

Nestling national 'transformation' imperatives in local 'servicing' space: Critical reflections on an inter-governmental planning and implementation project

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Abstract

In this article, it is argued that South Africa's post-1994 dream is marked by a tension between servicing and transformation – mutually supporting, but potentially also divergent set of intentions, processes and outcomes. Towards the end of 2006 the national Presidency in South Africa embarked on an ambitious project of using the spatial logic and principles of the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) to structure a process of high-level intergovernmental and civil society dialogue, strategising, plan-preparation, resource-allocation and implementation in all District Municipalities in the country over a three-year period. This project, in which both authors were intensively involved, is used to illustrate this tension and need for convergence and balance between servicing and transformation. The project context and key planning and governance challenges are described, the project outcomes highlighted, possible explanations for the findings probed, and the lessons learnt, documented.

DIE SPANNING TUSSEN NASIONALE TRANSFORMASIE EN PLAASLIKE DIENSLEWERING: KRITIEKE REFLEKSIES OP 'N INTER-REGERINGSBEPLANNINGS- EN IMPLEMENTERINGSPROJEK

Dit word in hierdie artikel geargumenteer dat Suid-Afrika se na-1994 droom gekenmerk word deur 'n spanning tussen dienslewering en transformasie – twee konsepte, elk met hul eiesoortige prosesse, intensies en uitkomst, wat eweneens ondersteunend of skeidend kan wees. Teen die einde van 2006, het die Suid-Afrikaanse Presidensie 'n ambisieuse drie-jaar projek onderneem in al die Distriksmunisipaliteite in die land met die doel om die ruimtelike logika en beginsels van die *National Spatial Development Perspective* (NSDP) te gebruik om 'n proses van hoë-vlak strategiese owerheidsbeplanning en dialoog met 'n wye verskeidenheid van rolspelers, die strategiese allokering van fondse, en die implementering van voorstelle te rig. Hierdie projek, waarin beide outeurs intensief betrokke was, word gebruik om die gemelde spanning en behoefte aan konvergensie en balans tussen dienslewering en transformasie te illustreer. Dit word gedoen deur die projekkonteks en sleutelbeplannings- en regeringsuitdagings te bespreek, projekuitkomst te belig, moontlike verklaarings vir die bevindinge te ondersoek en lesse wat geleer is, te lys.

'DIPHETOHO' TSE TLAMANG TSA BODULO BA SETJHABA KA HARA SEBAKA SA 'TSHEBELETSO' YA LEHAE. TOTOBATSO YA MORALO WA MEBUSO E MMEDI LE TSHEBETSO YA TSHEBEDISO

Ditabeng tsena, ho bolelwa hore toro Afrika Borwa ya ka mora selemo sa 1994 ke tshwauwa ka tsitsipano pakeng tsa ho fana ka di/shebeletso le diphetoho tse tshhehswang mmoho, empa hape ho hlhela maikemisetso a fapaneng, di/shebetso esitana le diphetoho. Ho ya mafelong a selemo sa 2006 Kantoro ya Mookamedi wa Naha (Presidensy) naheng ya Afrika Borwa e ile ya kena tshhebetso ya ho sebedisa sebaka se nepahetseng le dintlha tsa nnete tsa Tjhebelopele ya Ntshetsopele ya Sebaka sa Setjhaba ho bopa tshhebetso ya kopanelo le mmuso ya boemo bo phahameng le puisano le setjhaba, ho bopeng leano, ho rala boitokisetso, kabo ya disebediswa le ho kenya tshhebetso diterekeng tsohle tsa boMasepala ka hara naha nakong ya dilemo tse tharo. Tshhebetso ena, eo ho yona bangodi bobedi ba bona ba neng ba ikakgetse ka setotswana ho yona, e sebediswa e le yona taba ho bontsha tsitsipano ena le tlhoko ya ho kopana le ho lekana pakeng tsa ho fana ka di/shebeletso le diphetoho. E etswa ka ho hlalosa mofuta wa tshhebetso le diphepetso tsa ho arala le ho busa tswa bohlokwa., ka ho hlakisa diphetoho tsa tshhebetso, le ho hlaloba ditlhaloso le diithuto tseo ho ithutlweng tsona.

1. INTRODUCTION

Development planning in post-1994 South Africa has been marked by a tension between two potentially convergent, but currently divergent strains of intent, action and outcome, namely servicing and transformation. At stake are issues of time, space, and objective/ideal.

'Servicing' has sought to ensure a rapid response to a lack of basic services and housing in the places where people are. While not future-blind, it has had a very near-future perspective, the past and the present – the lack of services and housing – matter most: the experienced reality being that without these essentials, life is hard, fragile and constrained. At the same time, the need has political implications – aspirations are voiced where people live 'now', and as 'all politics are local and temporal', politicians not appreciating this, risk their careers. Household infrastructure provision is a key component of the 'delivery' side of this strain of development, with the key indicators of success being the number of houses completed and serviced with running water, sanitation and electricity; the number of clinics and schools constructed, and the number of kilometres of residential/access streets built/tarred. While it would be incorrect to regard this mode of servicing as short-sighted and non-developmental, it could be argued that the outcome has not necessarily been transformative of the apartheid superstructure or its supportive space economy. As has been argued at numerous occasions over the past 17 years, it is simply cementing the apartheid model – completing, filling in and rounding off the model started by the apartheid ideologues. It could also be argued that the thinking behind the 'servicing model' lacks in boldness, is distrustful of the future in that 'it will take what it can get today, as there may be no tomorrow', and is as such not really 'planning' in the true spirit of the word, but rather about using public funds to fix holes – the symptoms – and not about

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'changing the world' and addressing the causes of the challenges and the problems. It has also not been mindful of the fact that once basic needs have been addressed, the next set of needs and demands kick in, and that many of these needs would not be that easily addressed/achieved in the places where apartheid left people, and where the 'servicing' has taken place.

