

Government interventionism and sustainable development

The case of South Africa

G van der Waldt

Research Professor: Public Governance
North West University
South Africa

ABSTRACT

Governments have moral and legal obligations to intervene in society in order to direct, regulate, facilitate and act as catalyst for economic prosperity, social justice and ecological sustainability. The nature and scale of such interventions depend on various factors, which include the ideological reasoning of policy makers, the availability of natural resources, demographical and geographical realities, as well as trajectories for economic growth. On a global scale governments have to address serious challenges such as climate change, ecological dysfunction, and the depletion of natural resources. The global community is living far beyond its ecological means. It is expected that governments muster coherent policy responses to the highly complex environmental problems that society is facing currently.

The aim of this article is to outline governments' interventions in sustainable development by focusing on a particular case, namely the South African Government. This government sets itself the target to become a developmental state according to the strategic goals of its National Development Plan. This context will be explored by focusing on specific social, economic and environmental interventions the South African Government has effected to facilitate sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the respective branches of science have begun to weave together a picture of the intricate complexities concerning the delicate interaction between nature and human civilisation. A tsunami of recent scientific evidence confirms that this delicate relationship is under serious strain, which places critical question marks behind humankind's stewardship of earth. Globally people experience immense challenges in terms of the climate, ecological dysfunction, and the depletion of natural resources. The global community is by far exceeding its ecological means. Human enterprise has already overshoot the global carrying capacity by

more than 50%. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) warns that “human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of the earth that the ability of the planet’s ecosystem to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted”.

Confronted by a vast body of scientific evidence, decisive interventions would be expected of governments around the globe. However, the rather limited and uncoordinated efforts thus far failed dismally to deal successfully with the cumulative effects of human activity on the environment. Rees (in Costanza & Kubiszewski 2014:191) confirms that not a single national government to date has an “evidence-based, visionary, morally coherent policy response” to the highly complex environmental problems which society face. There is a need for a totally new governance paradigm, a new way to think and act in balancing the so-called “pillars” of sustainable development. However, the question springs to mind: How should one frame the interventionist role of governments in this process of sustainable development? How could governments’ initiatives worldwide be leveraged to maximise positive development outcomes in their society?

The aim of this article is to frame governments’ interventions in the process of sustainable development by focusing on a particular case, the South African Government. This government sets itself the target to be restructured into a developmental state. Government interventions in sustainable development within the context of a developmental state, have recently gained particular significance among proponents of the New Public Administration. This context will be explored by focusing on specific interventions of the South African Government to facilitate sustainable development within its society. The basic assumption that serves as theoretical foundation for this article is that government is the key actor in society to regulate, facilitate sustainable development and act as catalyst for such initiatives.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONISM CONCEPTUALISED

Interventions of governments in civilisation are intricately part of the perceived purpose and role of the rulers in society. On one end of the socio-political spectrum liberal thinking may regard governmental intervention as interference or intrusion in citizen’s free spaces, whilst on the other end socialists may perceive such intervention as a necessity to establish order, stability, and equity in society. A literature review reveals that the notion of a government’s intervention features prominently in mainly three arenas – political, social, and economic. In the case of political interventionism, one country interferes with the internal affairs of another, such as its internal politics, and even deploys military force to establish order and stability in the foreign country (Rose & Miller 1992:175). Foreign political interventions may further include the use of methods such as sanctions, trade protectionism, and foreign relations (Pearson 1974:262). However, this arena of intervention falls outside the scope of this article.

Regarding social interventionism a government’s regulation is often the result of pressing societal needs, such as epidemics, natural disasters, and human destruction that demand a rapid response from government. It is evident that positions on social intervention depend on the specific issue at hand. Generally, interventions in the areas of a state’s healthcare and educational services are considered more ‘socially acceptable’ than arms production and the construction of a nuclear power plant (see McClelland 1996:89). Judgement of the desirability of social interventions further depends on the general legitimacy of a government.



If government officials are perceived as experts who aim to promote the common good and general welfare of society, such interventions would typically be regarded as more favourable (Parton 1994:14). However, where social interventions are viewed as paternalistic, autocratic, unethical, and only aimed at benefitting a certain societal grouping (i.e. elites), citizens would generally not welcome such interference (Bermant, Kelman & Warwick 1978:176).

The context of governmental social interventionism thus requires epistemological consideration, a new knowledge and metatheoretical basis for understanding the issue. It involves interventions in the lives of individuals in society and may infringe or attempt to alter individuals' rights or choices. Interventions could also be regarded from a moral perspective: governments have a socio-political obligation and moral duty to design policies in the national interest.

