

# The transformation of municipal development planning in South Africa (post-1994): Impressions and impasse

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## Abstract

In South Africa, the government's transformation process, which effectively started in 1994, not only resulted in a new democracy, a new governmental dispensation or a 'new South Africa', but it also spearheaded a significant, rapid and radical transformation of local government in South Africa, as well as a radical transformation of municipal planning.

During the mid- to late 1990s, significant strides were made in South Africa by government, planning institutions and planners to develop a new more appropriate, integrated, developmental, democratic, strategic and sustainable development planning system – in line with the international planning principles and the emerging focus of the new democratic South African government.

Currently, almost two decades later, the South African municipal planning system, in spite of various efforts and policy developments, is still struggling to adapt to, and implement the new principles and is not addressing the development goals in all parts of the country effectively.

In order to set a basis for assessing the challenges of, and gaps in the current planning system, this article discusses the characteristics of the (new) transforming planning system and examines some of the most important efforts being made on policy level and in practice to promote the new principles.

This article presents an interrogation of the gaps in the planning system in an attempt to present some propositions to address these shortcomings.

## DIE TRANSFORMASIE VAN MUNISIPALE ONTWIKKELINGSBEPLANNING IN SUID-AFRIKA (NÁ 1994): INDRUKKE EN IMPASSES

In Suid-Afrika het die regering se transformasieproses, wat daadwerklik in 1994 begin het, nie net tot 'n nuwe demokrasie, 'n nuwe regeringsbedeling of 'n "nuwe Suid-Afrika" geleidelik, maar was dit ook die begin van aansienlike, snelle en fundamentele transformasie ten opsigte van plaaslike regerings in Suid-Afrika, en van radikale transformasie wat stadsbeplanning betref.

Gedurende die middel tot laat 1990's het die Suid-Afrikaanse regering, beplanningsinstansies en beplanners aansienlike vordering gemaak met die beplanning van 'n meer toepaslike, geïntegreerde, ontwikkelingsgerigte, demokratiese, strategiese en volhoubare ontwikkelingsbeplanningstelsel – in ooreenstemming met internasionale beplanningsbeginsels en die nuwe demokratiese regering se ontluikende fokus.

Vandag, byna twee dekades later en ten spyte van verskeie pogings en beleidsontwikkelings, sukkel die Suid-Afrikaanse munisipale beplanningstelsel nog steeds om die nuwe beginsels aan te pas en te implementeer en word die ontwikkelingsdoelwitte in munisipaliteite oral in die land nog steeds nie doeltreffend aangespreek nie.

Ten einde 'n grondslag daar te stel vir die assessering van die uitdagings en tekortkominge in die huidige Suid-Afrikaanse beplanningstelsel, bespreek hierdie artikel die kenmerke van die (nuwe) transformerende beplanningstelsel en word daar gekyk na enkele van die belangrikste pogings wat op beleidsvlak en in die praktyk aangewend word om die toepassing van die nuwe beginsels te bevorder.

Die artikel ondersoek die tekortkominge in die beplanningstelsel in 'n poging om enkele voorstelle te maak oor hoe dié tekortkominge reggestel kan word.

## PHETOŠO YA PEAKANYO YA TLHABOLLO YA MMASEPALA MO AFRIKA-BORWA (MORAGO GA 1994): DIKGOPOLU LE MATHATA

Mo Afrika-Borwa, tshepetšo ya phetošo ya mmušo, yeo gabotse e thomilego ka 1994 ga se ya tšweletša temokrasie e mpsha, pušo e mpsha goba 'Afrika-Borwa e mpsha' fela, eupša

e hlotše phetogo ye kgolo, ya bohlokwa, ya ka pela ya pušoselegae mo Afrika-Borwa gammogo le phetogo ye kaonekaone ya peakanyo ya setoropo.

Go thoma magareng go iša mafelelong a 1990, go gatilwe dikgato tše kgolo mo

Afrika-Borwa ke ba Mmušo, ditheo tša peakanyo le babeakanyi go tšweletša mokgwa wa maleba wa peakanyo ya tlhabollo wa go swarelela le wa togamaano, temokrasie, tlhabollo,

togagano – go ya ka dikokwane tša peakanyo tša boditšhabatšhaba le nepišo yeo e rotogago ya Mmušo wo moswa wa Afrika-Borwa ya temokrasie.

Lehono, morago ga mengwagosome ya go nyaka go ba ye mebedi, mokgwa wa peakanyo ya mmasepala wa Afrika-Borwa, le ge go na le maiteko le dihlabollo tša dipholisi tša go fapafapana, o sa šitwa go fetogela go le go phethagatša dikokwane tše di swa gomme ga o šogane gabotse le dinepo tša tlhabollo ka mahlakoreng ka moka a naga.

Go tšweletša mekgwa ya go ela ditlhohele le go rarolla mathata ka gare ga mokgwa wa bjale wa peakanyo wa Afrika-Borwa, sengwalwa se se ahlahlala dika tša mokgwa wa peakanyo (wo moswa) wo o fetogago le go lekola dikgato tše dingwe tše bohlokwahlokwa tše di dirwago maemong a pholisi le phethagatšong go godiša dikokwane tše di swa.

Sengwalwa se tšweletša dipotšišo mabapi le mathata ka gare ga mokgwa wa peakanyo ka maikemišetšo a go tla ka dikakanyo tša go rarolla mathata a.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, planning has transformed significantly in South Africa – from the typical modernist planning system to a more postmodern, democratic, strategic and developmental type of planning system. The contemporary planning system in South Africa, which was incidentally largely informed by the international planning trends that developed in the latter part of the 1900s in USA, UK and Western Europe (Harrison, 2002) is, to a large extent, associated with the Integrated Development Planning System, Strategic Planning, Spatial Development Frameworks and a new more flexible type of Land Use Management System (see also Coetzee, 2005: 38).

