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How to cite: Gibbens, M. & Schoeman, C. 2020. Planning for sustainable livelihood development in the context of rural South Africa: A micro-level approach. *Town and Regional Planning*, no.76, pp. 14-28.

Planning for sustainable livelihood development in the context of rural South Africa: A micro-level approach

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/2415-0495/trp76i1.2>

Peer reviewed and revised September 2019

*The authors declared no conflict of interest for this title or article

Abstract

In South Africa, different spheres of government (national, provincial and municipal) have different responsibilities with respect to rural planning and development. Rural development strategies, however, are predominately developed by national and provincial government (centralised planning) such as, for example, the 2009 Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and the 2018 draft National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF). These efforts from different spheres of the South African government are nevertheless still not having the desired effect in the development of sustainable rural livelihoods, according to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, similar to policies and efforts to implement them elsewhere in Africa. In addition to the appropriate planning and implementation scale, the spatial dimension of rural livelihood within the South African context also requires a specific understanding of the extreme differentiation of areas within 'rural South Africa'. Research regarding the impact of planning at village level (micro-level), as presented in this article, may provide valuable insights for realising sustainable rural livelihoods. This article aims, through an analysis of relevant literature, to examine the sustainable development discourse, in general, while addressing sustainable rural livelihoods and micro-level planning, in particular. The main research question concerns the way in which micro-level planning can contribute to ensuring sustainable rural livelihoods in South Africa. The article also discusses the complexity of 'rural' space and its understanding in the development planning framework of South Africa, providing the spatial context for sustainable rural livelihoods. Examples of micro-level planning approaches in Africa and South Africa are discussed to elucidate their applicability to sustainable rural livelihood development in South Africa. In conclusion, the analysis reveals that, while centralist policies are pursued in South Africa to support sustainable rural development, the actual realisation of sustainable rural livelihoods may well require micro-level development planning strategies. The implication for academics, planning professionals and politicians is that the support and development of micro-level sustainable rural livelihood planning should be pursued to attain the goals of the National Development Plan (2012) of eliminating poverty and to encourage citizens to be active in their own development.

Keywords: Rural development, rural planning, micro-level planning, sustainable development, sustainable rural livelihoods

BEPLANNING WAT GERIG IS OP VOLHOUBARE LEWENSBESTAAN-ONTWIKKELING IN DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE LANDELIKE KONTEKS: 'N MIKRO-ONTWIKKELING BENADERING

In Suid-Afrika het verskillende regeringsfere (nasionaal, provinsiaal en munisipaal) verskillende verantwoordelikhede ten opsigte van landelike beplanning en ontwikkeling. Landelike ontwikkelingsstrategieë word egter oorwegend ontwikkel deur die nasionale en provinsiale regering (gesentraliseerde beplanning), soos byvoorbeeld die Omvattende Landelike Ontwikkelingsprogram (2009) en die konsep Nasionale Ruimtelike Ontwikkelingsraamwerk (2018). Hierdie werksaamhede van die verskillende regeringsfere het egter steeds nie die gewenste uitwerking op die ontwikkeling van volhoubare landelike lewensbestaan nie, aldus die Departement van Landelike Ontwikkeling en Grondhervorming, soortgelyk aan beleid en pogings om dit elders in Afrika te implementeer. Benewens die tersaaklike beplanning en implementeringskaal met betrekking tot die ontwikkeling van landelike lewensbronne, is dit ook noodsaaklik om 'n begrip te hê van die aansienlike onderskeid tussen verskillende 'landelike' gebiede in Suid-Afrika. Navorsing betreffende die trefkrag wat mikrovlakbeplanning kan hê om die gewenste ruimtelike ontwikkeling teweeg te bring, soos in hierdie artikel vevat, kan waardevolle insigte bied om volhoubare landelike lewensbronne te verweselik in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die doel van hierdie artikel is dus om 'n bondige beskrywing van die begrip 'volhoubare ontwikkeling' te verskaf en voortvloeiend daaruit die ontwikkeling van die volhoubare lewensbronnegrip, asook 'n bespreking van mikrovlakbeplanning, deur middel van 'n analise van toepaslike literatuur. Die belangrikste navorsingsvraag wat hier oorweeg word, is die wyse waarop mikrovlakbeplanning kan bydra tot volhoubare landelike lewensbronnontwikkeling in Suid-Afrika. Die ingewikkelde aard van die Suid-Afrikaanse landelike ruimte word onder die loep geneem en hoe dit beskou word in die Suid-Afrikaanse ontwikkelingsbeplanningsraamwerk van Suid-Afrika, om sodoende die ruimtelike konteks vir volhoubare landelike

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lebensbronne te verskaf. Voorbeelde van mikrovlakbeplanningsbenaderings in Afrika en Suid-Afrika word vervolgens bespreek om die toepaslikheid van hierdie benadering vir volhoubare landelike lewensbronne in Suid-Afrika toe te lig. Ten slotte wys die ontleding daarop dat, hoewel daar hoofsaaklik 'n sentralistiese beleid in Suid-Afrika gevolg word om volhoubare landelike ontwikkeling te ondersteun, die verwesenliking van volhoubare landelike lewensbronne waarskynlik afhanklik is van mikrovlakbeplanningstrategieë. Vir akademiese, beplanners en politici behels dit dat daar daadwerklike pogings aangewend moet word om die mikrovlakontwikkeling van volhoubare landelike lewensbronne te ondersteun om sodoende die doelstellings van die Nasionale Ontwikkelingsplan (2012) te bereik, naamlik die uitwis van armoede en om mense aan te moedig om aktiewe deelnemers te wees aan hul eie ontwikkeling.