'Transformation', on the other hand, has been concerned with restructuring the space economy from the national to the local level, with the aim of ensuring a very different economic and social outcome, through the pursuit of shared, sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth. At 'societal and individual level', transformation also has an increase in quality of life as outcome, but on 'procedural level', it is far more demanding. In this instance, it requires and pursues a transformation in governance in the form of a deepening in democracy, and the active, integrated and harmonised participation of all three spheres of government in local development planning. As such, it has had a far more radical agenda than 'servicing', and while it also seeks to provide services, it seeks to provide these services through participatory processes and in spaces where it can ensure long-term economic growth and improved quality of life alongside the servicing agenda. In addition, it has taken both a macro- and a micro-view of the country, arguing that micro-changes in households and community's lives and life chances are not separable, and that local decisions have to be considered in terms of their (collective) national outcomes and vice versa. This has meant a tension with local democratic processes in that it did not necessarily have the support of politicians, especially not those operating in the municipal sphere (where by far the bulk of politicians are located), and, as noted earlier, where the achievement of service provision has been viewed as the key indicator of success. At the same time, the suggestion of people moving out/away from the wards that politicians represent has not been greeted with much enthusiasm. In addition, a strong belief that 'economies can be readily picked/scooped up and moved elsewhere', such as where people live, as apartheid did at enormous cost and with great damage

to the national economy, has meant that transformation, as defined above, has generally not been regarded as part of servicing decisions.

It is clear which of the strains has been the most prevalent – 'servicing', which has seen many communities not getting 'the full development package'. While this has for many communities meant access to municipal services and a house, the major hubs of economic activity, well-paying jobs, good schools and areas rich in amenity, have remained as far away from where they live as prior to 1994. The simple reality is that, while services have been provided, expansion of the economy has been limited. Pre-1994 economies and spaces/places of economic activity have by and large remained the same, with the same prevailing in the case of spaces/places of economic neglect. This has seen the persistence of the four-sided settlement model of South Africa: high-quality, economy-rich urban areas – the former white suburbs and new high-quality extensions; low-quality, economy-poor urban areas – the former townships and new low-income housing extensions; dense rural ghettos, and isolated low-density, low economic intensity, scattered traditional village areas. Together with this has gone the two-sided mobility profile of the spatial formation: 'macro-connectivity and regular daily, weekly and monthly movement' between the last three, often driven by necessity and far less so choice, and 'micro-connectivity and daily commuting' between the first two. The reality of this is that if you were born in the latter three spaces, your chances of moving into the first are very slim. This has meant that the 'South African Dream' of movement from poverty into a better future has been constrained, and examples of it happening are far and few between.

The provision of housing and services in spaces/places where it did not assist in dismantling the apartheid space economy has been decried by many authors in the development environment, notably the housing arena, and has received many a mention in political speeches and mandates. However, such calls have not been balanced by equal degrees of attention in the area of proposals for attending to this, and actual actions/interventions to make

it happen. This is cause for concern, for the two approaches differ not only in terms of planning, budgeting and implementation, but also in terms of the governance regime, and degree and focus of intergovernmental collaboration they require, as well as the reason for such collaboration. At the same time, however, 'both are necessary, and to suggest one at the cost of the other is a non-starter'. Instead, what is proposed is a greater degree of balance in planning, budgeting and implementation, which at this point, given the huge emphasis on servicing and targets, means a shift towards transformation, so as to find a more balanced place between the two.

In this article¹ the authors deal with one such initiative with which they have been actively involved in a variety of capacities over a number of years (2007-2010) and that actually sought to change the way in which planning, budgeting and implementation by the State is done – the aim being to ensure a pursuit of both 'servicing' and 'transformation'. The aim of the article, and the case study approach followed, is to expand the awareness of such initiatives; to demonstrate what can be done and was done; to celebrate and 'advertise' the successes, and to highlight and make sense of the pitfalls and challenges in such endeavours.

The project is discussed as follows: project background and rationale; objectives; roll-out; outcomes; explanations, and lessons learnt. The conclusion picks up the threads discussed in the introduction to the article.

The article is mainly based on the experiences of the authors in the project. The experiences and interpretations were, however, corroborated, amended and enriched through structured interviews with key role players in the project and tested against outcomes generated through various project-learning and structured reflection sessions. Key informants in this regard were consultants, notably team leaders of the various projects, project champions in the various district municipalities, the project management team in the Presidency, interviewees in a study on learning undertaken by one of the authors as part of the initial pilot, and attendees at a debriefing workshop held at the end of the pilot phase (see

¹ The article is based on a keynote address delivered by the authors on the same topic at the SAPI 2010 Conference in Durban.

CSIR, 2007a; CSIR, 2007b; CSIR, 2007c). In terms of the research for this article, the study was approached from an appreciative, yet critical perspective. Based mainly on 'Appreciative Inquiry',² which is rooted in social constructionist thought, the adopted approach was that by focusing on past successes and amplifying these, and seeking to understand undesired outcomes from the perspective of 'wanting to address the underlying reasons for such outcomes', a course for future success can be charted (Oranje & Van Huyssteen, 2005: 5; Fry, 2000). While the research was essentially focused on finding successes, as reflected in the article, those areas 'that did not work as well as wished for' were also sought and explored with a view on how these can be used and/or responded to in charting a way forward.