This new planning system (and planning and development principles), which was (were) firmly framed by a wide

array of new, post-transformation Acts and policies in South Africa (ANC, 1994; South Africa, 1995, 1996a, 1998a, 1999, 2000, 2012), not only affected local government in South Africa as a whole, but ultimately also had a major positive and negative impact on urban planners, local authority managers, officials and politicians.

Currently, almost two decades following on the transformation, the planning system in South Africa appears very good on paper, but still finds it difficult to facilitate and spearhead the change and transformation that is required in the South African urban, regional and rural spaces. Many regions in South Africa are still characterised by low-density urban sprawl, fragmented communities and spaces, and scattered impoverished informal settlements established in remote areas, far from employment opportunities, services and amenities.

While the new integrated planning system attempted (in some areas) to facilitate growth and development, there still is evidence of some areas (for example, the City of Tshwane), where the desired change, restructuring and growth did not happen at the pace and in the spaces as required by government and planning policy.

In an attempt to understand the (new) contemporary planning system (and its shortcomings), this article provides some introduction to, and background on the transformation of planning and the characteristics of the new planning system. In this context, the article further explores and unravels some of the impediments and obstacles that hampered the performance of this new contemporary planning system (or the gaps in the planning system, as will be discussed in the latter part of this article) in an attempt to present some propositions to refine the planning system and to make it more effective.

This article is partly informed by a Ph.D. study on the transformation of urban planning in South Africa and the City of Tshwane during the period 1992-2002 (see Coetzee, 2005), as well as various other research efforts and studies on the subject matter during this period of transformation.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. REFLECTING ON THE OLD PLANNING SYSTEM (PRE-1994)

Prior to the 1990s, planning in South Africa was dominated by the typical modernist urban planning system.<sup>2</sup> This modernist planning system is, to a large extent, associated with the concepts of land-use control and zoning and structure planning that developed in the early 1900s in the USA, UK and Western Europe (Thomas, Minett, Hopkins, Hamnett & Faludi, 1983: 28; Slater, 1984: 14). In South Africa, as the apartheid system unfolded during the mid- to late 1900s, this rigid, structured and autocratic planning system became an ideal tool for enforcing and promoting separate and fragmented development in urban areas – in line with the South African government's apartheid policies (see also Harrison, 2001: 179-180). This planning system ultimately created a fragmented spatial pattern that was characterised by racial, socio-economic and land-use segregation, unsustainable human settlements far from the workplace, and poor-quality environments. This

planning approach in South Africa also proved incapable of addressing the broader aspects of (integrated) urban and rural development and, more specifically, the growing needs in terms of social and economic development (see South Africa, 1999).

The planning approach was also widely criticised for being too complex; its lack of focus on implementation; its rigid and autocratic nature; its physical, master-plan and blueprint nature, and its lack of democratic properties (see also Mabin & Smit, 1997; Younge, 1998; South Africa, 1998b, 1999, 2001b: 66-67).

This realisation resulted in a reaction to, and protest against government policies, the planning system (and planners), somewhat reminiscent of the reaction of the advocacy planners and proponents of Civil Rights during the 1960s and 1970s in the UK and USA (McClendon & Quay, 1972: 52-7; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996: 9; Alexander, 1979: 121; Hall, 1996: 32, 332; Sewell & Coppock, 1997: 1; Brooks, 1996: 117; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1996: 270; Sandercock, 1998: 117).

This reaction and critique played a major role in kick-starting the transformation of urban planning, during the time of the government's transformation, which effectively started in the early 1990s.

## 3. THE TRANSFORMATION AND OTHER FORMATIONS (POST-1994)

While the transformation of urban planning was chiefly triggered by the critique on the modernist apartheid planning system, the African National Congress (ANC), already prior to the transformation and during the transformation phase, realised that a new improved and more liberal form of planning was needed to address the spatial and development flaws of the apartheid system and the challenges of the new South Africa (ANC, 1992, 1994). The ANC (and also some progressive planners) prior to 1994 also started witnessing the emergence of new planning trends and increasingly realised that these more liberal forms of planning provided an ideal framework for the new South Africa (ANC, 1992, 1994; Harrison, 2002: 172). The following major international trends influenced the transformation of urban planning and local government in South Africa (post-1994): the focus on community involvement and participation; the new emphasis on social planning and communities; the emerging focus on strategic planning; the focus on environmental management and sustainable development; the new relationship between urban planning and urban management and municipal affairs; the new focus on Local Economic Development (planning), and the new developmental style of planning and local government (ANC, 1994; FEPD, 1995; South Africa, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, DCD, 1997: 8; Coetzee, 2005, 2010).

### 3.1 Community participation

Although the concept of community participation had already reached its heights in the UK, USA and Western Europe in the 1960s, it only emerged in South Africa in the late 1980s

1 Between 2002 and the present, the author has been extensively involved in monitoring the transformation of urban planning and local government through ongoing research, observations, exploratory inquiry, interviews and questionnaires. Since 2007, the author, as a facilitator and participant observer, has also been extensively involved with numerous training sessions and workshops with managers, planners and development professionals in various local authorities such as Tshwane, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, John Taolo District Municipality; as well as the 18 municipalities and district councils in the Mpumalanga Province.

2 The so-called modernist planning is commonly associated with a style of urban planning that dominated the period between the late 1800s to approximately the 1960s in most parts of the western world.

when civic movements and progressive NGOs began to challenge local government as they raised concerns regarding issues of housing, services and the spatial and institutional fragmentation of the city (Harrison, 2001: 183, 2002; Gelderblom & Kok, 1994: 37; Brynard, 1996: 39).