Sleutelwoorde: Landelike ontwikkeling, landelike beplanning, mikrovlakbeplanning, volhoubare landelike lewensbestaan, volhoubare ontwikkeling

THERO EA NTS'ETSOPELE EA BOIPHELISO BO TSITSITSENG TIKOLOHONG EA MAHAENG A AFRIKA BORO: KATAMELO EA TEKANYO E TLASE

Naheng ea Afrika Borwa, mekhahlelo e fapaneng ea mmuso (ea naha, ea liprofinse le ea masepala) e na le maikarabello a fapaneng mabapi le thero le nts'etsopele ea mahaeng. Le ha hole joalo, hangata maano a nts'etsopele ea mahaeng a etsoa ke mmuso oa naha le oa provense, mehlala ke Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) ea 2009 le National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF) ea 2018. Ho latela Lefapha la Nts'etsopele ea Libaka tsa Mahae le Phetoho ea Mobu (DRDLR), boiteko bona bo tsoang makaleng a fapaneng a mmuso oa Afrika Boroa bo ntse bo sa fihlele litabatabelo tsa ntlafatso ea mekhhoa ea boipheliso mahaeng, eleng bothata bo tshweroeng ke linaha tse ling tsa Afrika. Kaholimo ho thero le tekanyo ea tshetso e nepahetseng, tikoloho ea boipheliso mahaeng kahare ho Afrika Borwa e hloka kutlwisiso e ikhethang ea phapang e pharalletseng ea libaka tsa 'mahaeng a Afrika Boroa'. Lipatlisiso tsa boithuto mabapi le tshusumetso ea thero maamong a mahaeng (tekanyo e tlase), joalo ka ha ho hlalitsitsoe sengoliloeng sena, e ka fana ka leseli la bohlokoa ba ho hlokomela mekhhoa e tsitsitseng ea boipheliso mahaeng. Ka tlhahlobo ea lingoloha tse amehang, sengoliloeng

sena se rerile ho hlahloba nts'etsopele e tsitsitseng ka kakaretso, ha ka hlakoreng le leng e lekola mekhhoa e tsitsitseng ea boipheliso mahaeng le thero ea tekanyo e tlase. Potso ea sehlooho e mabapi le kamoo thero ea tekanyo e tlase e ka kenyang letsoho ho netefatsa mekhhoa ea boipheliso tikolohong ea mahaeng a Afrika Boroa. Sengoliloeng sena se boetse se bua ka ho rarahana ha sebaka sa 'mahaeng' le kutloisiso ea sona ketsong ea meralo ea nts'etsopele Afrika Boroa, se bile se fana ka maemo a tikoloho ea boipheliso bo tsitsitseng mahaeng. Mehlala ea thero ea tekanyo e tlase ea meralo Afrika le Afrika Boroa e tšohloa ho hlakisa tšebeliso ea eona mabapi le bophelo bo botle ba mahaeng Afrika Boroa. Qetellong, boithuto bona bo senola hore, le ha maano a bohareng a nse a phetoha Afrika Boroa ho ts'ehetsa nts'etsopele ea mahaeng, ho fihlella mekhhoa e tsitsitseng ea bophelo ba mahaeng ho hloka maano a kenyelletseng thero e tekanyo e tlase ea nts'etsopele. Ka baka lena, barutehi, litsebi tsa meralo le bo-ralipolotiki ba lokela ho ts'ehetsa le ho nts'etsapele thero ea tekanyetso e tlase ea boipheliso ba mahaeng, mme ba e latelle ho fihlela sepheo sa Morero oa Ntshetsopele ea Naha oa 2012 (NDP) sa ho felisa bofuma le ho khothaletsa baahi ho ba mafolofolo ntlafatsong ea bona.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing and critical challenges that South Africa faces at present is the impoverishment experienced by communities in predominantly rural areas, specifically the poorer and more vulnerable segments of the population (Stats SA, 2017: 18). The difficulties that these communities face are numerous (RSA, 2013) and include, among other things, the loss of essential natural resources, food insecurity, a lack of economic opportunity, the unmet need for social services, poor education, geographic isolation, decay of the social fabric, unresolved restitution and land tenure issues, and poor infrastructure (Powell, 2012). Rural development strategies to address this rural impoverishment are predominantly developed by national and provincial government (centralised planning) such as, for example, the 2009 Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and the 2018 draft National Spatial Development

Framework (NSDF), compiled by the National Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. These efforts, however, are still not having the desired effect in the development of sustainable rural livelihoods, according to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (Munyai, 2018).

Research regarding the impact of planning at village level (decentralised planning at micro-level), as presented in this article, may provide valuable insights for realising sustainable rural livelihoods. The concept of community-based planning in South Africa has already been established through the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process on local government level (Harrison, 2003). However, the application of this approach on a micro-level (for instance, at village level) as a sustainable rural livelihood development strategy and utilising it to augment local municipal level IDPs, has not yet been explored, especially considering the geographical extent of predominantly rural municipalities. In this context, village-level planning, or micro-level planning, encompasses planning for a community (or village) that is defined by three essential characteristics, namely social interaction, shared ties, and common geographical location (Meltzer, 2005: 2).

