

LEARNING BRIEF #2

Spatial Transformation and the SDF

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Introduction

Apartheid spatial patterns persist. More than 20 years after the birth of a new democracy, the majority of black people continue to live far from jobs, shops, institutions of higher learning and other urban opportunities. The first two paragraphs of chapter 8 of the National Development Plan (2013:260) say it well.

"Where people live and work matters. Apartheid planning consigned the majority of South Africans to places far away from work, where services could not be sustained, and where it was difficult to access the benefits of society and participate in the economy.

"A great deal of progress has been made since 1994, but South Africa is far from achieving the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) goals of 'breaking down apartheid geography through land reform, more compact cities, decent public transport and the development of industries and services that use local resources and/or meet local needs'. Despite reforms to the planning system, colonial and apartheid legacies still structure space across different scales."

In short: our cities have not been spatially transformed. (See annexure 1 for more discussion on what is meant by spatial transformation). The reasons for this lack of spatial transformation can be broken down to economic, political and technocratic.

- Economically, the new democratic South Africa has not fundamentally changed who owns the land and economic assets of this country. For those who were historically denied access to land this means that they have to compete with those who have been able, over decades, to build up a strong land and asset portfolio to purchase any well located land. Cheaper more affordable land is by definition land that is less well located.
- Politically, some claim that there is no political will to make the government interventions necessary to transform our urban areas. Those in control of the land and economic assets continue to influence significant influence on those who control the levers of the state.
- Technocratically, the tools at governments disposal to guide and influence public and private investment decisions have not been effective for the transformational task required.

This knowledge brief unpacks in more detail the more technocratic reasons for the lack of spatial transformation, and leaves the economic and political reasons for another day and for others to unpack. The brief summarises and provides a framework that municipalities can use when thinking about what technical tools they have at their disposal to achieve spatial transformation. Without

understanding what tools a municipality has and how to use these tools in pursuit of spatial transformation, it is likely that municipalities will blindly continue using the same old tools they have used in the past in the same old ways, leading to the same old settlements and spatial patterns.

Unpacking the Framework

Settlements develop, grow and are modified (i.e. transformed) through a combination of public and private investments in infrastructure and buildings in space. On the public side, the state has a big role to play in determining future development paths through determining and investing in new and upgraded road networks, new and upgraded educational and health facilities, and determining and acquiring land for low income housing developments. The private sector responds to this public investment, building shops closer to markets, industries near transport interchanges, and building higher income houses in areas of high amenity value and close to good schools etc.

When making their land development decisions the private sector responds to where the state has already invested, it responds to any fiscal or regulatory incentives or disincentives provided by the state, and the private sector takes into account any recommendations made by government as to where government would like them to invest. In this sense the private sector is like a donkey being guided by its owner (the state) along an identified path through the construction of fences and water troughs, being offered carrot and stick incentives and disincentives, and being verbally coxed to move in a certain direction.

In effect the government has a set of three tools at its disposal to guide investment decisions of the private sector and thereby work towards spatial transformation.

- Spatial investment tools (the fences and water troughs): The government, through its spatial planning processes decides where to locate bus routes, public schools, clinics etc and leaves it up to the private sector to respond and locate their activities relative to this public investment framework.
- Financial and regulatory tools (the carrots and sticks): With regard to financial and regulatory incentives (the carrots), government is able, for example, to provide tax breaks or financial subsidies to the private sector if they develop in certain place and in certain ways. Government also sets rules and regulations and disciplines the private sector by using fines and extra taxes (the sticks) if they develop and do things that are against these rules.
- Awareness raising (loud-hailer): The government can explain to the private sector and the public, using proposed plans, guidelines and policy position papers, why they want the private sector and communities to locate and act in certain ways, leaving it up to the private sector to accept or reject these recommendations.

In reality, government will use a combination of these spatial, fiscal and regulatory, and awareness raising tools.