As the international trends on community participation permeated the South African planning scene during the early 1990s, the African National Congress (ANC), through its public statements and policies, continually promoted the principles of community participation within the broader context of urban planning (ANC 1994; South Africa, 1995, 2000). This democratic approach also formally established community participation as an integral and inseparable part of the municipal planning system and the comprehensive Integrated Development Planning (IDP) system, as is evident in specifically the IDP processes that were rolled out in the various metro's, district and local authorities in all parts of the country (see also South Africa, 2000; Coetzee, 2005: 42-45).

### 3.2 The unfolding social awareness in urban planning

During the 1960s and 1970s, a number of social movements developed in the UK, USA and Western Europe, in reaction to the excessively narrow emphasis on physical and economic development and the neglect of broader social development and social wants and needs: the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the proponents of Advocacy Planning, Radical Planning, Equity Planning, Marxist planning, and the Basic Needs Approach.<sup>3</sup> This emerging social awareness also highlighted the problems of the rigid, autocratic, and scientific, apartheid (patriarchal) urban planning system and the discriminatory practices of the former government.

The social movement in South Africa, however, gained further momentum during the government transformation process (early to mid-1990s), as the new government and planning policies and legislation began to emphasise the need for government (and planning) to focus on social issues such as poverty, basic needs, integration, equity; local economic development, community development and social restructuring (see Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994), the Development

Facilitation Act (1995) and the Constitution (1996) (ANC, 1994; South Africa, 1995, 1996a)).

This emerging social awareness played a major role in shaping the new urban planning system in South Africa. Ultimately, it shifted the emphasis from the patriarchal urban planning system, which was so widely criticised by 'social planners' in South Africa (Harrison, 2001: 183), to a more social and people-oriented planning system (see also Coetzee, 2005: 45-46).

### 3.3 The consolidation of (urban) strategic planning

The concept of urban strategic planning, which was initially largely informed by corporate strategic planning and applied in other countries in the world, played a major role in shaping and transforming the post-1994 urban and development planning system in South Africa (FEPD, 1995; South Africa, 1995), and ultimately formed the basis for the Integrated Development Planning system (IDP) (South Africa, 2000).

Unlike the previous South African planning system with its emphasis on land-use management and structure planning, strategic planning provided a broader strategic and developmental focus on the planning and management of the city as a whole. It highlighted the importance of action and implementation, and the need to focus on (selected) strategic issues. In the South African context, strategic planning specifically provided a framework that focused on the future (change) management of a complex urban environment. The structured strategic planning process with its distinct phases was considered an ideal framework within which the emerging community participation processes could be addressed (integrated), specifically within the context of the social, economic, physical and institutional environments. It also provided a structure and process that could bridge the gap between urban planning and urban/municipal management – i.e., the link between vision, goals, strategies and human and financial resources and institutional structures and processes (see also Coetzee, 2005: 46-49). Assessments of various IDP processes and strategic planning processes over the past few years indicated, among others, the new focus on strategic issues; the focus

on longer term planning and visions; the advantages of a focussed goal-directed planning process in support of a common vision; the benefits of formulating and implementing strategies and projects that are informed by a vision, goals and specific objectives, and the ongoing focus on performance assessment and monitoring of projects.

### 3.4 The 'sustainable' environmental agenda

Although environmental planning and management have always been part (in some or other form) of the South African urban planning system, it was only during the late 1980s that planners, activists and environmentalists re-emphasised environmental issues, mainly in reaction to the *ad hoc* and fragmented approach to planning and the neglect of the urban environment. As the principles of environmental management matured in South Africa during the early 1990s, it acquired a new look and definition, encapsulated in the form of sustainable development (Nadin & Barton, 1996: 13; South Africa, 1998b, 1998c, 1999: 41).

The concept of sustainable development became an important topic on the agenda of the ANC during 1992, as was captured in the 'ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa' (ANC, 1992; see also ANC, 1994; FEPD, 1995; South Africa, 1998, 1999).

As the integrated and holistic focus on urban planning developed in South Africa during the 1990s, planners and environmentalists increasingly realised the important link between planning and environmental management, as is evident in many of the new generation urban planning efforts in the country (Coetzee, 2005: 49-51). As a result of the new focus on environmental management and sustainable development, the planning processes in South Africa also started acquiring a new look and focus with an increased emphasis on understanding and addressing the total environment as well as the integration of the various environmental components in the planning and development processes (see also South Africa, 1998).

3 For more information on the reaction of these social movements, see Moser (1997: 47-48); Claassen & Milton (1992: 722); Alexander (1979: 121); Hall (1996: 32); Sewell & Coppock (1997: 1); Fainstein & Fainstein (1996: 270); Sandercock (1998: 117); Campbell & Fainstein (1996: 263); Hall (1996: 332); Brooks (1996: 117).

### 3.5 Urban planning and management

The foregoing planning trends all played a major role to bring urban planning closer to (and to integrate it closer with) the public domain (and municipal management). However, the real merger of urban planning and management over the past decade in South Africa, was primarily influenced by the emerging entrepreneurial, democratic, developmental and strategic focus of local authorities (South Africa, 1999; Slater, 1984: 24-25, 37, 64; Rondinelli, 1983: 376-383) as well as the neo-liberal notion of New Public Management (NPM), which developed during the 1980s in the UK (Harrison, 2002: 178; Taylor, 1998: 131, 138, 140; Allmendinger & Chapman, 1999: 107-108).

Urban planners (and managers) in South Africa increasingly realised that they had to introduce new forms of urban management if they had any hope of addressing the enormous challenges of spatial and social reconstruction in urban areas; the enhancement of service delivery; spatial integration; and the development of previously disadvantaged areas in South Africa (ANC, 1992, 1994; FEPA, 1995; South Africa, 1999; Beall, Crankshaw & Parnell, 2002: 85-86).

