

LEARNING BRIEF #1

Spatial Planning and Integrated Development Planning

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A call for a critical assessment of the local government planning framework, particularly the integrated development plan meant to deliver urban spatial, social and economic patterns that are in line with the country's democratic vision

Introduction

It is no secret that the spatial patterns of South Africa today still reflect that of colonial and apartheid planning. This despite the fact that the victory over the apartheid state in 1994 set policy makers, in all spheres of life, the mammoth task of overhauling the social, political, economic and cultural institutions of South Africa (Asmal, 2001). The aim was to bring these in line with the imperatives of a new democratic order. With this in mind, the first generation of post democracy urban planners and managers, politicians and policy-makers, responsible for urban development were faced with a task of reconstructing a spatially segregated, highly fragmented and dispersed urban society.

Literature points to a fact that during the transition period from apartheid to democracy, and in the restructuring of local government, limited integrated development planning took place (Dewar, 1998; Donaldson, 2011; Asmal, 2001). During this transition period, according to Dewar, policies were formulated 'within discrete national line-function departments, with little reference to the activities in other departments' (1998: 369); and this approach contributed to a fragmented and distorted urban planning and development phase. Dewar identifies the outcome of this period as the policies of certain departments conflicting with one another, which resulted in a confused and cumbersome planning system.

The Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) at the time, was the anchor policy document of the post apartheid government with which it aimed to address the apartheid legacy. The Urban Development Framework (UDF) released in 1997 by the then Department of Housing was its interpretation and expression of its mandate emanating from the RDP. The implementation of the UDF focused on four key programmes:

- a. Integrating the city
- b. Improving housing and infrastructure
- c. Promoting urban economic development
- d. Creating institutions for delivery

Integration in the context of the UDF was perceived to be achieved through a combination of compaction and integration with development corridors and transport routes with mixed land-use along these routes. Compaction policies promoted a range of principles, including amongst others, urban regeneration and revitalisation of the inner city, the prevention of urban sprawl, the promotion of higher densities (mainly residential), support for mixed land-use activities, the promotion of public transport nodes, and the improvement of access between employment, housing and services (Donaldson, 2011).

Numerous other planning related pieces of legislation have since been introduced most of which locate planning and land-use management within local government. The Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000) is the primary legislation that outlines municipal planning responsibilities, along with the relatively new Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) (No.16 of 2013) and the Housing Act (No.107 of 1997). With all these developments in legislation, the words of Mills (1989) cited by Donaldson (2001), that the 'position of the black majority and the basic features of their living environments remain unchanged since the colonial era, the only real changes to have occurred are in the aesthetic and technological details of their housing' still ring true (Mills 1989:66).

Mills could have written these words today. Much has changed in South Africa in the political and policy environment, but in black townships, not much has changed in the creation of sustainable urban designs.

This brief aims to initiate a conversation on the role that is to be played by integrated municipal planning in reversing the current spatial patterns in the country. Without so much as offering solutions, the paper aims to get South Africa talking about the persistent challenges, and hopes that, in those conversations, solutions will emerge.

Presenting the problem

Local government is the sphere tasked with land-use management and spatial planning. This has recently been confirmed in the Constitutional Court Judgement in City of Johannesburg vs Gauteng Development Tribunal ((2010 (9) BCLR 859 (CC)) and more clearly in SPLUMA. As municipalities assume greater responsibility for achieving a broader transformative agenda in terms of land-use management, the implication is that planning needs to be more strategic and cross-sectoral (integrated). As a result, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is the key planning tool used to deliver this strategic and cross-sectoral planning vision in local government.

The Municipal Systems Act mandates municipalities to produce five-year IDPs that are reviewed every year. The content of these IDPs must include a long-term vision, a situation analysis,

development priorities, a Spatial Development Framework and three year financial plans and budgets. The IDP is then reviewed annually, taking into account any changes in the global, national or local ecological-social-economic environment and new opportunities that have emerged over the recent past; as well as any lessons that can be drawn from implementing previous projects (Eglin & Ngamlana, 2015).

Figure 1¹ below denotes the municipal planning framework and the centrality of the IDP within that framework.

