

# BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION

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## ABSTRACT

African cities are witnessing rapid urbanisation rates, presenting city and regional governments with complexities that demand urgent responses. The prevailing trend is to build new large-scale projects aimed at mass delivery, which can often exacerbate spatial fragmentation. Simultaneously, there is a policy push towards compact and integrated cities. These dual pressures challenge practitioners to build integrated and functional cities that generate rapid residential and economic growth at scale and with limited financing and skills.

In South Africa, there are numerous policies and programmes aimed at spatial integration, such as the Catalytic Land Development Programme, TODs, nodal developments, and transport corridors. The intention of these is to target public infrastructure in key nodes that will both accommodate lower-income communities into high value areas and attract private investments. The result of this approach, however, has been limited and big questions are raised as to why and what can be done to unblock delivery.

At the same time as the limited delivery by the government, there are positive trends and shifts in the property, finance and services sectors and burgeoning small-scale and locally-based entrepreneurial delivery. The boom in densities along public transport routes, the growth of the township and inner-city developers, and the increase in affordable housing (often by traditional commercial developers) in strategic locations like Sandton all pose significant opportunities.

Effective policy implementation hinges on feasibility of the large scale interventions, realism of what is likely and possible and tapping into the broad spectrum of 'markets' and forms of delivery contributing to city restructuring.

This shift means gearing up the public sector to support and facilitate development and foster innovations and creative implementation strategies. A different set of expertise and capacity is needed, one that understands markets, development, financing, investments, and partnerships. Integrating cities is about building communities, economies, and healthy urban environments. A responsive and skilled public sector is required to harness our society's diverse and dynamic expertise, resources, and drive.