Since 1992, South African local authorities have been severely challenged to develop a developmental role in achieving local economic development, sustainable development, representative local democracy and equitable urban management. In short, they had to restructure and reshape their organisations in order to align their actions with the new planning environment (Koster, 1996: 99-102; Gelderblom & Kok, 1994: 37; Brynard, 1996: 39; Scheepers, 2000: 180; South Africa, 1999).

This new focus on a more performance-driven local government system, to a large extent, spurred the notion of 'Developmental Local Government' and Local Economic Development in South Africa, and formed the cornerstone of the Integrated Development Planning approach in South Africa (see Development Facilitation Act (DFA), 1995; The Constitution, 1996; White Paper on Local Government, 1998; Municipal Systems Act, 2000; South Africa, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000). As a result of this new developmental

focus in planning and in local government, various efforts were made by governments (post-1994) at all levels to make municipalities (and planning and development processes) more developmental and to cultivate a more developmental mindset among officials and planners. Coetzee (2010: 21), however, argues that 'these development streams emerged and developed under tremendous transformational pressures and somewhat separate from the real (new) developmental (state) context'.

### 4. THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

Based on a study of the transformation of urban planning in the City of Tshwane during the period 1992-2002 (Coetzee, 2005), it is evident that this emerging integrated planning system had a major impact on planners, government officials, managers, politicians and the local authorities, in general.

Planners increasingly had to learn a new planning methodology that would capacitate them to work and plan with and for the communities, to engage with the political systems, to become involved with urban and municipal management, to become more involved with (sustainable) development processes and to engage with a new type of strategic planning and management (within the developmental and democratic local government system). The integrated and extended nature of the new urban planning methodology ultimately resulted in the emergence of a number of new planning processes and methods and a variety of new planning techniques and tools (for example, strategic planning, community planning, visioning, and so on). This new planning methodology also required planners to acquire a number of new skills such as communication, negotiation, conflict management, facilitation and managerial skills, to name but a few. Although this extended role of planners made planners more relevant and important, and created numerous new opportunities for planners in all sectors, it also resulted in considerable confusion and conflict. Some planners have argued that it has become extremely difficult for planners to deal with all these different roles effectively.

During the 1990s, the South African planning system was transformed from a rigid, scientific and autocratic system into a new integrated, developmental, democratic and people-oriented urban system (Coetzee, 2005: 53). Towards the turn of the millennium, it appeared that this transforming planning system had the potential to replace the inappropriate and discriminatory urban planning and urban management systems that existed prior to the 1990s, and to provide a new context and impetus for the further transformation, reconstruction and development of the neglected and fragmented South African urban and rural spaces.

Unfortunately, 18 years after the advent of democracy, municipal planning in South Africa (and all that is attached to it) finds it difficult to come to terms with its new role and identity, isolated and in disarray.

### 5. THE HOLE IN THE SKY

Looking back at the transformation in South Africa, specifically against the backdrop of the developing policy and legal frameworks in South Africa, a number of critical questions need to be addressed: Where is the planning system (profession) today, 18 years after the advent of democracy and how are planners and governments performing? What are the gaps in the system and what is the nature of these gaps? How can the planning system be improved upon? Is the institutional and government system appropriately structured to support the planning system?

When viewing the contents of the current planning system and the way in which planning processes (more specifically the SDF and IDP processes) are structured and conducted, it is evident that, although some progress has been made, there still are a number of gaps and shortcomings in the planning system and in the institutional system that have to support and guide the planning system (see also CoGTA, 2009: 18; South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 1).<sup>4</sup>

#### 5.1 The policy – practice gap

Since 1994, South Africa has made great strides to establish a solid and sound policy, institutional and legal framework to guide and facilitate planning, development and (re)structuring in the 'new' South Africa. Government

<sup>4</sup> These aspects were also raised in a multitude of government and planning forums over the past two decades. Various papers and discussion sessions at the recent African Planning Conference held in Durban, September 2012, also highlighted many of these concerns.

departments and municipalities have developed a myriad of policies, plans and strategies to achieve urban restructuring, poverty alleviation, rural development, local economic development, economic growth, housing delivery and quality human settlements, improving public transport, and so on. Although it is accepted that a great deal of progress has been made in certain sectors and in certain parts of the country, there still seems to be a growing concern that the country and its various municipalities are not performing as they should be (COGTA, 2009: 18; Coetzee, 2010: 25; South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 1; SACN, 2011).

After almost two decades of learning, practising, and trial-and-error, planners and government leaders still find it difficult to effectively implement the new planning system and to bring about the change that is needed. COGTA (2009) argues that this slow progress has been the result of, among others, poor service delivery, poor governance; lack of leadership, weakening of institutional structures; lack of capacity and skills, and so on (Coetzee, 2010: 21).

One of the major concerns raised by the research that informed this article relate to the fact that, while much time is spent on developing Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs), Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), policies, strategies, programmes and projects for urban regions, very little is done to put these into action. Many IDPs and SDFs do not have proper implementation strategies (which should include management, funding, partnership and monitoring strategies), and not enough is being done to facilitate, lead and champion the ongoing implementation of these plans and strategies. Various government officials and planners have argued that this lack of implementation can be ascribed to aspects such as poor leadership; inappropriate organisational structures and processes; lack of capacity; poor-quality plans (with poor or no implementation frameworks); confusion relating to the plethora of different plans and strategies; poor inter-governmental relations and cooperation; lack of funding and the absence of strong partnerships; inappropriate planning systems; and, lastly, the negative attitude, lethargic mindset and inertia, and lack of commitment of

some planners and managers to really make things work (see also South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 238).