In addition to the appropriate planning and implementation scale, the spatial dimension of rural livelihood within the South African context also requires a specific understanding of the extreme differentiation of areas within 'rural South Africa'. Not all spatial systems are similar in nature and being cognisant of the micro- and macro-relations, as well as the spatial context of a rural community, provide a fundamental awareness of what constitutes rural livelihoods. This is the approach advocated in the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) (RSA, 2016: 27) as well as the draft NSDF (RSA, 2018: 79), which emphasises the need for a managed response that recognises the

extreme variation between spatial areas. These variations are referred to in the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012: 264), where, in Chapter 8, it distinguishes between settlements such as small market towns, agrivillages, informal settlements, farm villages, scattered homesteads, displaced townships, and peri-urban informal settlements.

This article examines the following key questions: How does sustainable rural livelihood relate to sustainable development? Where is it situated in the spatial context of South Africa? What is the contribution of micro-level planning in this regard? These questions are discussed within the framework of sustainable rural livelihood development and the complexity of rural livelihoods in South Africa. Examples of micro-level planning in Africa and its relevance to a similar approach in South Africa are considered. The discussion concludes with recommendations for academics, planning professionals and politicians with respect to micro-level planning for sustainable rural livelihoods.

2. FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable rural livelihood development is situated within the broader category of sustainable development, a planning approach that has gained considerable traction since the 1970s. The best-known definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 43) This definition originated with the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) entitled “Our Common Future” (1987). It has often been referenced in sustainable development discussions, used either as is or elaborated upon, but its validity as a definition has also been questioned, particularly with regard to its vagueness about how

“sustainable development” is to be achieved (Rankin, 2014: 1376). This vagueness, however, has also allowed it to be embraced by different stakeholders, whether they be conservative, radical or somewhere in between.

Initially, sustainable development focused on its environmental aspect, recognising the necessity of meeting the complex needs of people, while maintaining the integrity of natural systems that support all life (Silberstein & Maser, 2000: 69). Dasmann, for instance, believed that sustainable development should be the rational use of the environment to provide the best possible sustainable quality of life for humanity. In other words, “using environmental resources to provide a sustainable living environment for as long as possible”, with the quantitative and qualitative needs of people determining the quality of life (Dasmann, 1975: 5).

Ultimately, sustainable development and sustainability began to be defined in terms of the “triple bottom line”, namely economic development, social development and environmental protection, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars (United Nations General Assembly, 2005: 2). All of these definitions also have three pertinent characteristics, as identified by Martens (2006: 36-38): it is intergenerational (at least two generations, or 25 to 50 years); the level of scale (global to regional to local, not necessarily mutually inclusive, due to shunting mechanisms), and multiple domains (economic, ecological and sociocultural). In terms of these aspects and for the purposes of this article, Anglin’s (2011) comprehensive definition of sustainable development is considered the most relevant. It states that locally sustainable development is the use of natural, economic, political, human, and social capital with attention to the ability of future generations to benefit from these resources, and includes the necessity of good

stewardship of the environment in the effective use or reuse of natural or man-made assets, while generating income and livelihoods. This situates livelihood development within the contextual understanding of sustainable development.

2.1 Sustainable development and sustainable rural livelihoods

Establishing the concept of sustainable rural livelihoods, as derived from sustainable development, requires an understanding of the complex interaction between at least the sociopolitical, economic and ecological spheres, with humankind at the centre (MacDonald, 1994: 125). Gause (2007) describes this interaction as the linkage of citizens to nature (ecological) and to one another (sociopolitical) to create more healthy and vital neighbourhoods (economic); it involves residents in community governance and environmental stewardship, creating sustainable communities. Figure 1 demonstrates this crucial interdependency of the different spheres in order to attain sustainable development. It also alludes to the notion that ‘development’ is context-dependent, as economies, societies and environments differ, making it difficult to arrive at a consensus goal for sustainable development that is always applicable to all communities (Pearce, Barbier & Makandya, 1990: 2).

This interrelatedness between the economic, environmental and sociopolitical spheres refutes the notion that environmental conservation equates to sustainable development, which is still the prevalent belief in Africa (UN-Habitat, 2014: 255). The reality is that successful integration of ecology and economy can provide enough feedback mechanisms to ensure the resilience of ecosystems and the endurance of their life-sustaining elements (Panday & Khanna, 1990: 14). This is more than simply a “solution” to the

conflict between conservation and development (Kritzinger, 1996: 4); it emphasises the interdependence of socio-economic development and environmental conservation in the achievement of quality of life (Nel, 1994: 65). A pertinent example is the impossibility of achieving sustainable agriculture (need for development) if land is degrading (need for conservation) (Savory & Butterfield, 2010: 151).