It is evident that the majority of literature deals with governmental interventionism in an economic sense. Thus the discourse focuses on the nature of the relationship between a government and the market. As is the case with the social arena, government interventionism, economically speaking, requires context. At the one extreme of the ideological spectrum, neo-liberals may seek to reduce the state as a 'defender' of private property rights (Huffman 2013:15). Perspectives from a mid-range spectrum include capitalistic vantage points where protagonists such as Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes would probably argue against any government interventions in the economy whatsoever. At the other end of the spectrum, the clearer socialist, neo-Marxist thinkers would expect of government to assume full ownership and control of the economy. They would probably argue that government intervention in the economy of the state is necessary to correct market failures and to achieve a more equitable distribution of income and wealth among the citizens. In this regard Kropotkin and Woodcock (1996:97) argue that government intervention is a prominent feature of capitalism. According to them, "Nowhere has the system of 'non-intervention of the state' ever existed. Everywhere the state has been, and still is, the main pillar and the creator, direct and indirect, of Capitalism and its powers over the masses. The state has always interfered in the economic life in favour of the capitalist exploiter". Kropotkin and Woodcock (1996:98) further insist that even in a truly *laissez-faire* capitalist system, the state would still be protecting capitalist property rights as well as hierarchical social relationships. In the same vein, Polanyi (1944:71) notes that while many ideological proponents of capitalism "thunder against state intervention (for the benefit of the masses), the fact is that capitalism itself produces the need for such intervention".

The way governments intervene in society in general and its economy in particular, are highly diverse in nature. Such interventions may include *regulatory* interference by means of policies, by-laws, directives, and guidelines. It may also involve more *facilitatory* interventions such as strategies, programmes, and projects. Regarding the environment and general development, government interventions may entail physical input such as infrastructure development, spatial planning and by establishing green zones in cities and towns, as well as planning environmentally-friendly power plants (see Vermeulen & Kok 2012:186).

The nature of interventions in fact are so diverse that it might be useful to design a typology ranging from direct to indirect interventions, strong (i.e. prescriptive) and weak (i.e. guidance, facilitation) interventions, and hard and soft interventions. The 'right' way to intervene probably lies in striking a careful balance between an appropriate level or intensity of intervention. This level of intervention may, however, depend on various factors:

- particular growth trajectory of the country, demographics – culture groups;
- historic realities – colonialisation;
- the maturity of its democracy;
- geographical circumstances – size, location, growth hubs, urban-rural settings; and
- availability of natural resources – low levels may require stronger protectionism, leading to interventionism.

Given the conditions mentioned above, a particular government may, for example, decide to fast-track certain interventions or to scale down others. Government interventionism is thus highly sensitive to each specific case.

For purposes of this article, government interventionism is defined as an analysis of the nature, extent and types of systemic, socio-economic, policy, strategic and programmatic interventions of governments to leverage initiatives for sustainable development in a country.

Government interventionism in a developmental state

In the context of a developmental state, government interventionism gained specific meaning and application value. In the case of contemporary examples of developmental states such as Korea and Singapore, state intervention was the key to development and success in the ‘free market’ (Wade 2003). In developing countries that suffered the misfortune to be subjected to ‘free-market reforms’ (e.g. neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programmes) rather than following the interventionist models of the Far East, the results have been destructive for their economy (Chomsky 1996).

Considering the nature of government interventionism within a developmental state against the backdrop of a spectrum of extremities, the state either reveals itself as fragile, absent, erratic or inept (Stiglitz 2003:34), or it unveils a ‘strong’ or ‘hard’ state character (Fukuyama 2004:ix). The intensity and scale of such interventions should thus be considered according to the particular nature of the state. It is important to note that a developmental state belongs to a category of state types, which *intervene* in the affairs of society, and particularly in the economy (Koehler & Chopra 2014:26). According to Gumede (2009:1), a developmental state generally refers to the model many of the East Asian nations (the so-called ‘Asian Tigers’) pursued after the Second World War in an attempt to modernise their economies rapidly. The basic model of the East Asian developmental state implies that the state sets specific goals for development and mobilises society to achieve industrial modernisation. Developmental states thus employ active development strategies, and in particular, specific industrial policies. Such states set clear policies and goals for their economy with regard to export promotion, investment in human capital and credit allocation through development banks (Bora, Lloyd & Pangestu 2000:29). According to Gumede (2009:2), the financial sectors played a crucial role in funding development strategies. A developmental state thus plays an active role in guiding economic development and using the resources of the country to meet the needs of the people (Van Dijk & Croucamp 2007:665). It uses all available resources (i.e. natural, state, human, and financial) to address social challenges and facilitate economic growth (Leftwich 2007:133; Edigheji 2010:15).