## 5.2 The planning system gap

As discussed earlier, there was a strong impetus during the 1990s to move the planning system away from the rigid, control-dominated type of planning towards a more democratic, strategic and developmental type of planning that could facilitate and speed up development in all sectors (see Development Facilitation Act (1995), Green Paper on Development and Planning (1999) and Municipal Systems Act (2000); South Africa, 1995, 1999, 2000). These efforts ultimately resulted in Integrated Development Plans (IDPs); a modified Spatial Development Framework system, that spawned Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) in all urban regions (and some rural areas) in the country, as well as a somewhat different, more flexible type of Land-Use Management System (LUMS). Unfortunately, the South African planning system is still criticised in various forums for not achieving the restructuring and developmental goals of the country and for not meeting the needs of communities (see also South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 244).<sup>5</sup> In spite of many efforts to establish community participation as part of the policy frameworks, participation in the planning process is still, to a large extent, neglected, and planners and community facilitators are finding it difficult to conduct meaningful participation processes, while many politicians still view this as window dressing. Looking back to the 1990s when these principles were phased in, it is argued that government and local authorities were not doing enough to promote and establish the basic principles of urban democracy, and to develop experience-based guidelines and policies that could facilitate the effective implementation of community participation – specifically in South Africa with its young democracy (Coetzee, 2005: 198-199). Various planners and officials involved with community participation processes have also argued that the limited Ward Committee system (which incidentally is regarded as the formal vehicle for public consultation) is not efficient to effectively deal with public participation at large, and that its limited focus does not support an

embedded government system and the needs of all the stakeholders.

While great strides were made to include strategic planning as part of the IDP and other planning processes, a number of concerns are often raised by planners and other role players, such as the way in which meaningless, fluffy visions are being created; the lack of focus on the real strategic issues; the cumbersome nature of many strategic planning processes; the rigid nature of some of these processes (which hampers innovative thinking and flexibility); the lack of strategy implementation and monitoring, and the poor linkage between strategic plans, projects and the budget (Coetzee, 2005: 199).

Although the recent transformation of urban planning in South Africa mainly included an extended holistic and integrated focus on environmental issues and the broader definition of sustainable development (as is evident by the many post-1994 policies and legislation), the aspect of sustainability and sustainable development is still not properly understood and effectively addressed in planning and urban management. This concept is loosely used by planners, communities and even politicians – in many instances without a clear understanding of the meaning of the concept. Although much reference is made to the concept of sustainability in some planning endeavours and documents, the government's policy frameworks did very little to unpack the concept, promote its aims and contents, implement it in practice, and integrate and align local authority planning and development efforts towards achieving the common goal of sustainable development (Coetzee, 2005: 199).

Despite the progress made by planners (and policies) to promote the link between urban planning and municipal management and to increase the developmental properties of planning (through, among other things, the IDP), many problems are still experienced in effectively aligning the organisational structures, processes and functions with the City vision or 'the plan' (Coetzee, 2005: 199).

Many Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) are criticised for not effectively prioritising and facilitating development; its rigid blueprint qualities; the lack of

5 Various papers and discussion sessions at the recent African Planning Conference held in Durban, September 2012, also highlighted many of these concerns.

strategic focus; the way in which the SDFs are isolated and divorced from the overarching City Development Strategies, IDPs and the related sector plans and strategies (Coetzee, 2010: 25).

The IDP system, on the other hand, was also criticised in a multitude of forums and through various assessments and reviews of IDPs for its cumbersome nature; the lack of a long-term vision and strategic focus; not effectively focusing on community needs and priorities; the lack of proper implementation and monitoring; not achieving integrated and sustainable development outcomes; not effectively integrating the various sector plans and strategies (within a particular local authority and from other spheres of government); the poor link between the IDP and the budget, and for being too much of a municipal tool with a municipal focus rather than a planning and management tool that focuses more on the development of the urban region and not so much on the municipality. While many of these problems are ascribed to the rigid and cumbersome process of formulating IDPs and the challenges posed by the community participation phases, these problems are also ascribed to a lack of understanding of the IDP principles and process; a lack of capacity in local authorities (both in the IDP offices and sector departments); a lack of managerial and political support and guidance from the top; a lack of funds to manage and implement the process; poor and inappropriate organisational structures and, lastly, the lack of an IDP mindset and culture (Coetzee, 2010: 25; see also COGTA, 2009; South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 252).

When examining the Land-Use Management component of the planning system, the following points of critique and concerns are raised: the fact that local authorities are still too much entrenched with the rigid Town Planning Schemes, with a limited focus on a larger integrated Land-Use Management System (LUMS) that encompasses all aspects of, and linkages with spatial planning and policies, norms and principles, guidelines, the SDF and IDP. One of the biggest points of critique on the current system is its overly rigid and control-dominated nature and the lack of a more developmental and facilitative nature (Coetzee, 2010:

25; South Africa. Presidency, 2009: 8, 2011: 252).

Coetzee (2010: 25) argues that:

the time has arrived to move the planning debates away from the rigid comprehensive IDP (phases), the ponderous and rigid land use processes, and blueprint structure plans, to a larger facilitative, activist and developmental debate – in line with the developmental principles or the goals of the Developmental State.

An aspect that is often raised in planning forums is the plethora of different planning processes at different levels and in different sectors and government spheres. Planners and government officials often argue that this proliferation of plans and strategies in different sectors has the potential to create duplication and confusion. Although, in recent years, much emphasis has been placed on integration (vertically, horizontally and spatially) and integrated planning, such integration failed to materialise in certain areas (see also Oranje & Van Huyssteen, 2007: 5; DPLG, 2007: 19; Mulaudzi, 2007: 83; Meiklejohn & Coetzee, 2003: 1; Todes, 2002: 23, 63). In other areas, integration was overdone to such an extent that it resulted in an entangled mess that is difficult to unravel. Instead, more emphasis should be placed on harmonisation and the need for what could be coined as a 'symphonic planning system' – a system that conducts and arranges all efforts, plans, and strategies in such a way that it harmonises to bring about symphonic quality (or quality development performance).