Sustainable rural livelihood development reflects this complex interrelationship between environmental aspects and requires a “historically constituted, sustainable mode of organization employed by a rural society to use its area and manage its resources, resulting in interactions between the bio-physical, socio-economic and technical factors” (Jouve, Tallec & Budelman, 1996: 19). In the 1990s, Robert Chambers and others developed the specific use of sustainable livelihoods as a framework for understanding rural development, based upon research in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Mali (Levine, 2014: 1). Sustainable rural livelihoods, for Chambers and Conway (1992: 7-8), comprise livelihood capabilities, as well as tangible and intangible assets. Capability refers to a person being able to perform certain basic functions, including the ability to cope with stress as well as being reactive, proactive and dynamically adaptable. Tangible assets are often both stores and resources (i.e., livestock, trees and savings). Intangible assets include claims, which are demands and appeals that can be made for material, moral or other practical support or access, as well as access to use a resource, store or service or to obtain information, material technology, employment, food, or income. This approach is illustrated in Figure 2.

Building upon these defining components and flows, the UK Department for International Development (DFID, 2001) developed a sustainable livelihoods framework that views people

as operating within a context of vulnerability shaped by different factors: shifting seasonal constraints (and opportunities), economic shocks and longer term trends. Through different types of livelihood assets (or capital) that influence institutions (structures) and processes, which, in turn, determine access to livelihood assets, a range of livelihood strategies are developed to achieve desired livelihood outcomes. This framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

This framework provides a valuable tool with which to evaluate sustainable rural livelihoods within the South African context. This contrasts with conventional “sustainable

development” approaches that focus exclusively on the improved management of natural resources and do not adequately reflect on the livelihood strategies of agricultural households and communities (Cole, 1994: 12). It distinguishes the different livelihood assets (or capital) that influence institutions (structures) and processes, which, in turn, determine access to livelihood assets, from which a range of livelihood strategies are developed to achieve desired livelihood outcomes. This approach respects the fact that, for most of the rural population, especially in Africa, the focus is on livelihood

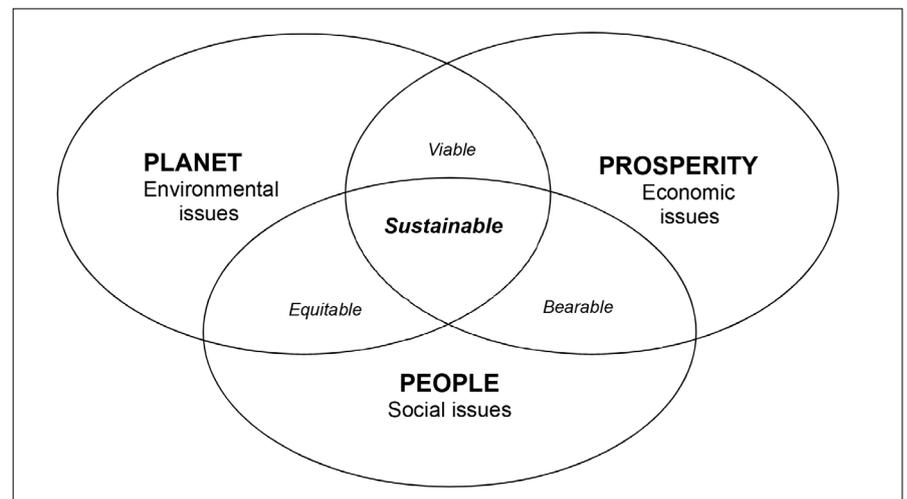


Figure 1: Elements of sustainable development
Source: Yates, 2012: 10

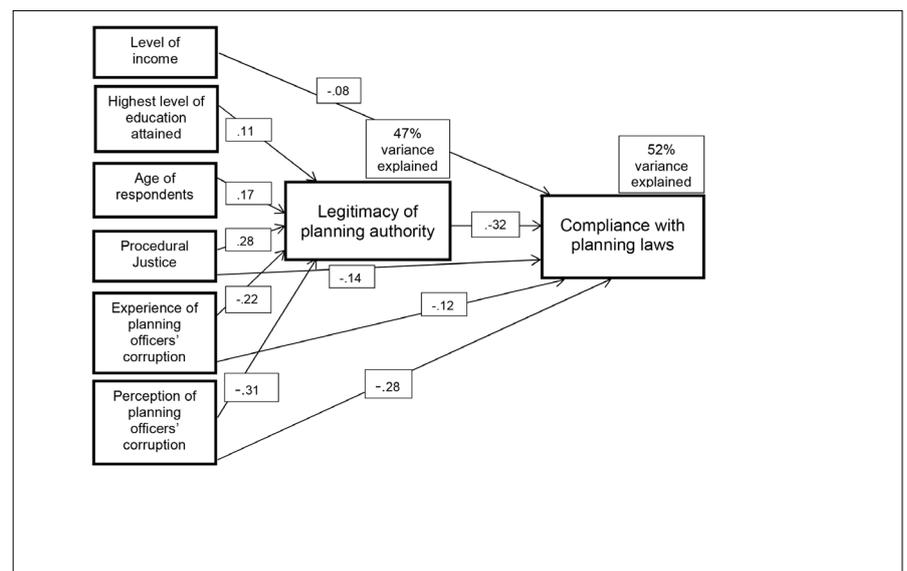


Figure 2: Components and flows in a livelihood
Source: Chambers and Conway, 1992: 7