2. THE NSDP-DISTRICT APPLICATION PROJECT

2.1 Project background and rationale

The democratic transition in 1994 heralded a new dawn for planning in South Africa. In contrast to its former concern with land-use planning, parceling and control, practised in isolation from other kinds of planning (e.g. health, education, environment, and transport), planning was recast as a tool to ensure reconstruction, integrated local development and transformation (ANC, 1992; 1994). In addition, its mode of functioning was changed from a backroom activity to one in which collaboration of communities and other stakeholders was paramount (ANC, 1992; ANC, 1994).

A clear indication of this was the definition given by the Forum for Effective Planning and Development (FEPD) to 'integrated development planning' cited in Oranje & Van Huyssteen (2004: 13)³ as:

A participatory approach to integrate economic, sectoral, spatial, social, institutional, environmental and fiscal strategies in order to support the optimal allocation of scarce resources between sectors and geographical areas and across the population in a manner that provides sustainable growth, equity and the empowerment of the poor and the marginalised.

This new emphasis was given institutional form when legislation was passed that made provision for the 5-yearly preparation and annual review of first the Land Development Objectives (LDOs) and later the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) by every municipality in the country.⁴ These LDOs and IDPs were regarded as the primary tools in the municipal arena that would bind all other plans,⁵ destroy poverty, ensure strong, sustainable and equitable local economic growth, uplift the poor, and give voice to the oppressed (see *Municipal Systems Act, 2000* in Republic of South Africa, 2000; Jewell & Howard, 2000). In accordance with the intricate State architecture and 'governance'⁶ model introduced by the 1996 Constitution – quasi-federal in form, but unitary in function⁷ – the IDP was also called upon to perform two key objectives: to ensure the provision of basic municipal services and access roads, and local economic development. While both these objectives were dependent on forms of 'intergovernmental coordination', the former was far more

of a project management and budget-synchronisation, operational nature, i.e. to ensure sequenced investment of settlement components (e.g. schools, clinics, roads and potable water) than the latter. The latter, in turn, required high-level, strategic 'intergovernmental harmonisation and alignment' in terms of macro-spatial-economic development and infrastructure investment and development spending decisions by the municipal, provincial and national spheres of government.

Whilst wonderful on paper, practice proved more challenging. Interaction among officials, in both the same sphere and different sectors and spheres, was hard to achieve, as was the realisation of value from such engagements, further marred by the enormous extent of infrastructure backlogs and economic woes inherited from apartheid, the lack of technical, financial, planning and managerial capacity and very limited municipal budgets (see reports of these in Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2005; CSIR, 2006). The result of this was that IDPs often did not guide municipal budget allocations and implementation priorities, nor did they support or enhance a wider, province or nationwide economic and/or sustainable development thrusts/foci (as also argued by Adam & Oranje, 2002; Meicklejohn & Coetzee, 2003; Todes, 2004; CSIR, 2006).⁸ Likewise, plans prepared by provincial and national government at best provided strategic guidance for the institution they were prepared by and no-one else (CSIR, 2006), meaning that many of the post-1994 reconstruction and development ideals remained just that.

2 See Mellish (1999); Hall & Hammond (undated); Anon (undated) and Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) for a concise, easily accessible exposition of 'Appreciative Inquiry', or 'AI' as it is also known.

3 This definition was very much in line with the thinking in planning in the international arena at the time (see Harrison, 2002; Oranje, Harrison, Van Huyssteen & Meyer, 2000).

4 The DFA first made provision for the preparation of Land Development Objectives (South Africa, 1995), the forerunners of the IDPs that were to be prepared in terms of the *Local Government Transition Act, Second Amendment Act, 1996* (South Africa, 1996) and, thereafter, the *Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (South Africa, 2000).

5 These include, at municipal level, City Development Strategies (longer term plans), District Growth and Development Strategies, Local Economic Development Plans, Integrated Water Services Plans, and Integrated Transport Plans.

6 'Governance' can be described as the complex interactions between state institutions and a diversity of role players in the management/governing of public affairs (see Flinders, 2002). It has also been defined as "... the action, manner or system of governing in which the boundary between organizations and public and private sector has become permeable ... The essence of governance is the interactive relationship between and within government and non-governmental forces" (Rakodi, 2001: 216). See Pinson (2002) for a detailed exposition of the differences between 'government' and 'governance'.

7 In countries with federal constitutions, such as Australia, Belgium and Canada, as well as in 'unbundling unitary ones', such as the United Kingdom, one outcome of this has been a move towards the development of intergovernmental agreements between various levels/spheres of government on a wide range of issues affecting more than one level/tier or sphere, or sector of government (Wayenberg, undated; UTS Centre, 2000; Horgan, 2002; Horgan, 2004; Samson, 2002; McEwen, 2003).