It is also somewhat ironic to note that, by the end of 2012, almost 18 years since the transformation, the government could not succeed in promulgating the Spatial Planning and Land-Use Management Act (SPLUMA) (see also the Spatial Planning and Land-Use Management Bill 2001; South Africa, 2012).

### 5.3 The knowledge and capacity gap

When examining the transformation of planning in South Africa and the contents and characteristics of the new transforming urban planning system (including the municipal planning environment), it is clear that planners

had to acquire new skills and knowledge related to the various aspects of planning (for example, learning to work and plan with the community, getting involved with municipal management, strategic planning, development facilitation, and so on).

Following the transformation in 1994 and the rather rapid introduction of the new planning principles in the 1990s, many efforts were made (and are still being made) by planning schools, government departments and other institutions such as the CSIR, the former GTZ, NGOs and the Development Bank of South Africa to refine and promote the new planning principles and to build capacity in the various planning sectors.

For this country and its various municipalities to advance to a more developmental state and to achieve the restructuring and developmental goals, more efforts will have to be made to increase capacity and skills – not only among planning professions, but also (and specifically) among those many officials, managers and politicians who are actively involved with the planning, development and urban/rural management processes (see also South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 17; Mulaudzi, 2007: 63-65).

One of the planners who was interviewed within the context of this article also recognised the lack of capacity in local authorities and planning departments and stressed 'the need for council planners to network locally and internationally, and the need for them to benchmark and stay abreast of the latest technology and best practices on planning and development' (Nel, 2008: personal communication).<sup>6</sup> This interviewee further highlighted the need to establish formal relationships between governments and municipalities and tertiary institutions in order to enhance collaboration and information-sharing between these entities.

In line with the above, it is argued that the professional planning bodies such as the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) and the various planning schools should make more effort to promote Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the roll-out of short courses and refresher courses to planners (and related professions) in the various sectors. However, the feasibility and

<sup>6</sup> Interview held with Prof Verna Nel (former Director of the City Planning Department of the City of Tshwane and current Professor at the University of the Free State) on 16 May 2008.

success of such programmes depend, to a large extent, on the support not only from SACPLAN, but also from the government, local authorities and other planning sectors. Unfortunately, the lack of funds is usually presented as an excuse, while an overall inertia and lack of interest is also evident in many local authorities. Apart from formal CPD programmes, more could also be done by the various professional planning bodies in South Africa, namely SACPLAN, the Association of Consulting Professional Planners (SAACPP) and the South African Planning Institution (SAPI) (whose main aim is 'to promote the art and science of planning ...') to improve the communication with, and between planners (members), through newsletters, position papers and more regular (and more relevant) conferences and seminars.

When examining the research outputs and articles published in both local and international magazines, the planning profession in South Africa is not performing well on this score and, in general, planners are very sluggish to learn, to benchmark and to develop the planning theory and practice. Too often this is mainly done by planners in the academia (to a limited extent) and not enough is done by planning practitioners to publish and share practice stories and planning experiences. According to Coetzee (2010: 24), 'the cyber space technology also presents various opportunities for institutions to communicate, collaborate, benchmark, share knowledge, experience and ideas through planning and development websites or development portals – an aspect that has not been exploited by local governments in South Africa'.

#### 5.4 Mindset and culture gap

Apart from acquiring new skills, as stated in the previous section, the new planning system and the integrated, developmental, democratic and strategic style of planning also require a different mindset, culture and attitude. The Presidency, within the context of the National Development Plan (2011), states that 'Developing and upgrading capabilities to enable sustainable and inclusive development requires a new approach and a new mindset' (South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 5).

Unlike the autocratic and rigid planning system of the past (pre-1994), planners as well as the related professions are increasingly challenged to expand

their horizons, to develop a particular attitude towards people's needs and aspirations, to acquire a more entrepreneurial and developmental mindset, as well as a more innovative and creative approach to solving problems – specifically in terms of the escalating development challenges, both locally and globally.

Unfortunately, many 'old style planners' are still caught up in the archaic, rigid, autocratic and control-oriented mindset. In general, planners are too concerned with development control and limiting potential development in a top-down rigid way, and not enough with the positive facilitation of development. Many planners working in government are so entrenched in the bureaucracy and the govern(mentality) that it is difficult and somewhat scary for them to even talk of a different entrepreneurial and developmental mindset or the need to acquire a develop(mentality). Many planning consultants, on the other hand, are so entrenched in the typical zoning and township establishment processes, which seem to be the money-making industries, that it will be difficult to alter their property/zoning/land-use/money-making mentalities.

However, as long as planners in government, local authorities and the private sector continue to dissociate from the current planning system, instead of contributing to improving and refining the system, these planners will find it difficult to actually acquire the mindset that is needed for them to effectively perform as planners.

#### 5.5 Organisational set-up gap

As the transformation of planning unfolded during the 1990s and early 2000s, the organisational structures of government institutions and municipalities also experienced ongoing and radical transformation in line with the transforming national policies. This transformation was mainly aimed at improving and reshaping the organisational structures and to establish new and more appropriate departmental functions in line with new development goals or key performance areas (for example, the provision of housing).

However, when examining the new relationship between planning and urban management (and budgeting), the expanded role of officials and communities in the new integrated planning process, the strategic/developmental

role of urban planning, and the general integrated (cross-sectoral) nature and focus of urban planning, it is obvious that not enough was done by the authorities to align and adapt institutional processes and structures with the new integrated and developmental style of planning.

The current organisational structure and processes still have many shortcomings in terms of the new municipal planning environment, namely the fragmented silo structures; the lack of interdepartmental communication; the weak link between the budget and the IDP; the lack of meaningful participation in municipal affairs, and the lack of appropriate, dynamic, entrepreneurial and strategic leadership, specifically within the top management of municipalities (see also COGTA, 2009: 18; South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 235).