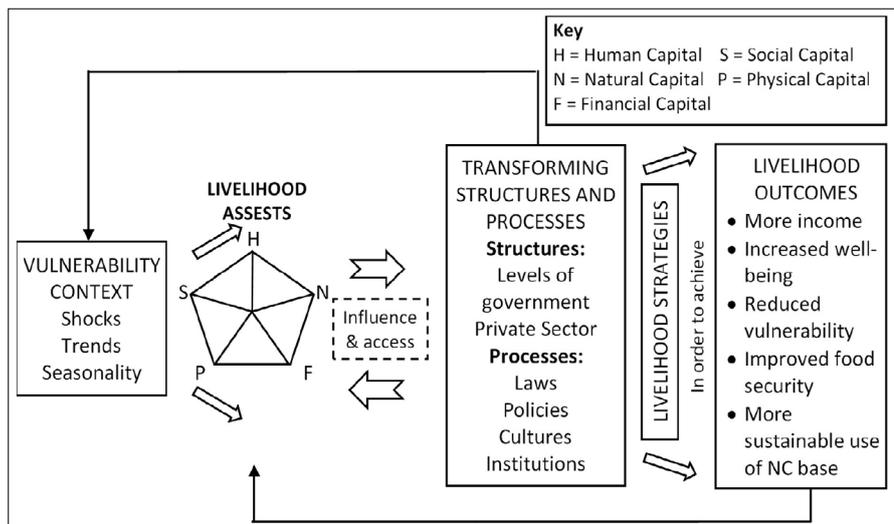


Figure 3: Sustainable livelihoods framework

Source: DFID, 2001: 1

strategies (specifically the rural poor) (Lesetedi, 2003: 37). It also provides some indication of the complexity of rural space and the effect it has on sustainable rural development.

2.2 Planning for sustainable development and sustainable rural livelihoods in South Africa

Post-1994, the South African planning processes and policies purposely endeavour to incorporate sustainability principles to address the challenges of sprawling suburbia, mono-functional zoning, low-density development and the social inequities of the separated and fragmented urban landscape (RSA, 1998: 21). For example, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), one of the first policies formalised in 1994, sets out explicit goals for the sustainable use of resources, including fair access to natural resources, as well as safe and healthy living and work environments. It also advocates that environmental issues be attended to through participatory decision-making processes. This reflects Munasinge's (2009: 225) viewpoint that sustainable development strategies should be devised on a country-specific basis, with due regard for local conditions, resource endowments and social needs. In terms of planning for sustainable rural livelihoods, it implies that the

perspectives of rural communities should be at the heart of strategic rural planning (Dalal-Clayton, Dent & Dubois, 2003:187) and that the design of sustainable settlements must consider cultural precepts, encoding of the history and collective identity of residents, building on community-empowered models of design, and be physically adapted to environmental conditions (Zetter & Watson, 2006: 10).

While the distinct qualities of rural communities should inform sustainable rural livelihood development in South Africa, planning approaches must also contend with context-specific challenges in these communities. Lubbe (1995: 108) points out the relative shortage and pollution of water resources, the yearly degradation of topsoil, the desperate need of indigents to improve their living conditions, and the desire of the affluent to maintain their living standard. Furthermore, Nel and Hill (2000: 230) iterate critical issues such as land tenure, economic interaction in rural former homeland areas, urban dependence, the role of local production, and the place of local/periodic markets in the progress of sustainable rural development. The draft NSDF (RSA, 2018) also recognises that these issues need to be addressed, in order to realise sustainable rural development in South Africa through

the environmental (water and land resources), economic (land tenure, local production and markets) and social (community practices) spheres.

Pertinent to the issue of sustainable rural livelihood development in Africa is the accessibility of resources for women as well as their ability to participate in planning and implementation processes (Government of National Unity, 1995). Women's prospects in availing themselves of productive land, grazing and other resources are often limited by customary law and the lack of their understanding of bureaucratic systems (Cousins, 2013: 73).

In terms of enabling the participation of women in planning and implementation processes, the provision of childcare, information, education, training, capacity building, and positive strengthening of women's groups and cooperatives are requisite (Gibbens, 2016: 69). It is essential to include these gender-specific concerns in sustainable rural livelihood development planning, given the challenges that women face in rural South Africa.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect related to rural development is the underlying assumption that it is dictated by accessibility. In South Africa, access and ownership of land remains a foundation for improving rural sustainability and achieving development. Thus, the continuous call for land reform, which includes (according to the draft NSDF [RSA, 2018: 14]) land restitution, land redistribution, and tenure reform. However, the most significant determinant of whether sustainable rural development will be realised through land reform is the institutional environment through which resources are distributed (specifically land in this case) (Cole, 1994: 4). This argues for careful planning considerations, as rapid and large-scale land reforms could be economically disastrous (Clayton, 1983: 21), as is currently evident in Puerto Rico (Trigo, 2007: 64), Venezuela (Naím & Toro, 2018: 130), Zimbabwe (Chipenda, 2018: 140)

and South Africa (Chikozho, Makombe & Milondzo, 2019: 13; Kirsten, Machethe, Ndlovu & Lubambo, 2016: 456).