8 See findings from the Draft National IDP Hearings Report (CSIR & DPLG, 2005) and Goss & Coetzee (2007: 46-58).

Deeply concerned about the long-term implications of uncoordinated investment in infrastructure in space, planners in government, especially those dealing with transport planning, embarked on a number of initiatives to address this state of affairs (see discussion in Oranje & Merrifield, 2010). These initiatives had very little success, with the turning point coming when the task was taken on by the Office of the Deputy President (later The Presidency) in the late-1990s. From here an initiative was embarked upon in 1998 to prepare a set of 'spatial guidelines for infrastructure investment and development' to ensure greater synergy in the actions of the three spheres of government. This initiative, as well as the thinking that went into it, was strongly influenced by a burgeoning body of local and international literature that emphasised the value of coordinated, synergised and aligned government investment in achieving social, economic, environmental and spatial objectives (Asibuo, 1998; Boyle, 2000; Cameron & Ndhlovu, 2001; Harrison, 2001; Harrison, 2002; Bird & Smart, 2002; de Rooij, 2002; Faludi, 2002; Faludi, 2003a; Faludi, 2003b; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Horgan, 2002; Horgan, 2004; Albrechts, Healey & Kunzmann, 2003; Gualini, 2003; Robinson Brown, Todes & Kitchin, 2003). At the same time, another stream of work, largely derived from a detailed scrutiny and analysis of successful economic development practice emerged, stressing the value of developing nation-states through a focus on 'functional economic regions' and 'clusters' (Amin, 1998; Balchin, Sykora & Bull, 1999; Lechner & Dowling, 1999; Lloyd & Illsey, 1999; Merrifield, 2001; Merrifield, 2003; Engerman & Sokoloff, 2003; Asheim, Cooke & Martin, 2006).⁹ A key feature of this approach was that of 'learning regions' in which deep and dense networks of institutions acted both as the instigators and providers of the glue of regional development. The central argument was that regions with strong institutions, well-linked to each other and to the economic activities and livelihoods of the region, are crucial

for future growth and development. Hence, a core focus in development practice was to identify, utilise, support and enhance such regional institutions and the actors that operate in and through them, as well as their links to each other and the economic activities in regions that they enable, govern and sustain.

Out of this initiative emerged the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), prepared by The Presidency and adopted by Cabinet in January 2003 (The Presidency, 2003). Being an indicative, guiding perspective and not a plan, the NSDP did not make explicit statements on state action in specific geographic locations. Instead, it provided a spatial logic and set of normative principles, based on both local and international best practice and theory, to inform and guide decisions on infrastructure investment and development spending by all three spheres of government in sub-national spaces/regions, later referred to 'functional (economic) regions'. Essentially, the NSDP sought to ensure greater rationality, synergy, coordination and integration in State infrastructure investment and development spending (The Presidency, 2006a).

At its heart the NSDP had a deep concern with 'people, not places' (The Presidency, 2003). In practical terms, this translated into focusing significant infrastructure investment in areas with proven economic development potential, and development spending in areas with high levels of poverty (The Presidency, 2003). Places with, for instance, their origins in spatial engineering by the apartheid regime, with no or very little economic development potential, would thus not be targeted for massive road and other forms of hard infrastructure investment. Instead, State spending in such places would focus on building and supporting the people living there through education, health care, grants and making available labour-market intelligence (e.g. information on tender and

job opportunities).

However, merely adopting the NSDP had very little impact on the ground, other than unleashing a chorus of dissent. This, in turn, gave rise to further work on both the focus and processes of strategic planning instruments, and the adoption by Cabinet in February 2005 of the Harmonisation and Alignment Framework (The Presidency, 2004), which was intended to ensure greater harmonisation and alignment in the planning and spending proposals of the three spheres of government. This framework argued that maximum developmental impact by a 'Developmental State' is reliant on focused, targeted, integrated development, and that this, in turn, requires of all role players: a shared understanding on development dynamics and trends in all regions; high-level debate on the development of such regions; commitment by all role players on what needs to be done in these regions in terms of infrastructure investment and development spending, and provision for this in plans, frameworks and budgets (Oranje & Van Huyssteen, 2007: 9).

In addition, the framework argued that the then 46 district and 6 metro areas were to be used as shared areas of jurisdiction to coordinate planning. The high-level intergovernmental dialogue, shared understanding and joint agreement were meant to provide a foundation on which state actors in the three spheres of government could conduct their strategic and sector planning and prepare their budgets. This would then also form the basis of the district/metro Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The strong position of district and metropolitan IDPs in sustainable social and economic transformation was given a further boost when the President's Coordinating Council (PCC)¹⁰ resolved in 2004 that the district/metropolitan Integrated Development Plan (IDP) would become the 'shared expression of the development objectives and intentions of the three spheres of government', as illustrated graphically

9 Porter (1998: 17) cited in Asheim *et al.* (2006: 2) defines clusters as: "Geographical concentrations of interconnected companies, specialised suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, associated institutions (for example, universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also co-operate".

10 The PCC, which comprises the President, the Minister for Provincial and Local Government and the nine Premiers, seeks to ensure alignment and integration between actions of common interest to the three spheres of government (see Oranje and Van Huyssteen, 2007 for background about this alignment initiative). The PCC has over the past few years taken a number of decisions regarding the role and importance of IDPs in the broader system of intergovernmental development planning. Recently, it also called on provinces to complete the review of their PGDSs and to work more closely with municipalities to ensure greater coordination, integration and alignment in planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of government programmes.

11 At provincial level, Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDSs) were introduced as strategic plans to plan holistically for 'provincial space' and to guide provincial sector department and district-wide municipal planning, budgeting and implementation; at national level, this role was to be played by the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) is both a reflection of

in Figure 1.¹¹

After many efforts and tribulations, a new planning system with a range of planning instruments, had been put in place on paper. The challenge of making it work in the way envisaged, however, remained elusive. This resulted in a decision by The Presidency in 2006 to initiate a pilot project – the NSDP District Application Project¹² – to implement the framework and contextualise the NSDP in a sample of districts and to record lessons learnt from this experience (The Presidency, 2006b). With the support of an intergovernmental task team¹³ and the nine provinces, the Presidency launched the project in 13 districts in eight of South Africa's nine provinces. This was subsequently followed by the implementation of the project in all the remaining 33 districts over the next three years.