The peculiarity of the government’s interventionism in a developmental state particularly concerns the large scope and level of intervention in the economy. It also applies to state



ownership and the state’s control of the industry. This can also entail privatisation and the nationalisation of industry, including mines. Richards (1989:9) cautions that nationalisation simply means replacing a private owner with a state one, with little real improvement for society at large. He continues to argue that bureaucratic (governmental) control does not mean that governmental structures suddenly have provided the cure for societal and environmental problems. Also in the case of privatisation, Kerr (2006:14) does not hesitate to call privatisation a “rip-off of the general public for the benefit of the wealthy”. According to him, “Privatisation of public services involves a massive transfer of wealth from taxpayers to the pockets of private business interests”. It is evident that not all types of interventions yield positive results. There may be short-term benefits, but less-desired consequences for the longer term.

As indicated above, the nature of interventions is case-dependent. There are, however, a number of typical options available to governments that aim to intervene in a developmental state. These options include the following:

- *Legislation and regulation*: The focus here is on price control in main utilities such as telecommunications, electricity, gas and rail transport.
- *Direct state provision of goods and services*: This may include bus services, water provisioning, and housing.
- *Fiscal policy intervention*: This entails the level of demand for different products and also the pattern of demand within the economy, which may include indirect taxes, subsidies, tax relief, ‘sin tax’ on damaging substances, and welfare payments.
- *Public awareness*: Examples are labelling on cigarette packages with health warnings to reduce smoking, nutritional information on foods to facilitate healthy eating habits, and information campaigns on the dangers of certain addictions.

The combined scholarly efforts of Edigheji (2007), Hjort (2008), and Fukuyama (2008) revealed three basic dimensions and intents of developmental states. These dimensions and intents are reflected in Table 1 and provide a useful framework to gauge interventions from government.

Table 1: Dimensions and intent of developmental states

Dimensions	Intent
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rule of law ● Democracy ● State building
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic growth ● Facilitation of wealth redistribution
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nation building and national identity ● Social equality ● Social capital

It should be noted that interventionism by the government in a developmental state is multi-faceted and multidimensional (political, economic and social). These dimensions are

supported by governmental intent, all contributing towards the achievement of the state's particular developmental goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPT AND APPLICATIONS

Thiele (2013:1) states that sustainability is one of the very few values – such as democracy and human rights – that enjoys near universal (global) recognition. Issues such as climate change, natural resource depletion, and failing states, brought sustainability to the forefront of the current discourse in governance in general and New Public Management in particular.

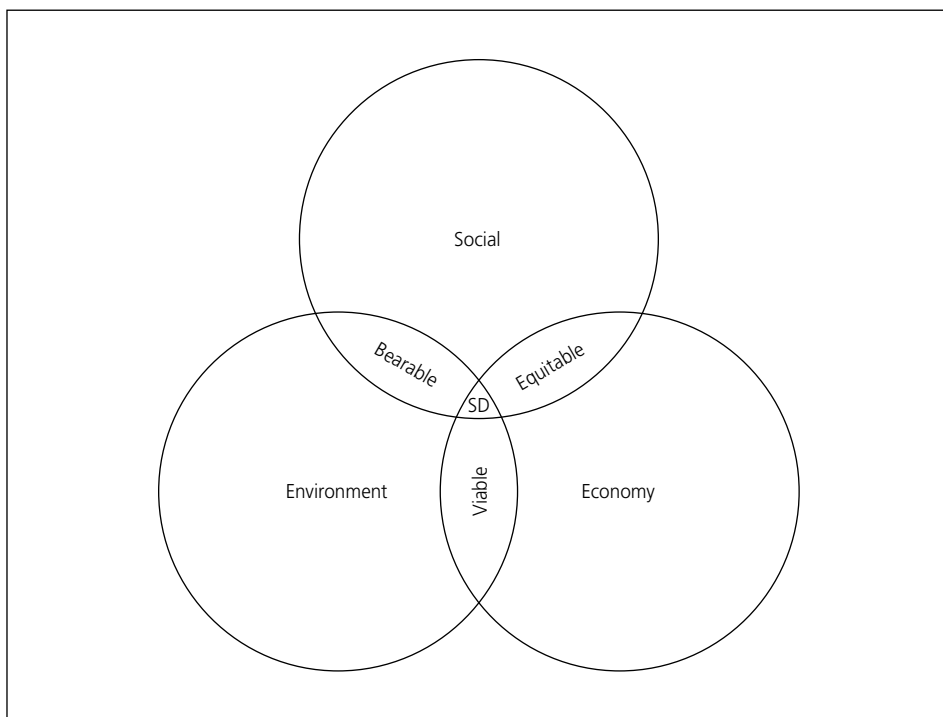
Sustainability is a highly dynamic and multidimensional concept. It has multiple applications, which relate to various dimensions: environmental, material, ecological, social, economic, legal, cultural, political and psychological. These dimensions are highly interrelated and interdependent, which makes an integrated approach from government imperative. The lack of such an integrated approach has serious consequences; governments may intervene in some dimensions (i.e. political and economic) and neglect others. Even though the factors facilitating and constraining the various dimensions of sustainable development are generally known, it follows a largely unpredictable and evolutionary path (Payne & Philips 2010:6). In an increasingly 'global community' where countries are interdependent, people worldwide are affected by the actions or inactions of other countries (Hopper 2012:206). The consequences of political decisions and policies of a particular country transcend borders and affect future generations. These decisions require a combination, an integrated and balanced response, to ecological health, economic welfare, and social empowerment (Thiele 2013:9).