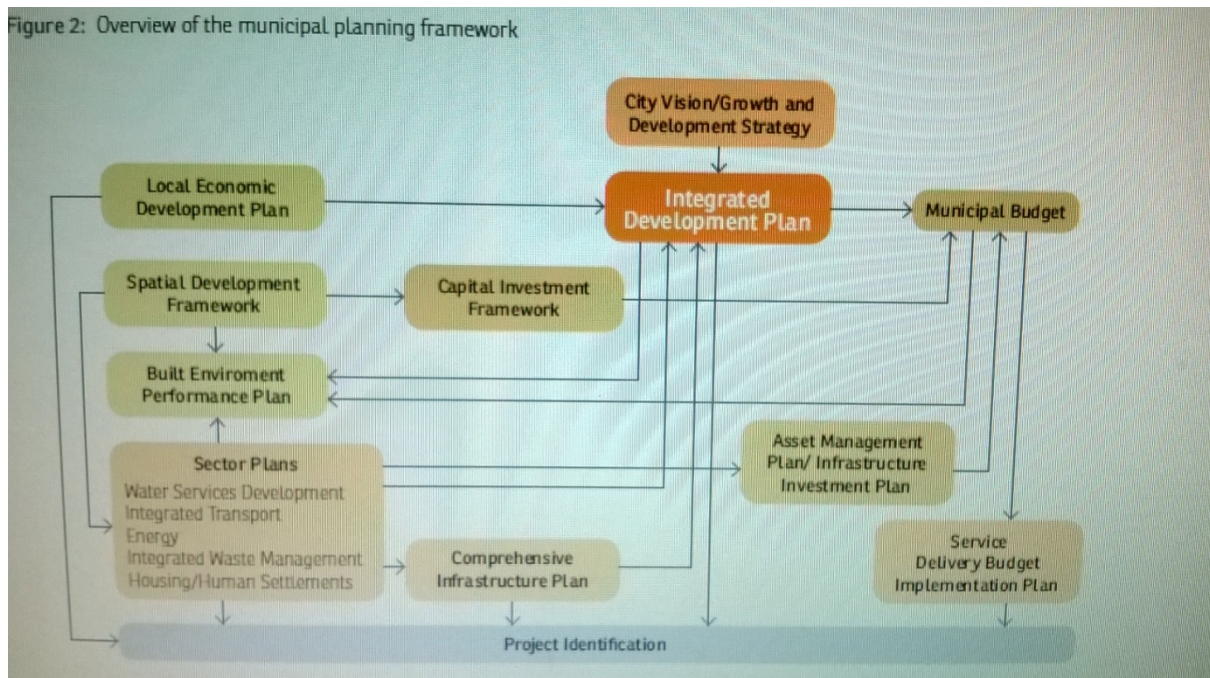


Figure 1: overview of the municipal planning framework

The figure above points to the existence of a complex planning framework in local government and that all planning converges at the level of the IDP. While the IDP is conceptually a useful framework around which more responsive, integrated and strategic development planning and implementation can be achieved, we caution that uncritically using the IDP as the ultimate expression of the development trajectory of a municipal space may be dangerous for the following reasons:

a. The assumption that a good planning process will lead to good spatial transformation outcomes

Underlying the Municipal Systems Act is an assumption that the IDP in the manner it is conceptualised will address the country's apartheid spacial legacy. With this view, development planners are pre-occupied with integrating sector plans and improving public participation into the IDP. These planners operate in blind faith that spatial transformation outcomes will be achieved if the IDP process is thorough, transparent and democratic. However, as the last 20 years have shown, the outcomes of even well developed IDPs have consistently failed to alter the spatial,

¹ Figure copied from a paper by Graham, Jooste and Palmer published by the South African Cities Network, South Africa, 2014

physical and economic landscape of many towns and townships in South Africa. More attention needs to be given to the need for planners and others to systematically intervene in the spatial and political economy to foster spatial transformation.

b. The disjuncture between planning and implementation

Research continues to point to a functional disjuncture between planning and implementation². Graham, Jooste and Palmer (2014) conclude that at the levels below the IDP, sector plans are still largely drawn up independently of one another. The level of integration is determined by the degree to which municipal departments talk to one another, which in turn is a function of the municipal structure and the corporate culture of each municipality. The case studies they present show that while all the statutory planning may be in place, the processes fall short of achieving inter-departmental integration. The weaknesses of spatial plans to influence spatial patterns of investment compounds the problem even more.

c. The rigidity of the IDP approach

The assertion of the IDP as the core development plan in local municipalities robs municipalities of opportunities to be more open to other adaptive planning approaches that acknowledge limited foresight, are responsive to contextual changes and adaptive to lessons learned from implementation. Within the IDP, there is limited space and opportunities for municipalities and others to test and experiment with different development planning and implementation approaches. While the IDP is conceptually a useful framework around which more responsive development planning and implementation can be achieved, over the years it has proven challenging to achieve this in practice. As a result, the IDP has become yet another legislative requirement that municipalities 'tick off' and it has failed to deliver a framework and a process within which ongoing adaptation, learning and emergence can occur (Hummelbrunner & Jones, 2013).

d. The lack of meaningful citizen participation in planning processes

A major legislated vehicle through which citizens can participate in the development of IDPs is the ward committee system. The failure of the ward committee system to facilitate citizen participation, in the IDP and other planning and implementation processes, has been recorded in detail (Afeis-corporplan 2013, Ngamlana & Mathoho 2013). Examples of identified failures are that municipal councils do not take ward committees and their concerns seriously; ward committees are not provided with information to be able to make meaningful input in councils on critical issues affecting the communities they represent; and ward committees are highly politicised in the sense that there is a struggle for access to power and resources within ward committee structures (Afeis-corporplan 2013).