2.2 Project objectives

The 'NSDP-District Application Project' sought to ensure that senior representatives from the three spheres of government rigorously debate and reach a shared understanding and agreement on developmental needs. Agreement was also sought on development opportunities, challenges and bottlenecks in the district municipality, as well as the infrastructure investment and development spending required to address these needs and to utilise the potentials in a sustainable way (The Presidency, 2004; The Presidency, 2006b). This objective was pursued within the developmental logic and normative principles as set out in the NSDP, and backed by detailed spatial analysis of the participating districts, using the foci of the NSDP ('need' and 'development potential') as novel pillars for the analysis. This was done with the clear intent of ensuring the popularisation and application of the NSDP in district development planning processes as part of the broader agenda of establishing this regional unit as the spatial

area/territory of State planning action. All of this was based on the assumption that the various components of the agreement would then be translated by the respective spheres and sectors into plans and budgets, as and when these were prepared. This, it was believed, would provide a foundation for State investment and spending to take place in the district, as a spatially defined entity, in a focused, coordinated and synergistic way.

2.3 Project roll-out

As noted above, the project started as a pilot with 13 of the 46 district municipalities selected in eight provinces (all,

experimentation with different consultants, and with different combinations of members from earlier teams in new teams. The use of different consultants was also explained as 'allowing for capacity to be built in a broader group of service providers'. Questions were, however, raised by some commentators about project-learning and the ability of service providers to really learn from, and adapt within a single appointment, with no provision made for learning or sharing of experiences between earlier and new teams.

While the methodology deployed in the various phases varied, the key components were:

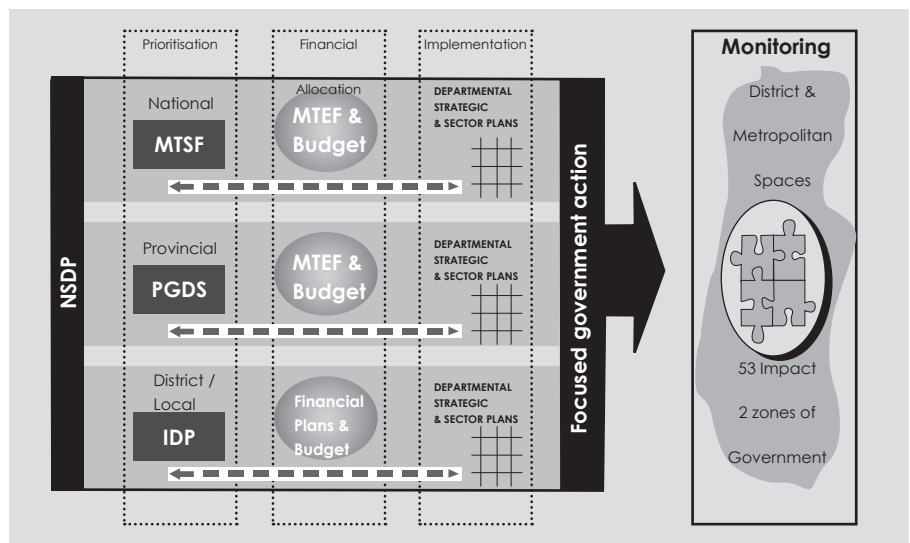


Figure 1: Idealised alignment of planning instruments to achieve intergovernmental prioritisation, resource allocation and implementation

Source: The Presidency, 2006a: 14

excluding Gauteng) in a process of negotiation between The Presidency, the provinces and respective districts (see The Presidency, 2006b). Thereafter, the project was rolled out in batches of between 8 and 15 districts at a time, with the final 12 being completed in June 2010. While this roll-out was mainly based on the availability of funding, it also allowed for learning and

- The appointment of consultants and the setting up of a project team consisting of the project manager in the Presidency, the consultant team, a project champion in the district municipality and representatives from the district and local municipalities and the Premier's Office and/or Departments tasked

government's assessment of, and perspective on, key development challenges at a particular point in time, as well as a statement of intent as to the way it envisages addressing the challenges over the medium (three year) term. This statement of intent is then taken further and elaborated upon in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), which sets out government's resource allocation to address the identified key developmental challenges in the three-year period. Together, the MTSF and the MTEF provide a framework of development objectives and funding commitments in terms of which national and provincial line departments, provincial governments and municipalities have to do their planning and budgeting.

12 This project was initiated by The Presidency and to a large extent co-funded and driven by the GTZ, Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and the Department of Provincial and Local Government.

13 This team included representation from key role players, such as the Development Bank of South Africa, and national departments of Provincial and Local Government, Housing, Trade and Industry, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Land Affairs, and Treasury.

with local planning and economic development.

- Data-gathering from secondary sources and through interviews with key informants in the community, the private sector, organised labour, NGOs and the local and provincial spheres of government, culminating in the preparation of a draft development profile of the district, including a series of GIS maps. In accordance with the terminology of the NSDP, the key constructs in terms of which the data was presented, were 'need' and 'development potential'. The bulk of this information was generated through a refinement of the spatial analysis platform and accompanying socio-economic dataset originally developed at national scale for the 2006 NSDP¹⁴. In most districts, this task was eased by the existence of datasets, often generated in IDP, Local Economic Development (LED), Spatial Development Framework (SDF), Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) and specific sector initiatives. Draft 'Development Profiles' for each district were prepared from these initial technical analyses.
- The hosting of a one- or two-day workshop in the district, facilitated by the consultant team and supported by technical experts, and attended by representatives of all three spheres of government (notably the Offices of the Premier in the respective provinces and the Presidency), and in some cases private sector and community representatives, at which the draft Development Profile was deliberated. A key objective in this instance was to 'test' official secondary, technical/expert, outsider knowledge of the district area against local and context-specific knowledge of the area, institutions and spheres, and the expertise and experiences of participants representing different disciplines and sectors. During these sessions, the facilitators and their technical support teams and project champions used the draft developmental profiles to structure the discussions, highlight mismatches in prioritisation and resource allocation, flag bottlenecks, and elicit debate. For this and the follow-up

session to be a success, attendance and active participation by key district and local politicians, senior officials from district and local municipalities and high-level representatives from provincial and national sector departments, The Presidency and Offices of the Premiers was imperative.