The integrated and inclusive rural development strategy proposed in Chapter 6 of the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012: 219) intends to address the aforementioned challenges. It takes into consideration that rural communities require greater social, economic and political opportunities to overcome poverty, with a three-pronged strategy to alleviate the overwhelming poverty in rural areas that entail agricultural development with a land-reform and job creation/livelihood approach; the provision of quality access to basic services, healthcare, education and food security, and formulating development plans tailored according to the varying opportunities specific to a rural town and area, including the improvement of intergovernmental relations to support rural governance. The draft NSDF (RSA, 2018: 17-18) incorporates this perspective into two of five spatial development frames, namely “Productive rural regions and regional development anchors as foundation of national transformation” (Frame 2) and “National social service infrastructure system as enabling infrastructure for national well-being” (Frame 5). It also provides broad guidance regarding the differentiation found in rural areas by dividing South Africa into two halves, namely a semi-arid, sparsely populated west and an eastern side with dense rural settlements (RSA, 2018: 41), as well as proposals regarding the development potential of different rural areas.

In summary, sustainable rural livelihoods should be viewed as an integrating concept that places communities at the heart of strategic rural planning in the pursuit of sustainable rural development in South Africa. It also requires an understanding of the spatial complexity of rural livelihoods to give substance to the distinct qualities and context-specific challenges of rural communities.

3. SPATIAL COMPLEXITY OF RURAL LIVELIHOODS

‘Rural’ space has historically been juxtaposed with ‘urban’ space, frequently using population density and economic activity as the predominant criteria to differentiate between the areas (Fazal, 2012: 2). This approach towards spatial differentiation informed studies of the interaction between urban and rural areas in developing countries (Rostow, 1960; Boudeville, 1966; Friedmann, 1966). It has become clear, however, that these models are not able to represent the complex reality of human settlement and the rural-urban interface in developing countries, specifically the effect of migration dynamics. The key tenets to rural livelihood include the increase or diversification of income and/or ensuring access to assets, and rural populations in developing countries consider migration in its various iterations as an important way to achieve this (Gilbert & Gugler, 1992: 79; laquinta & Drescher, 2000).

The multiplicity of migratory patterns is not the only determinant in the complexity of what constitutes ‘rural’ areas, but it is also influenced by flows of natural resources, ideas, information and wealth exchanges (Ndabeni, 2013: 1). This two-way connection may include urban-rural linkages (sending remittances from urban to rural areas, supporting new migrants to urban areas), but also rural-urban (sending food from rural to urban areas, rural asset management) (Djurfeldt, 2015: 4). The existence of these linkages is

also recognised in the draft NSDF that emphasises their necessity in support of productivity and a people’s economy (RSA, 2018: 34). The persisting intensification of these linkages has led to the blurring of boundaries between what constitutes ‘rural’ and ‘urban’, as well as the diffusion of economic and spatial boundaries (Ndabeni, 2013: 13), resulting in a complex landscape of areas with varying degrees of “urbanity” and “rurality”. Figure 4 illustrates a stylised representation of these linkages, flows and networks connecting rural and urban areas, with an exchange of benefits and disadvantages on both sides.

In the South African context, these urban-rural linkages also come to the fore when considering rural areas; for instance, some of the differentiation criteria that the NDP (RSA, 2012: 264) indicates for rural areas are the contraction or expansion of their populations due to migratory patterns, location with respect to development nodes and corridors, and the degree of poverty. Another informative criterion is that of the Department of Human Settlements (RSA, 2009: 1-4), namely tenure, stating that the housing needs differ in areas with communal tenure and traditional settlement patterns to those in rural towns with informal and formal settlements. Using the criteria of the (dominant) economic activity, it can vary from commercial farming areas to subsistence farming areas (with communal tenure) and often includes small towns and settlements that are largely dependent on agriculture.

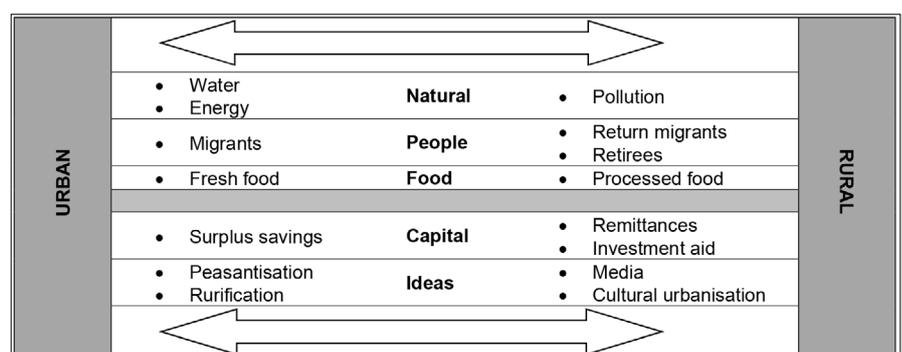


Figure 4: Urban-rural linkages
Source: Lynch, 2005: 6

The multi-faceted concept of 'rural' South Africa is further complicated by the effect that apartheid policies have had on human settlement patterns (Ndabeni, 2013: 13; RSA, 2018: 19). Examples include segregationist policies that discouraged the development of a settled Black urban working class in cities and native reserves where Africans had to reside (Du Toit, 2017: 2). This specific aspect is highlighted by the distinction that the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012: 264) makes in Chapter 8 between human settlements in the 'rural' areas of South Africa: it distinguishes between settlements in commercial farming areas and those in former homelands. Those in commercial areas are categorised into small market towns, agrivillages, informal settlements, farm villages and scattered homesteads and those in former homelands into displaced townships, peri-urban informal settlements, villages and scattered homesteads.