In an environmental and developmental frame, sustainable development implies the least amount of negative consequences on people and on the planet. The concept of sustainable development generally gained popularity during the 1970s with the Club of Rome's report, *Limits to Growth*. This report can be regarded as the foundational document to stimulate thought on sustainability, the environment, and development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) placed the notion of sustainable development firmly on the global agenda with its *Brundtland Report*, published in 1990. The WCED clarified sustainable development as "... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The United Nations' Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) is further regarded as the first major event that coordinated developmental efforts of countries, scientists and social service organisations worldwide. In addition, the United Nations' *Agenda 21* provides a comprehensive list of activities that the world community needs to undertake in order to ensure sustainability.

Figure 1 reflects the three so-called 'pillars' of sustainable development. Where the social dimension intersects with the environment, for example, the key driver should be whether society finds the environment *bearable* to live and prosper in. In the areas where the economic dimension meets the environment, the key question is whether economic growth is *viable* given the declining levels of natural resources. Where the social dimension interconnects with the economy the question is whether prosperity is *equitable*. Sustainable development (SD) lies at the centre, the point where the social, economic and environmental dimensions overlap their boundaries.



Figure 1: The three pillars of sustainable development



Source: Adapted from Adams (2006:2)

The Venn diagram above provides another useful framework to guide governments' interventions in working towards sustainable development. In order to pursue sustainable development, governments should intervene through well-designed strategies and programmes to facilitate a balance between the country's social, economic and ecological needs. Governments should furthermore facilitate cooperation between all stakeholders and role-players involved in the social, environmental and economic arenas in this process.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Especially over the last three decades a significant change became evident in the way issues of sustainable development are approached. For example, it is clear that there is a movement away from development aid and assistance, to countries experiencing development challenges to a better coordinated and integrated 'global compact' (see Thérien & Pouliot 2006:55). Furthermore, top-down decision-making is largely replaced by multi-sector and multi-stakeholder engagement (Rapley 2007). A more systemic and integrated approach is followed rather than a focus on single issues. It is also evident that governments pursue a more proactive, resilience approach, rather than a traditional reactive methodology of 'damage control' (Porter & Van der Linde 1995; Preston 1996). On a global scale, countries thus collaborate increasingly and establish treaties for cooperation to deal with the complexities

brought about by the process of sustainable development. Some of the most prominent initiatives, in no particular order, include the following:

- Earth Summit, 1992 (Rio Declaration)
- Earth Summit and Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21, 1992
- World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002
- Earth Hour
- Environment Performance Index (EPI)
- Sustainable Societies Index (SSI)
- The Happy Planet Index
- Ecological Footprint Analyses (EFA)
- World Economic Forum Competitive Reports
- World Economic Forum Sustainability Reports
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)
- Kyoto Protocol, 1997
- Montreal Protocol, 1997
- World Development Indicators
- World Energy Report
- Human Development Index
- World Watch Institute
- Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reports
- Millennium Development Goals, 2000

Regarding the African continent, specific governmental interventions in the context of sustainable development can be pointed out:

- The Monrovia Strategy, 1979
- The Lagos Plan of Action, 1980
- Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986–1990 (APPER)
- United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD), 1986
- The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), 1989
- The African Charter of Popular Participation for Development (ACPPD), 1990
- The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF), 1991
- The Cairo Agenda for Action, 1995
- The African Union (AU) Programme for Sustainable Development, 2002
- NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), 2011

From these lists of interventions it becomes evident that a wide variety of initiatives are already taken – some with significant successes, and others with limited effectiveness. In the following section the focus shifts to particular interventions taken by the South African Government to facilitate and regulate sustainable development, and to act as catalyst for this process. As indicated above, the circumstances and environmental conditions of countries differ. Thus an integrated and coordinated approach should be followed to address global environmental challenges. South Africa is no exception to this rule.



GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONISM IN SOUTH AFRICA: TOWARD A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Global society increasingly faces serious world-scale problems, such as climate change, pollution, financial crises, depletion of natural resources, and poverty. Under such difficult circumstances, each country recognises that collaboration and coordination are crucial for an adequate response. This also applies to South Africa where the government partakes in global initiatives aimed at sustainable development, as highlighted above.

As stated previously, a government's interventions within the context of a developmental state enjoy particular significance. South Africa has committed itself to building a developmental state. The aim is to facilitate economic development by mobilising the resources of society and directing these towards realising the goals set out in the National Development Plan: Vision 2030, as well as the State of the Nation Address (SONA 2013). The African National Congress (ANC) as the ruling party in Government, has expressed the desire to transform South Africa into a 'developmental state' with the 'people's contract' as a prominent feature of this transformation process (Edigheji 2007:1; Duvenhage 2009:12). To be developmental implies equity, justice, enabling a rapid growing economy and improving the quality of life of all South African citizens (Edigheji 2007:3). Edigheji (2007:7) adds that the capacity of Government is critical as the formulator and implementer of the state's developmental agenda. Furthermore, Government identified 12 Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) outcomes for 2009–2014. These outcomes have measurable outputs and optimal activities, and form a coherent developmental agenda. The aim is to transform South Africa into a developmental state capable of delivering effective basic services and national development (The Presidency 2010). It also is evident that South Africa needs a comprehensive response to deal with sustainability in a developmental state context in terms of the three dimensions (i.e. "pillars"), namely social, environmental and economic.

In her seminal article, "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System" Donella Meadows (2010) assessed the power that points of leverage exert to create change in a system. Meadows (2010:42) argues that governments have to "push in the right direction; small actions can make big differences". In the same vein the following sections in this article explore some of the social, economic and environmental leverage points of the South African Government in the context of sustainable development. A leverage point indicates where the least amount of energy input yields superior outcomes; thus in nature a sustainable economy in society. These points are meant to stimulate economic prosperity, social justice and ecological sustainability. The corresponding interventions should be seen against the backdrop of the Government's agenda pointing the way towards a developmental state.

Social interventions

The South African Government plays a significant role as catalyst for and regulator of sustainable development. As a catalyst, Government's role is to facilitate social development particularly by setting policy parameters, allocating and utilising resources, and establishing global networks and partnerships. South Africa boasts an extensive social welfare system that comprises a variety of social grants and transfers. It services approximately 16,7 million people per month from an estimated population of 52 million people (National Treasury

2014:89). The country also spends a significant amount on education and health care, with 6,9% and 4,1% of GDP respectively having been budgeted for the 2014/5 fiscal year (Burger 2014).

In developing countries such as South Africa, it is usually the poorest of the poor that suffers the most due to hazardous developments. In this way the poor are continually disadvantaged by market-driven environmental choices. Often developers purchase sites in destitute areas due to the low cost and then start “dirty” development in the area. To deal with these and related issues, the South African Government has developed a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework to address the various dimensions and aspects of development in the country. Below is a brief list of some of the most significant pieces of legislation in this regard.

- Petroleum Products Act 120 of 1977
- Agricultural Pests Act 36 of 1983
- Agricultural Products Standards Act 119 of 1990
- Development Facilitation Act 67 of 1995
- Genetically Modified Organisms Act 15 of 1997
- National Water Act 36 of 1998
- National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998
- Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998
- National Forests Act 84 of 1998
- National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999
- Meat Safety Act 40 of 2000
- Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002
- National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004
- National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act 39 of 2004
- National Energy Regulator Act 40 of 2004
- National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act 24 of 2008

It is evident that South Africa has a comprehensive statutory framework to deal with the most significant dimensions and issues regarding sustainable development. The capacity and competency of Government to operationalise these policies successfully, however, do not always live up to expectations. Measured in terms of the appropriate vision, commitment, policies, institutional capacity, and the maturity of the democracy, the delivery of a democratic developmental state at best still must be considered ‘a work in progress’ (Gumede 2009:8). Given the country’s history and pressing developmental challenges such as the divide between the poor and affluent, one may argue that the country is still *en route* to become developmental (see Shawa, Cooperb & Antkiewicz 2007; Burger 2014).