The typical hierarchical, silo-type organisational structures, which are mainly informed by goal structures, make it very difficult to cross-cut integration, collaboration and harmonisation between line functions. Although this arrangement focuses on achieving specific goals, it is not appropriate for effectively integrating and combining efforts in order to address problems and achieve common development outcomes (see also Coetzee, 2010: 22; Meiklejohn & Coetzee, 2003: 13; Robinson, Brown, Todes & Kitchin, 2003: 265; Todes, 2002: 23, 63).

In spite of many efforts to promote intersectoral planning, intergovernmental relations and collaboration in South Africa through, for example, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005 and related forums and efforts (see South Africa, 2005), the aspect of 'integrated governance' or 'collaborative public management' is still largely neglected. Collaborative public management, which emerged in the mid-1990s, implies a systems and cross-sectional approach that is aimed at moving away from the conventional vertically configured silo operations towards working across and between organisational boundaries (Ling, 2002: 616; McGuire, 2006: 1). Collaborative public management also implies an embedded government system where government sectors work hand-in-glove with civil society and communities to address issues collectively – to achieve 'collaborative advantage through synergy' (McGuire, 2006: 20; Agranoff

& McGuire, 2003: 41; Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 359; Coetzee, 2010: 24).

If we agree that the urban planning function in recent years is required to become more strategic and facilitative in nature, and a function that has to harmonise and integrate various other sectors, it makes sense to locate such a function at the appropriate level of a local authority, and even within the office of the Municipal Manager. Unfortunately, this is not the case in South Africa. In many local authorities, the planning function, specifically the IDP and the SDF functions, which are intended to facilitate development, are neglected in terms of organisational status and also poorly capacitated.

If government and local authorities want to develop a planning system that is capable of creating the desired development outcomes, it is imperative that organisational structures and processes be aligned and adapted to support planning efforts. This may require a radical (re)structuring and (re)engineering of the entire local authority planning environment as well as the sector departments and departmental processes. Apart from establishing appropriate structures, it is equally important that attention be given to the establishment and improvement of relationships, cooperation and collaboration between sector departments in the various spheres of government (vertically and horizontally), as well as developing a new 'embedded relationship' between city leaders and officials, and communities and stakeholders.

Coetzee (2010: 22) states that:

Planning systems can be 'as good as it gets' but if these systems are not protected and supported by appropriate organisational structures and processes, it will be difficult for planning systems and planners to effectively facilitate developmental planning,

while The Presidency argues that 'A plan is only as credible as its delivery mechanism' (South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 22).

## 5.6 The power-planning gap

The friction between power and planning, or politics and planning has always been a major challenge for planners.

Many stories exist of how planners were/are threatened by the power of politicians, power games and often undesirable power relations (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Coetzee & Oranje, 2006: 6-7; Coetzee, 2005). In South Africa, the participatory, strategic, developmental and managerial nature of the new planning system had a further impact on power structures and power relations as well as on the roles and powers of planners, managers, politicians and communities. These power impacts and associated conflicting power relations often created conflict, frustration and friction – a situation which was further amplified by the transformation of the urban planning and local government system, as well as the power/s of/in this system (Coetzee & Oranje, 2006: 9; Coetzee, 2005).<sup>7</sup>

Currently, many planners are still grappling with these power structures and power games. As a result of this and the associated conflict and frustrations, many planners find it difficult to effectively perform their duties and to act professionally, rationally and responsibly. This not only hampers the planning process, but also has the potential to hinder and obstruct much needed development processes and proper urban management in general.

It is argued in this article that not enough has been done by the authorities to manage this power change and transformation (and the new powers). Planners will have to learn to better understand the dynamics of the power webs and associated power relations. They will have to learn to adapt to the elusive powers and learn to manage power relations, to remediate negative powers and to exploit positive powers. Planners will have to find the right 'power tools' and combination of tools that could assist them in performing better in volatile and unpredictable environments. The use of effective communication, negotiation and the 'force of the better argument' (Habermas) could be tools to be used by planners (see also Watson, 2001; Coetzee & Oranje, 2006: 10-11).

## 5.7 Professionalism gap

Since the initial attempts to formalise the Town and Regional Planning Profession (as far back as the 1940s), planners,

planning bodies and concerned government departments have been trying to establish, enhance and promote the professional status of the planning profession. In recent years (late 1990s and early 2000s), the various professional planning bodies in South Africa, namely the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN), the Association of Consulting Professional Planners (SAACPP) and, to a lesser extent, the South African Planning Institution (SAPI), also made some attempts to establish and promote the professional status of planning. Fortunately, in 2002, after the promulgation of the Planning Profession Act (2002), the profession was legalised and 'professionalised' (on paper).

At present, after so many years, and many efforts, the planning profession still finds itself somewhat isolated, confused, and with a lack of professional identity. When compared to, for instance, the legal, medical and engineering professions (which are more matured and more established), the planning profession appears weak, even if taking into account that it is a much smaller profession.

It is pleasing to note the effort that SACPLAN (which is supported by the National Department of Rural Development and Land Reform) is making to control, manage and guide the quality of planning schools, the training of planners and the professional registration of planners in terms of the Act. It is, however, cause for concern that so many government departments and, more specifically, local authorities are often keen to appoint any Dick, Tom and Harry (who show some interest in planning, or have done some mediocre courses on topics related to planning) in planning positions, and very often senior planning positions that require planning experience. Another concern which is often raised by planners in, specifically, the larger municipalities relates to the way in which non-planners, and/or related professions are encroaching on the planning consultancy industry – getting involved with the preparation of SDFs, IDPs, township establishment, rezoning applications, and so on – often at unreasonably low professional fees.<sup>8</sup>

This state of affairs makes a mockery of the Planning Profession Act (2000) and the efforts of SACPLAN and is also an

<sup>7</sup> These powers, as well as the use/abuse of powers, were specifically evident in the Tshwane transformation and organisational restructuring processes in the early 2000s (Coetzee, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> These concerns were frequently raised in a multitude of forums over the past few years by qualified planners working in government and local government planning departments in many parts of the country, and have also been a priority on the agenda of SACPLAN for many years.



embarrassment for the planning profession that desperately seeks (and needs) more recognition and professional status. Not only does this situation create problems for local authorities and the planning industry, but it can also result in substandard planning and undesirable development proposals that are not supportive of the developmental goals of the country and the principles of the new planning system. It further also creates an undesirable situation for the registered professional planners and consultants, an unfair competition in the market as well as confusion and frustration among planners, developers and planning institutions. Against the backdrop of the problems experienced with the planning system, the Presidency in 2011 also pointed out the difficulty in attracting much needed quality planners to government posts (South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 245).