- Amendments to the draft profile on the strength of the deliberation at the workshop, and the preparation of a set of proposals for the development of the district and on which high-level intergovernmental agreement would be required.
- The hosting of a second one-day workshop in the district at which the amended profile and proposals were deliberated and shared understandings and agreements reached on the needs and potentials of each district. The key objective was the achievement of a shared understanding and intergovernmental agreement on the key needs, development potential and long-term development objectives of the district, and the responsibilities of each sector and sphere of government in meeting these objectives.
- The preparation of a final development profile and set of priority actions in the form of an intergovernmental development agreement that had the support of all representatives, and had to be respected and taken up by each sphere and sector of government in its planning, budgeting and implementation actions.

While still essentially focused on the same objectives and going through the same basic steps, the project underwent a few changes in terms of prescribed methodology and the name of the output. Influenced by the OECD's 'Territorial Reviews', the key areas of focus (especially for the preparation of draft development profiles) were prescribed in the projects after the pilots, based on the contents of these Territorial Reviews and the output called a '[name of district] Territorial Review'. This move, which was regarded as unproblematic by the project management in The Presidency, was not welcomed by all, and regarded by some as an unwarranted departure

from the initial intentions and methodology of the project, and viewed as lacking in focus on both transformation and servicing.

2.4 Project outcomes

After a drawn out conceptualisation and inception process, the pilot projects went well, with active participation from all three spheres of government in the workshops the norm. Despite this, very little was unfortunately done with the outputs of the workshops (intergovernmental agreements and sheets with tasks for attention by each sphere and sector of government). While some district champions sought the inclusion of the agreements and contents of the sheets in their IDPs during the next review phase, the same cannot be said about active follow-up in the provincial and national spheres. In subsequent phases this worsened, with the Territorial Reviews (originally perceived as project inputs in the form of the Development Profiles) becoming the only lasting output.

In contrast to the lively and active participation of provincial and national government in the pilot phase, the subsequent phases of the roll-out and sets of workshops saw far less involvement from the provincial, and especially the national spheres of government. At the same time, the non-State involvement became reduced to data-gathering and did not extend into the workshop phases. In the area of participation from senior officials and politicians, this had a brief flurry in the pilots, but was not sustained in the following phases. And, without it, the exercise had very little hope of achieving the desired outcomes, as the decisions and agreements simply lacked the power to persuade. Further complications emerged with the introduction of the OECD dimension, with the project moving away from an intergovernmental deliberation focus to a far more standardised and template-driven exercise. Towards the end of the exercise, the data-generation part was split between a generic and comparative data-generation, and context-specific data-generation exercise, dealt with by two separate consultant groups. As such, the key components of the project, namely the data-gathering and preparation of the development

14 The Geo Spatial Analysis Platform Version 2 (GAP2) was developed by the CSIR, the Presidency and the Department of Trade and Industry in a collaborative effort. For more information see CSIR, GAP2 (CSIR, 2007b).

15 It was initially envisaged that these agreements would be signed off by Mayors, Premiers and Ministers.

profile-exercise, and the workshops/engagement parts, became separated and dealt with by two separate consultant groups. As such it became even more of a compliance exercise, with the interface between data and deliberation being lost.

The use of space and spatial representations in the form of GIS maps and detailed analyses as a forum for detailed discussion and a canvas for joint making sense and construction of shared understandings and joint future, did not materialise far beyond a few of the initial pilots. Over time space became little more than a static/un-dynamic, flat surface on which inscriptions were made.

As for one of the key objectives of the project – the national-local comparison with a view to ensuring agreement on need and development potential of district spaces in the wider, provincial and national pictures - little materialised.

Over time it also became increasingly underplayed, with the serious questions that the project was meant to explore – the comparative and competitive advantage of each district and its development opportunities/chances – not really being confronted and their implications worked through.

In and amidst the disappointments and gaps in terms of the desired objectives, there were also many 'positive outcomes':

- The project raised awareness of the NSDP (arguably a more transformation-orientated planning instrument) among officials in all three spheres of government districts, albeit that the understanding and specific view of it differed in each case. The stark questions the NSDP raised, however, remained controversial and challenging – i.e. that of focusing different kinds of State infrastructure investment and development spending in different places. As such it also demonstrated that a heightened awareness and 'another set of new eyes' do not necessarily result in a different way of acting (in this instance, in the form of plans and budgets informed by such an awareness) in accordance with 'new' perspectives. This may have been due to the NSDP's focus on longer term transformation outcomes in contrast to the more familiar and comfortable shorter term servicing outcomes.