Economic interventions

According to Nobel Prize winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz (2015), a successful South African economy requires the government’s intervention. He points out that no great economic success in history has been achieved without direct government intervention. This provides a variety of rationales for a government’s intervention, for example, economic stability, allocation of resources, distribution of income and wealth, regulation of monopolies



and oligopolies, and externalities. Stiglitz (2015) further asserts that the recent international financial crisis revealed flaws in Adam Smith's argument that markets are 'self-directing' and 'self-regulating'. As Stiglitz contends, "If shareholders cannot hold their companies to account then it is left to government to be the ringleader!"

These arguments support the need for the South African Government to intervene in the economy by means of industrial policy, regulation and a wider variety of monetary tools. Government should coordinate the various levers of the economy. This means promoting development through subsidies and incentives, fixing of interest rates, foreign exchange rates, and facilitating industrial competitiveness. In this regard the establishment of the National Planning Commission to direct government interventions is an important step forward. Government also aims to address inequality and gross national income by facilitating economic stability (Heller 2001:134; Gumede 2009:95).

In addition, the South African Government has made significant strides to convert to a 'green economy' (Salamon & Anheier 1997:9). A green economy may offer a developmental path that reduces carbon dependency, promotes the efficient usage of resources and energy, and lessens environmental degradation. The green economy refers to two inter-linked developmental outcomes for the South African economy. On the one hand, it means a growing economic activity (which leads to investment, jobs and competitiveness) in the green-industry sector; on the other hand, it implies a shift in the economy as a whole towards cleaner industries and sectors with a low environmental impact as opposed to its socio-economic impact (Barbier 2010). For this purpose, in 2011, the government entered into the Green Economic Accord, which aims to create 300 000 jobs in the next 10 years through investment. A green economy is further prioritised as one of the key economic drivers in the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2009–2014 (Outcome 4 and 10), the President's State of the Nation Address (Feb. 2015), as well as the Minister of Finance's budget speech (2015). All government departments are to develop programmes that aim to:

- benefit the environment, economy and society;
- promote growth while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
- minimise waste and inefficient use of natural resources;
- maintain biodiversity; and
- strengthen energy security.

Other specific (socio-)economic interventions include the following:

- *Provincial Growth and Development Strategies*: These are critical instruments to guide and coordinate the allocation of national, provincial and local resources and investments from the private sector to achieve sustainable developmental outcomes in provinces.
- *Integrated Development Planning and Community-based Development*: Designed by municipalities, these plans must incorporate the development needs of all communities.
- *The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF)*: These are statements of Government's strategic intent regarding development and economic vision.
- *The Stellenbosch Resolutions, 2002*: This refers to the ANC's Policy Conference during which direct interventionist and developmental approaches were emphasised. Outcomes of the Conference include the establishment of the *Mining Charter* (2004) and the adoption of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003.

- *The Polokwane Resolutions, 2007*: The ANC's 2007 Polokwane Conference adopted a series of resolutions aimed at increased state intervention. The Polokwane resolutions saw a radical departure from conservative macro-economic policies, in favour of developmental and interventionist policies.
- *The New Growth Path*: Designed in 2011, the aim of this strategy is for the state to accept a leading role in directing investment and providing investment incentives (NGP 2011). The emphasis is, therefore, largely on the interventionist state which directs economic activity.
- *National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD)*: The Framework is premised on five strategic priorities: enhancing systems for integrated planning and implementation; sustaining current ecosystems and using natural resources efficiently; working towards a 'green economy'; building sustainable communities; and responding effectively to climate change.
- *The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS)*: This strategy aims to improve opportunities for development, as well as the general well-being of people living in deep rural areas.
- *Local Economic Development*: In order to adhere to their developmental mandate, local governments have to act as catalysts for opportunities of local socio-economic development. From the perspective of sustainable development it is critical that municipalities strike a healthy and delicate balance between the economic and developmental needs of the community and that of the environment. This applies especially to areas such as spatial planning, resource management, strategies to protect the environment, as well as to dispose of waste and control pollution efficiently.

Environmental interventionism

Since 1992, clear signs emerge that the South African Government is committed to facilitate sustainable development within the country. Two international conventions were ratified in 1992. The first one was the Basel Convention (ratified in May 1994), and the second the Convention on Biological Diversity (ratified in September 1995). Over and above these two conventions, South Africa signed the Convention on Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the World Heritage Convention.