This lack of a meaningful engagement by citizens in the IDP development processes results in poor buy-in of the IDP by local citizens and a missed opportunity to move towards the Constitution's vision of co-creation where 'government is based on the will of the people' (Republic of South Africa

² Graham, Jooste and Palmer's research on the application of the municipal planning framework in three metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, published by the South African Cities Network, South Africa, 2014

1996: preamble). It makes no sense to continue to base IDP processes on a participatory mechanism whose legitimacy has been widely questioned.

e. The lack of participatory monitoring and evaluation processes

There seems to be a general understanding by many planners involved in the IDP process that once an IDP is developed, there is no longer a need to involve citizens and other stakeholders in its implementation and monitoring. Presently, there are very few mechanisms to facilitate shared responsibility in IDP implementation (Ngamlana, 2010). Shared responsibility, however, does not imply that government shifts its statutory obligation over to citizens and other stakeholders, but rather allows for the creation of a space for citizen's energies, experiences and knowledge to be utilised in IDP implementation and monitoring.

f. The lack of inter governmental coordination in the IDP

The lack of a coordinated approach in planning between provincial departments, district municipality and local municipality results in fragmented planning, resource allocation and implementation. The autonomous nature of the different spheres of government and ineffectiveness of the legislative provisions meant to achieve inter-governmental connectedness impacts the country's ability to achieve integrated planning negatively. Afesis-corplan's has witnessed in its work, conflicting plans between district and local municipalities and between local municipalities and key provincial departments who must implement supportive processes in the realization of municipal plans.

The call we are making

The planning complexities in local government call for far more thoughtful planning approaches; approaches that do not just follow procedures that have been tried in the past, but approaches that try and do things differently. Afesis-corplan believes that these planning complexities call for, amongst others, the following:

- Maturity in municipal administration;
- Effective inter-departmental communication;
- Greater alignment of capital spending and political priorities;
- Effective leadership; and
- Meaningful engagement of citizens in planning implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

While we (as a country) continue to implement the current IDP and other planning and implementation tools³, we need to do so quite mindful of the limitations thereof. We need to seek innovative solutions to the complexities associated with the creation of transformed spatial landscapes. Civil society, academics and policy-makers need to compare notes in ascertaining whether the current planning framework, in the current environment in local government, will

³ Afesis-corplan offered suggestions on how the IDP could best be conceptualized within the Back to Basics approach of Cogta in a learning brief titled:which can be accessed on www.afesis.org.za

deliver the vision of a post democratic spatial vision for South Africa. A vision where people are living in transformed settlements – close to and integrated with social and economic opportunities. In this paper, we moot that the problem lies with both planning and implementation.

Furthermore, in understanding what hampers spatial transformation, we need to understand how the IDP is positioned to address the challenges uncovered and whether there shouldn't be other mechanisms introduced at local level to achieve this. We also need to understand the extent of political influence in municipal development planning and implementation which in turn direct spending and planning priorities of sector departments. The extent to which this influence can be minimized as the country's voting patterns shift remains unclear.

The existing market economy also has huge implications in shaping and guiding spatial investment decisions into the future. As a country we need to see how land-use planning can be used to guide and influence private sector decision making?

Finally, mechanisms for citizen engagement in local government are an issue that had evaded South Africa. While this may be the case, as it stands, the IDP envisages citizen participation in the planning phase only, little thought has been given to sustained participation in the implementation and monitoring phases, robbing it of an opportunity to facilitate co-creation and networked solutions.

In conclusion, we contend that the IDP will not lead to transformed urban spatial patterns if we continue to implement it as we have in the past. Attention needs to be directed towards improving, for example, public participation processes and intergovernmental relations, as well as allowing more flexibility, within a clearly defined framework, in how the IDP is implemented at the local level. So therefore, unless parallel attention is given by all role-players to what can be done through political and economic processes to shape future settlement spatial patterns, the IDP, even if it is improved as suggested above, will still not achieve transformed spatial patterns.

This learning brief has only touched the surface of the deep reflection and discussion that is needed in relation to using the IDP process to significantly alter apartheid spatial patterns. We look forward to taking this reflection and discussion forward in future.

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ABOUT AFESIS-CORPLAN

Afesis-corplan is an urban development NGO based in East London. Its work is focused on re-activating active citizens, and the attainment of good local governance. Afesis-corplan has a long history of having worked in local governance, sustainable settlements and access to land, developing and testing new and innovative models. For more information on Afesis-corplan, visit www.afesis.org.za

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