- The project allowed decision-shapers and -makers in districts from a variety of backgrounds and spheres of government to debate and focus their attention on a distinct geographic unit – the district municipal area. This assisted in providing key role players with a keener appreciation of the specific factors, development dynamics and trends impacting on growth and development in the district, instead of merely a sector-/discipline-specific interpretation. It also enabled a comparison between official and local data and the identification of areas for further research where neither official nor local knowledge proved adequate. As such, the project also illustrated the role of space in providing a shared platform for intergovernmental and broad-based popular participation and transformation by representatives from different disciplines, sectors and civil society groupings.
- The project demonstrated that it was possible for stakeholders to develop a shared (and richer) understanding of the different substantive aspects of development (institutional weaknesses, pressures, bottlenecks related to the economy, livelihoods, services, infrastructure, access to land, etc.), instead of merely listing these challenges as part of a (standard) single-sector/issue-based planning process. It also showed that these issues can be captured in a crisp, concise way and that they need not be incorporated into lengthy documents that drive their readers to deep frustration and anguish. On the downside, it quickly emerged that reaching an agreement on paper in the work-sessions was far easier than taking these decisions back into the participants' own institutional environment and launching that understanding and agreement into a different system with a different language and set of discourse-action-triggers.
- The project's engagement processes (and focus on procedural transformation) illustrated that agency matters – who attends, who speaks, who speaks first, who listens, and who seeks to make others listen, does make a difference, especially if there are champions who make the success of the project their business. Equally important, it (once again) demonstrated that if leaders commit, others do so more readily.
- The project re-emphasised a number of pitfalls in mobilising intergovernmental action towards sustainable development (see learning captured in CSIR, 2007a, 2007b). Key amongst these are the ease with which these processes can fall back into exercises aimed at ensuring compliance; the danger of raising expectations that are not lived up to, with cynicism often following in close pursuit; the persistent absence of consideration and maybe even care for 'the longer term'; the lack of capacity in most government structures to undertake intergovernmental planning; the need for strategic provincial and national guidance, and the dangers of 'speaking truth to power' in situations where 'power is the truth'.

3. EXPLANATIONS: 'THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN' AND 'WHAT IT MEANS'

The pilot with its anchor in the transformation-orientated NSDP not only meant the introduction and embedding of a controversial approach to development, but required of decision-makers in all three spheres of government to make trade-offs about investment and spending in a resource-scarce environment. This was in many cases not a pleasant experience. It was for many a difficult situation of opening up a local set of conditions to outside scrutiny. It also called on participants to commit in plan and budget to what was agreed on in the forums – something which in many cases was not the way the world worked. In many instances this did not make for enthusiastic engagement. Interestingly enough, in cases where the NSDP-logic was debated and discussed in depth (often in heated arguments), the resultant discussions of trade-offs were experienced as moments of breakthrough in reaching new levels of shared understanding regarding regional development dynamics.

3.1 Local peer/power pressure

In many cases, the project questioned long-held beliefs about local development potentials; in others, it elicited far less provincial and national support for a particular economic trajectory in a district than representatives in the district held. Entertaining such 'outsider' views on local potential, let alone admitting that they may have a point was not a common occurrence. In such contexts the level of serious, open

engagement is/was doubtful. The wish to speak truth to power was simply not there and those who challenged long-held beliefs about huge local development potentials risked being perceived as wet blankets who lacked creativity/imagination and who could not see the bright new dawn on the doorstep. The make-up of participating forums, as well as the existence and strength of local-local and local-provincial networks played a big role in the severity of this challenge.

3.2 Power, status, position, rank and turf

The project boldly ventured into the power-infested waters of turf, influence, status and professional jealousy, and called for a deliberative engagement in an environment in which all were equal in the pursuit of greater developmental/transformation ideals. This is not the way many perceive the world or others or themselves in the world – regardless of the transformative principles underlying the new planning regime in South Africa. Together with conservative and traditional views on aspects such as gender, age and race, this phenomenon did not contribute to the establishment of a platform for open and vigorous debate and discussion. Adding further fuel to the fire was the drawn-out tension and hostility in respect of the ANC-succession debate during the time of roll-out of the project, which in many cases meant that especially during the early and mid-term stages of the project (coming from The Presidency) it was viewed with suspicion, in some not really welcomed, and in others even treated with disdain.

3.3 The role and place of planning and plans and 'agreements such as these'

The same fate that so many plans suffer, i.e. that they are often weak levers/cogs in the state machinery and at best just another area of influence, and not the sole/only voice, given the absence of an authoritative voice on development trajectories, both nationally and locally, also befell the project. Even if the project delivered the desired shared understanding and agreement, it meant that it would need to be carted into another process where its value could potentially not count for much. The fact that so few senior officials and

politicians participated in the processes made this prospect even dimmer. This was not made easier by the fact that the project often generated 'bad news' and data that did not necessarily correspond with a particular perspective on development potential in an area.

3.4 Cynicism and development and participation fatigue

The project asked participants, many of whom had been involved in numerous post-1994 development and participation projects to pack away their cynicism and 'give the project a chance'. For many this was just a bridge too far. Given the need for active participation in the process from a wide variety of disciplines, the lack of interest and involvement by some participants meant a gap in this endeavour.

3.5 Simple old complexity and the difficulties of acting transdisciplinarily

As with so many planning and governance interventions, the world is far more complex, and far more so in so many ways than project office and ops rooms can imagine. While an attempt was made, in the pilot phase at least, to identify emergent patterns amidst the seemingly unpredictability of the complex systems (as explained in Smith, 2006; Cilliers, 2008), the complex nature of the State and local power dynamics meant that the outcomes were far more modest than had been hoped for. At the same time, and on the same issue, the project, while essentially based on a recognition for the need for a transdisciplinary focus – meaning a process of collaborative learning and joint problem-solving, in which scientists from different disciplines and different epistemologies and rationalities work with practitioners to jointly solve real-world problems (see discussions in Scholz, Lang, Wiek, Walter, & Stauffacher, 2006; Lawrence & Després, 2004; Stauffacher, Walter, Lang, Wiek, & Scholz, 2006; Van Breda, 2008) – also had to deal with the challenges this approach poses. This proved to be a difficult endeavour, not least enhanced by the fact that the consultants/facilitators and local project champions within districts were not necessarily all equally comfortable with the complexities it posed. Stated simply, high-level engagement, seeing relations, seeing

the small and the big and the different and the many and the few, all at the same time, putting together outputs, and finding and making avenues for implementation, are scarce skill.