Various Agenda 21-related initiatives have been taken in South Africa under the auspices of the Committee for Sustainable Development, established in 1997. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helped South Africa to adopt the UNDP Capacity 21 programme. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism acted as champion for this programme. The Department, with the assistance of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives and USAID, organised an African Regional Seminar in 1995, with the theme "Towards Urban Reconstruction and Development". The Seminar focused primarily on the experiences of countries outside Africa that also have implemented Local Agenda 21 initiatives. Specific environmental initiatives include the following:

- The construction of a \$21.8-billion, 5 000 MW solar park in the Northern Cape Province as part of an impetus to stimulate the industrialised economy and reduce poverty without increasing the carbon footprint.



- The World Bank granted Eskom a \$3.75-billion loan, both to help build the country's largest coal-fired plant, Medupi, and to finance renewable energy projects such as solar-power plants and wind farms.
- The electricity utility agency, Eskom, has implemented a solar water-heating programme, in which consumers who replace electric geysers with solar-powered ones are given a rebate.
- The Government launched a drive to install low-energy lighting in its buildings, which will save approximately \$845-million in electricity costs per annum.
- Private sector investment in renewable energy plants is encouraged through feed-in tariffs. According to the World Wind Energy Association, South Africa is the first country in Africa to introduce a feed-in tariff for wind energy.
- Government also introduced an emissions tax (Sept 2010) on new passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. South Africa is reported to be the first country in the world to include the latter in such a regime, which aims to encourage individuals and businesses to buy smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to outline governments' interventionism regarding sustainable development by focusing on the South African Government. It is evident that within the framework of a developmental-state agenda, the South African Government has designed a comprehensive response involving particular interventions in the social, economic and environmental dimensions associated with sustainable development. It is further clear that South Africa partakes in various international treaties, protocols and interventions to facilitate sustainable development, whilst the government nationally also has established a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework. The capacity and competency of Government to implement these responses and frameworks effectively are, however, not always *on par* with international good governance practices. Improved institutional capacity and effective political leadership can be singled out to support initiatives by government departments. Such initiatives will enable the departments to design and execute programmes that can further sustainable development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, W.M. 2006. *The Future of Sustainability: Re-thinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*. Report of the IUCN Renowned Thinkers Meeting, 29–31 January. New York. Available at: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:wP5za40ec5YJ:cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_future_of_sustainability.pdf+&cd=1&hl=af&ct=clnk&gl=za (Accessed on 2 July 2015).
- Barbier, E.B. 2010. *A Global Green New Deal: Rethinking the Economic Recovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bermant, G., Kelman, H.C. and Warwick, D.P. 1978. *The Ethics of Social Intervention*. London: Hemisphere.
- Bora, B., Lloyd, P.J. and Pangestu, M. 2000. *Industrial Policy and the WTO. Policy Issues in International Trade and Commodities*. Study Series No. 6. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. New York, NY: United Nations.

- Burger, P. 2014. How suitable is a 'developmental state' to tackle unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa? Presidential Address at the Biennial Conference of the Economic Society of South Africa, September 2013. Bloemfontein (Unpublished paper).
- Chomsky, N. 1996. Free Market Fantasies: Capitalism in the Real World. Paper presented at Harvard University, 13 April (Unpublished Paper).
- Costanza, R. and Kubiszewski, I. (Eds.) 2014. *Creating a Sustainable and Desirable Future: Insights from 45 Global Thought Leaders*. London: World Scientific.
- Duvenhage, A. 2009. The ANC and the National Democratic Revolution: Political and Strategic Perspectives. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe, spesiale uitgawe, Huldiging: T.T. Cloete*. 49(4):1-23.
- Edigheji O. (Ed). 2010. *Constructing a Democratic Developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges*. Pretoria: HSRC Press.
- Fukuyama, Y.F 2004. *State-building: Governance and World Order in the Twenty-first Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Fukuyama, F. 2008. What Do We Know about the Relationship between the Political and Economic Dimensions of Development? In North, D.D., Acemoglu, F., Fukuyama, F. and Rodrik, D. (Eds.). 2008. *Governance, Growth, and Development Decision-making. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*. New York, NY: The World Bank.
- Gumede, W. 2009. *Delivering the Democratic Developmental State in South Africa*. Development Planning Division. Working Paper Series No.9, Midrand: DBSA.
- Heller, P. 2001. Moving the State: The Politics of Decentralisation in Kerala, South Africa and Porto Alegre. *Politics and Society*, 29(1):131-163.
- Hjort, K. 2008. Competence Development in the Public Sector: Development, or Dismantling of Professionalism? *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 9(1):40-49.
- Hopper, P. 2012. *Understanding Development*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Huffman, J. 2013. *Private Property and State Power: Philosophical Justification*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kerr, G. 2006. Privatisation: the rip-off of public resources. Available at: <http://www.shelltosea.com/node/991>. (Accessed on 8 April 2015).
- Koehler, G. and Chopra, D. 2014. *Development and Welfare Policy in South Asia*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kropotkin, P. and Woodcock, G. 1996. *Evolution and Environment*. London: Black Rose.
- Leftwich, A. 1996. On the Primacy of Politics in Development. In Leftwich, A. (Ed.). 1996. *Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Leftwich, A. 2007. *States of Development: On the Primacy of Politics in Development*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- McClelland, J.S. 1996. *A History of Western Political Thought*. London: Routledge.
- Meadows, D. 2010. Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System. *Solutions*, 1(1):41-49.
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005. Living Beyond Our Means: Natural Assets and Human Well-Being. Available at: www.maweb.org/en/BoardStatement.aspx (Accessed on 5 April 2015).
- National Treasury. 2013 and 2014. *Budget Review*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Parton, N. 1994. Problematics of Government, (Post-)Modernity and Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 24(1):9-32.
- Payne, A. and Phillips, N. 2010. *Development*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pearson, F.S. 1974. Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes. *International Studies Quarterly*, 18(3):259-290.