Many planners mistakenly believe that it is the responsibility of the planning institutions and bodies to turn planning into a widely recognised and respected profession that offers significant support to its member planners. While it is recognised that these institutions have a role to play (and a responsibility to develop the profession), the biggest problem lies with the planners themselves. The fatalistic attitude of planners, the resistance that planners often show to change, and the negativity towards the future of the country do not contribute to the status of the planning profession.

For many planners (and current planning students), the planning profession was a second or third choice after engineering or architecture, while some planners seem to be studying planning mainly in the hope of making money through rezoning applications, or to establish a platform for a related career, for instance in property development.

The planning profession has always been branded as a 'Jack-of-all-trades-profession' in view of its many diverse functions. It is now obvious that the extended, hybridised, integrated, participatory, strategic and developmental focus of the transforming planning system has added a number of new trades to the profession – ultimately resulting in a profession almost incapable of dealing effectively with the wide spectrum of its activities. While it is noted that SACPLAN and the planning schools are continuously making efforts to define and shape the planning curricula, it is argued that a serious attempt should be

made to restructure the profession and to develop meta-streams of specialisation – to bridge the gap between an extremely limited and detailed kind of planning (for example, zoning and detail layout), on the one end of the scale, and the wider more strategic type of planning (IDPs, SDFs, and so on), on the other, with specific focus on the related fields of community-based planning, settlement planning, and so on in between.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Over the past two decades, great strides have been made (at a theoretical and ideological level) to develop and transform the municipal planning system, to introduce new planning policies and methodologies and a developmental government system. This article, however, presented some evidence of the gaps and shortcomings of the contemporary planning system and argues that the current planning system still finds it difficult to facilitate the change, restructuring, growth and development that is required in this country and in this time and space. Unlike the perception among some planners and government officials that planning can and should be improved through more and/or better policies and legislation, it was argued in this article that a package of interventions and remedies are now needed to strengthen, improve and refine the contemporary planning system in South Africa:

1. Improving, strengthening and re-engineering the institutional structures and processes in all spheres of government – including intergovernmental relations and planning; the improved integration of planning and development efforts; improved communication and collaboration (within and between spheres and sectors); developing an embedded government system; improving leadership structures and ethical practices; refining the confusing and sometimes unfair and inefficient tender processes; developing institutional structures and processes that are really supportive of planning and development and growth, and finding ways to deal with power relations and power struggles and the so-called power-planning dilemmas.
2. Building capacity and developing skills where it is needed most – including the training of planners (and non-planners, officials, managers, politicians and communities); developing a culture of learning; promoting a culture of research and benchmarking; instilling and promoting the principles of innovation, and the sharing of knowledge and experiences.
3. Cultivating a developmental and entrepreneurial mindset and attitude among planners, officials, managers and politicians in all sectors.
4. Improving and refining the planning system and planning processes – including the better alignment and integration of plans and projects; simplifying and harnessing the vast plethora of plans to limit duplication and confusion; developing more flexible and uniform Land-Use Management Systems; simplifying the IDP processes; moving away from overcumbersome and meaningless community participation processes that hamper planning and development towards more constructive and real meaningful participation processes; increasing the focus on real strategic issues, and increasing the focus on longer term strategic spatial planning.
5. Enhancing the professional status and importance of the planning profession (and plans) – including the focus on addressing the behaviour and professional conduct and practice of planners; the implementation and management of ethical codes; realising the strategic importance of planning (and planners) as a change management tool, and the need to appoint qualified planners 'to do the job'.
6. Moving away from merely compiling plans and strategies towards the real implementation of plans – including the measurement and monitoring of the performance of plans; measurement and monitoring of development outcomes and performance, and strengthening the linkages between plans, budgets and implementation.
7. The need for planners 'to take sustainability seriously', as highlighted by the SACN (2006).
8. The need to spawn and train appropriate leaders and champions to drive planning and development processes in line with the developmental local

government (performance-oriented development) principles and the Development State.

9. The need for government and development role players to stop developing and promoting unrealistic, fluffy and stereotypical visions and promises, that do more harm than good – not only to the people but also to the overall planning and development process.
10. Developing appropriate and strong (developmental) planning legislation and policies to support all the components of the planning and development processes (and 1-9 above).

The problem, however, is that such a planning system is, to a large extent, dependent on a type of government and leadership that can support all aspects of such a planning system. To this end, it is argued that the time has arrived to move away from the piecemeal government systems and processes, and 'governmentality', towards a new innovative, developmental and symphonic way of dealing with the different sectors and strategies.

The National Development Plan (2011) states that the country has to write a new story for the next two decades – a story of creating jobs and livelihood; expanding infrastructure; transitioning low carbon energy; transforming urban and rural spaces; improving education and training; building a capable state; fighting corruption, and enhancing accountability (South Africa. Presidency, 2011: 4-6). This story will be composed of many different storylines, but if the further transformation and refinement of the municipal planning system is not going to be part of this story, it could have a very sad ending.

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