3.6 Institutional issues

High levels of mobility mean that the participants in a project could change, sometimes during the project, at other times after completion of the project. This generally added to a lack of commitment and support for the project. In some cases the departure of a key player in the project meant that the project for all intents and purposes came to an end. In addition, a lack of a functioning performance culture, and a lack of description/recording of the project in performance agreements meant limited appetite for it.

3.7 No funds, no fun[ction]

Whereas the project documentation was clear from the outset – that there would be no additional funds for, or as a result of participation in it, it soon emerged from engagements with local participants that there was an expectation of special funds for the district as form of 'reward' for its participation. As soon as it was realised that this was not the case, the enthusiasm often waned. And, without any special funds or benefits, the question as to why bother, loomed large. For many it became an outside project on someone else's performance sheet, driven by outsiders.

4. LESSONS

4.1 Moving through and beyond discipline boundaries (and 'walking through walls'¹⁶)

While the project suggests that moving through and beyond discipline boundaries is possible, it can unfortunately also be a function of a/the event – i.e. the coming together moment may last only for the duration of the work session, for as long as the participants are lodged in the specific 'transdisciplinary arena/space'. However, as soon as they return to their respective realms and intellectual, disciplinary and institutional domiciles and language games, the transdisciplinary moment is in most cases lost.

Building upon, and keeping vibrant the sensation of a collective 'having had

¹⁶ A concept introduced by Tore Sager in July 2007 at the annual AESOP Conference, albeit in a very different context/setting.

a moment back there' and glimpse of what is possible, is thus critical. This calls for a language and set of processes that are not considered exclusively linked to 'events, holidays and (really intergovernmental or other) holy days'.

4.2 The power of multidisciplinary discussions on vexing challenges

The project not only allowed shared learning, but also new ways of considering phenomena. Roads were, for instance, not discussed as stretches of gravel waiting for tar, or as tar strips returning spot by spot to gravel and ashes, but as conduits of hope, of strips of dignity, of the skeleton of a myriad of systemic responses – from children at play, on their way to school, to the settings for scenes of human drama in the interplay of arrival, meeting, mingling, loss and departure. In terms of this perspective, interventions in 'infrastructure provision and maintenance profiles' become far more than simply that – they shape, re-arrange and re-size space, place, community and people's lives, and from that perspective, it was agreed 'what should be done'. This emerged as a clear prerequisite for a transformative instrument to actually 'work'.

4.3 Appreciating complexity and transdisciplinarity

While admitting to complexity and using it to make sense of the reasons for some of the less desired outcomes, or lack of outcomes of the project, it is also useful in mapping 'a way forward' through a better understanding of the systems in which such a project is located, and what it will take to see it being implemented. In addition, this project also demonstrated the value of exploding staid ideas and notions, incorporating a multitude of views, uncovering and keeping open options and acknowledging the many views and opposing priorities, without losing focus on the urgency of rapid development. It also suggested the need for a balance between a debate that acknowledges and celebrates complexity, while appreciating the need to produce a straightforward programme for joint action in a language understood by all concerned, at the end of the process, because, once the shared understanding and agreement 'leaves the forum', it has to enter the many complex processes through which investment and spending take place in the district.

To have any impact, it requires not only a certain level of clarity, but even more so, some complexity-supporting and navigating practices, mindsets and abilities – driven by agents with a passion for sustaining this rich appreciation in a focused pursuit of strategic objectives. This once again also emphasised the importance of an understanding of the systems in which we operate and the importance of locating, making and maintaining entry (and exit) points into (and from) such systems.

4.4 Power and what it can destroy and/or deliver

It has become commonplace in planning analyses to bring Foucault to the party and 'blame it and/or everything on power' (see discussions in Homann, 2005; Coetzee, 2006). When this happens, the result is generally predictable – little more needs to be said, a sombre nod, a shake of the shoulders, and a suggestion or statement that nothing can be done to circumvent some inevitable outcome, is enough. In this project, power reared its head, not once, but often. Generally, when doing so, constraining, closing down and even destroying many of what the project approach was and is about – of opening up a debate, trying something new, probing, and not necessarily opting for easy closures. The project demonstrated that power in the form of knowledge, in contrast to the huge bulk of literature in the planning theory field that has [so eagerly] painted an ultra-gloomy picture of the perverse and devious activities and agendas of power in the public domain, can be utilised to elicit and advance discussions. It was demonstrated that a recognition and understanding of the systems that create, institute and sustain power relationships and decision-making – in this process harnessing the positive power of knowledge – can be useful (and even employed) in promoting the materialisation of the much desired 'true development for all'.

5. CONCLUSION

At the outset of this article it was argued that the past 17 years of development planning have emphasised 'servicing' at the cost of a more balanced view in which 'transformation' (of a variety of sorts) is also pursued. It was furthermore argued that such a balance is urgently required to ensure the achievement of the post-1994 developmental objectives of shared, sustainable, inclusive

and equitable growth. While pointing towards the gap and arguing for a move towards more transformative development planning, it was also acknowledged that this would not be an easy endeavour. It was, however, also noted that this is not impossible, and that the road can be made by walking it and being willing to learn from the lessons learnt along that road. As part of this endeavour, a project in which *both servicing and transformation* was pursued, was proposed as holding value in terms of experiences and lessons learnt. In conclusion, and to return to where we started, the story told in this article does not paint an ideal picture of a planning, budgeting and implementation framework or regime. However, it does provide glimmers of hope and glimpses of practical lessons as to how the much needed move towards a balance between servicing and transformation can be made.

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