- Polanyi, K. 1944. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Porter, M.E. and Van der Linde, C. 1995. Toward a New Conception of The Environment-competitiveness Relationship. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 9(1):97–118.
- Preston, P.W. 1996. *Development Theory: An Introduction to the Analysis of Complex Change*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rapley, J. 2007. *Understanding Development*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Richards, V. (ed.). 1989. *Neither Nationalisation nor Privatisation: Selections from the Anarchist Journal Freedom 1945–1950*. London: Freedom Press.
- Rose, N. and Miller, P. 1992. Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 43(2):173–205.
- Salamon, L.M. and Anheier, H.K. 1997. The Third World's Third Sector in Comparative Perspective. Working papers of The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, No. 24, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies.
- Shawa, T.M., Cooperb, A.F. and Antkiewicz, A. 2007. Global and/or Regional Development at the Start of the 21st Century? China, India and (South) Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 28(7):1255–1270.
- South Africa. The Presidency. 2010. Measurable Performance and Accountable Delivery: Developing the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2009–2014 into Outcomes with Measurable Outputs and Optimal Activities, January. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa. 2011. The New Growth Path. Available at: <http://www.gov.za/about-government/government-programmes/new-growth-path> (Accessed on 2 February 2015).
- Stiglitz, J.E. 2003. *Globalisation and its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Stiglitz, J.E. 2015. The Case for Government Intervention: SA's Economy Needs Government Intervention to be Successful. Available at: <http://www.moneyweb.co.za/archive/the-case-for-government-intervention/> (Accessed on 8 April 2015).
- Thérien, J.P. and Pouliot, V. 2006. The Global Compact: Shifting the Politics of International Development? *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 12(1):55–75.
- Thiele, L.P. 2013. *Sustainability*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- United Nations. 1992. *Implementation of Agenda 21: Review of Progress Made Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*. Information Provided by the Government of South Africa to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 7–25 April 1997. New York, NY: UN.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 2011. Towards a Green Economy. Version 02.11.2011. New York. Available at: www.unep.org/greeneconomy/. (Accessed on 8 April 2015).
- Van Dijk, H.G. and Croucamp, P.A. 2007. The Social Origins of the Developmental State: Reflections on South Africa and its Local Sphere of Government. *Journal of Public Administration*, 42(7):664–675.
- Vermeulen, W.J.V. and Kok, M.T.J. 2012. Government Interventions in Sustainable Supply Chain Governance: Experience in Dutch Front-running Cases. *Ecological Economics*, 83:183–196.
- Wade, G. 2003. *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*. Washington, DC: Princeton University Press.

AUTHOR'S CONTACT DETAILS

Professor Gerrit Van der Waldt is Research Professor: Public Governance attached to the Focus Area: Social Transformation of North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).

Contact details

Prof G van der Waldt

Research Professor: Public Governance

Focus Area: Social Transformation

North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)

Private Bag X6001

Potchefstroom

2520

Tel: (018) 299-1633

Cell: 082 4511 752

Fax: (018) 299-4254

E-mail: Gerrit.vanderwaldt@nwu.ac.za