The following provides more specific examples of what actions government can take:

- Investment tools
 - Invest in roads and public transport infrastructure in certain areas where it wants development to occur.
 - Build new and upgrade existing public education, health and other facilities and areas in areas where development is to be encouraged.
 - Buy up and make available well located land for low income housing, recognising that well located land can be land that is well located now as well as well located in future (e.g. along a future public transport corridor).
- Regulatory/administrative and fiscal tools
 - Proactively zone strategically identified land for certain types of development (e.g. low income housing), allowing certain types of development you want in certain areas and making it harder for people to get land use changes in areas you do not want such development to occur.
 - Use the Spatial Development Framework (SDF) plan to guide decision making when making decisions on whether to grant or reject new land development applications.
 - Increase property taxes and/or fees where you don't want development to occur and reduce taxes and/or fees where you do want development to occur.
- Awareness raising tools.
 - Facilitate planning processes and host discussions and conversations on what plans the municipality and society would like to see.
 - Organize training courses for government and communities on spatial planning and spatial literacy.

The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) plan plays a very important role in most of these interventions. The SDF can either be used proactively or reactively to guide spatial investment decisions.

Proactively, the municipality uses the SDF in deciding where new infrastructure projects are to be located and/or deciding which private sector (and other) land the municipality should to purchase (either through market mechanisms or through expropriation). The SDF informs the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the location of projects that emerge from this plan. Reactively, the municipality uses the SDF when responding to private sector development requests. The SDF is used to make informed decisions about approving or rejecting any changes to the zoning or land use management scheme as part of any new land development applications. The SDF informs land use change decisions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that municipalities have not fully understood what tools they have at their disposal and how to use these tools in pursuit of spatial transformation. In order for spatial transformation to be achieved, municipalities (an government generally) needs to give far more attention to the development and use of SDF plans to proactively and reactively inform and guide public and private spatial investment decisions. Without the effective use of SDF plans, apartheid spatial patterns will still persist in another twenty years time.

Annexure 1: Spatial and Planning Transformation

Despite many calls for spatial transformation, it can be argued that our urban settlements have not been transformed. Spatial planning is understood as both the product of what spatial patterns we would like to be working towards in future (the product) as well as the process by which these spatial patterns will be created over time (the process).

If we don't know what type of spatial pattern we are working towards and if we don't know what spatial planning process will be followed, then those with political or economic power will influence both the product and process.

A starting point for transformation is to know what is being transformed and from what to what. The following table contrasts various principles associated with planning using the apartheid (separated development) approach, with principles associated with the new democratic South Africa (integrated development) approach. Transformation is about shifting from working with separate development principles to working with integrated development principles.

Table: Transformation – from what to what

Apartheid (separate development)	Democratic south Africa (integrated development)
Planning as product	
Racial separation	Social inclusion
Land use separation	Land use integration
Income separation	Income integration
Course grained land use	Fine grained land use
Introverted neighborhoods	Extroverted neighborhoods
Urban – rural separation	Urban – rural integration
Predominantly low densities/ sprawl	Continuum of densities from low to high
More focus on suburbs and townships	More focus on higher density urbanity
Private car focus	Pedestrian and public transport focus
Hierarchical street pattern	Grid street pattern
Streets for cars	Streets for people
Single/limited nodal	Multi nodal
Planning as process	
Master planning (set spatial goal and detailed steps to achieve goals) – like building a house from detailed plans	Framework planning (propose broad vision and undertake strategic interventions to move towards this vision) – like tending a garden from 'back of the napkin' plan
Impose idea on context	Adapt idea to context
Planning in silos	Inter departmental planning
Technical experts decide	Experts facilitate and advise
Community informed of plans	Community decides
Long feedback loops	Short feedback loops
Blindly follow plan	Experiment and learn
Community manipulation	Community participation
Few opportunities to modify plan after its approved	Many opportunities to modify plan after its approved
Ignores the property market	Works within the property market
Plan used in one way manner to inform stakeholders what will happen	Plan used to facilitate two way communication with stakeholders

Apartheid (separate development)	Democratic south Africa (integrated development)
Assumptions on which plan based hidden	Assumptions and learning questions incorporated in the plan

Many of these principles are not new. They have been expressed in various national policy papers and in national, provincial and local legislation, such as the National Development Plan (2012), and the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (Act 16 of 2013). Many IDP's have also included many of these principles. The challenge has been to transform these principles from intention to outcome.

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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