The recognition that human settlements in the rural areas of South Africa are, to some extent, interwoven with urban areas, through multi-level linkages, has led the NDP (RSA, 2012: 279) to adopt the approach of UN-Habitat towards 'rural' and 'urban' settlements. Instead of separate categories, settlements are considered as being situated somewhere along an urban-rural settlement continuum, linked by various

influences and processes. It is important to understand, however, that the nature of relationships and linkages is not uniform and as such the urban-rural continuum is not a smooth linear transition (Lynch, 2005: 90-91) influenced by sociopolitical, economic and structural relationships maintained between individuals and groups in the different areas (Lesetedi, 2003: 37). This approach reflects the reality of human settlements that are uniquely dynamic, interconnecting networks of tangible and intangible entities.

The acknowledgement of the interrelated and manifold nature of human settlements, especially in the rural areas of South Africa, is of utmost importance when considering rural livelihood proposals and planning considerations. In this regard, the rural-urban continuum (as conceptualised by Satterthwaite [2000] and illustrated in Table 1) is a useful tool to assist in determining the specific aspects of the spatial dimension of a specific rural community.

In considering sustainable rural livelihoods, it is, therefore, imperative to be cognisant of the fact that many rural and urban residents rely on a combination of both rural- and urban-based assets or income sources as part of their survival strategies. Sustainable development approaches in South Africa recognise that the sustainability of urban and rural areas is intimately linked

(Du Toit, 2017: 1), evidenced in the exploitation of urban-rural differentials by both rural and urban dwellers to develop and enhance survival strategies and livelihood options. Lynch (2005: 96) even declares that the different benefits and costs of urban and rural areas provide the opportunities that multi-locational and migrant households are seeking. This implies that, specifically in terms of poverty, a distinction between urban and rural contexts is limited because of the characteristics of production patterns, rural-urban links and the diversity of conditions in both rural and urban areas (Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002: 59-60). Rural livelihood strategies contain both urban and rural elements, comprising any combination of activities such as cultivation, herding, hunting, gathering, reciprocal or wage labour, trading and hawking, artisanal work (*i.e.*, weaving and carving) processing, providing services in transport, fetching and carrying, begging and theft (Chambers & Conway, 1992: 8). Furthermore, migration for rural populations is an important way to increase or diversify income (from complementary jobs and remittance) and/or to ensure access to assets (Gilbert & Gugler, 1992: 79; laquinta & Drescher, 2000).

It is also of vital consequence in South Africa to understand the gender dimension of rural livelihoods and poverty. Some of the relevant

Table 1: The rural-urban continuum

RURAL		URBAN
Livelihoods drawn from crop cultivation, livestock, forestry or fishing (<i>i.e.</i> key for livelihood is access to natural capital)	RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM	Livelihoods drawn from labour markets within non-agricultural production or making/selling goods or services
Access to land for housing and building materials generally not a problem		Access to land for housing very difficult; housing and land markets highly commercialised
More distant from government as regulator and provider of services		More vulnerable to 'bad' governance
Access to infrastructure and services limited (largely because of distance, low density and capacity to pay)		Access to infrastructure and services difficult for low-income groups because of high prices, illegal nature of their homes (for many) and poor governance
Less opportunities for earning cash; more for self-provisioning; greater reliance on favourable weather conditions		Greater reliance on cash for access to food, water, sanitation, employment, garbage disposal
Access to natural capital as the key asset and basis for livelihood		Greater reliance on house as an economic resource (space for production, access to income-earning opportunities; asset and income-earner for owners – including <i>de facto</i> owners)
Urban characteristics in rural locations (<i>e.g.</i> , prosperous tourist areas, mining areas, areas with high-value crops and many local multiplier links, rural areas with diverse non-agricultural production, etc.)		Rural characteristics in urban location (urban agriculture, 'village' enclaves, access to land for housing through non-monetary traditional forms, etc.)

Source: Satterthwaite, 2000

issues are that women comprise a large percentage of the rural poor (RSA, 2012: 264); women migrants in urban areas usually send a higher percentage of their income to their rural home than their male counterparts, and women in rural areas have less control over the spending of remittances (Ndabeni, 2013: 25). In addition, female-headed households are particularly disadvantaged, as they spend relatively more on basic social services such as food and water, shelter, energy, health and education, as well as transport and communications services (RSA, 2009: 3). This argues for an inclusive understanding of the complexity of 'rural' space and its interconnectedness with urban space along the purposive lens of women when developing sustainable rural livelihood strategies.

4. MICRO-LEVEL PLANNING IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOOD PLANNING

The specificity of local developmental context and the spatial complexity of rural livelihoods, as well as the interdependence of sociopolitical, economic and environmental factors in sustainable development argue for a planning approach that considers these aspects appropriately. While centralised rural development planning has dominated for a long time, there has also been a growing realisation that decentralisation is pivotal to sustainable rural livelihood development (Terrapon-Pfaff, Ortiz, Dienst & Gröne, 2018: 409). Nearly all development planning is 'local' (decentralised) in the sense of the needs of people, interventions to address them and accountability to local populations. It is only since the early 1970s that, instead of centralised development planning approaches, a more comprehensible scale of planning, or 'micro-level development', has been seriously considered. Brooks (2004: 63) explains this as a realisation that people identified with the immediate neighbourhood where they lived rather than with the administrative

unit (planning level) in which it was situated. Figure 5 illustrates this progressive shift in emphasis of planning approaches.

Many studies show the complexity and diversity of rural livelihoods and the strong influence that local contexts have on the scale and nature thereof (Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002: 66-67). This, in turn, supports a micro-level approach specifically in a rural African context, where all these aspects can be assimilated. In this context, village-level planning, or micro-level planning, encompasses planning for a community (or village) that is defined by three essential characteristics, namely social interaction, shared ties and common geographical location (Meltzer, 2005: 2). In this regard, Jouve *et al.* (1996: 19) concluded that village communities are the most effective scale of planning, stating that, in many developing countries (especially sub-Saharan Africa), individuals are usually closely integrated in family and lineage units, where their technical and social behaviour is relatively homogeneous and codified within a village community.

Micro-level development as a sustainable rural livelihood strategy, however, cannot occur in isolation and is subject to the issue of coordination with other planning instruments and decision-making powers (Conyers & Hills, 1984: 225). Rural development projects are

rarely successfully implemented in developing countries, as responsible authorities often lack enough authority and/or resources (Dalal-Clayton *et al.*, 2003: 197). This is amply illustrated by the inability of the majority of local governments in the predominantly rural areas of South Africa to implement their IDPs, especially at territorial and social levels such as the village agrosystem (Gibbens, 2016: 92). To truly realise sustainable rural livelihoods, communities often need the involvement of central government and possible third parties such as NGOs (Taylor, 1992: 246).

4.1 International micro-level development perspective

There are numerous international examples of a micro-level approach (or 'localism') towards development planning. In development practice, the concept of 'localism' is used to describe a strategy aimed at devolving power and resources from central to local control within an agreed framework of national minimum standards and policy priorities (Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Curtis, 2003; Stoker, 2004; Feagan, 2007; Hildreth, 2011; Walker, Hunter, Devine-Wright, Evans & Fay, 2007). The localism movement comprises elements of democracy, social and economic well-being, the relationship between citizen and state, and how public services are delivered in the twenty-first century (Hopkin & Atkinson, 2011; Mkandawire, 2002).

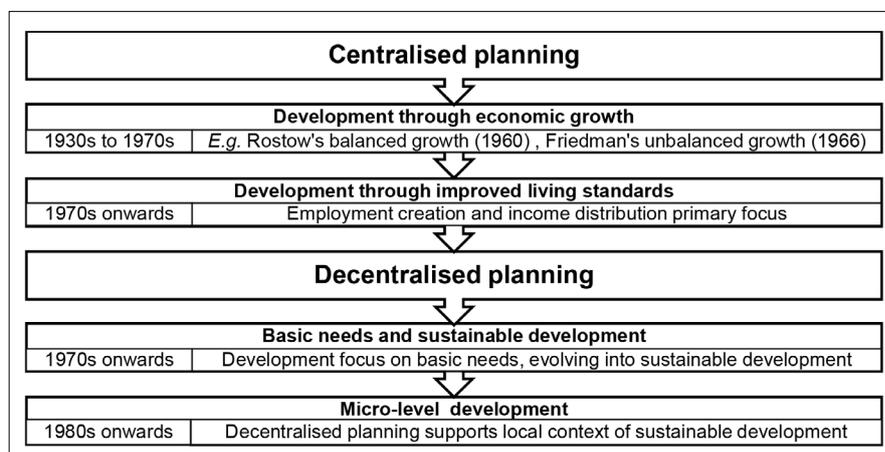


Figure 5: Regional development planning foci

Source: Gibbens, 2016: 90

Ultimately, the objective is that participative democracy, as opposed to representative democracy, should be the dominant political form in society (Magnaghi, 2008: xiii). In support of Magnaghi's contention that deliberative democracy should be the prevailing local and central political form, Parkinson (2007: 23) describes this approach as both macro-focused (on political conversation) and micro-focused (the ideal speech situation).

The practical implementation of this approach has increased in recent years, albeit mostly on a small scale, attracting considerable academic attention since 1970. As one of the most notable scholars in this regard, Edward Goldsmith (1977: 137-138) argues that the only effective form of democracy is participatory rather than elective, where all adult citizens take an active part in running their own affairs. He asserts that this is possible only in a small community in which there is constant contact between people, and in which public opinion is formed by the same cultural influences. Iterating this, Kunstler (1998) emphasises the need for the development of public spaces that acknowledge and encourage micro-level socialisation and interaction.

Presently, the localism approach is most vigorously promoted by its proponents in the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Western Europe (O'Riordan, 2004: 235). In the USA, adherents of the localism movement are particularly concerned with the local control of government, the support of local production and the consumption of goods, as well as the promotion of local history, culture and identity (Hess, 2010: 147). Hess' (2008) contention is that, by re-localising democratic and economic relationships to the local level (particularly the local ownership of regional economies), social, economic and environmental problems will be more definable, and solutions easily proffered. In addition, Roxburgh (2010:38) proposes the allocation of its public expenditure budget share (even if reduced) to a locality for service

delivery, and letting it determine its own priorities and strategy.

In the UK, localism is pursued not only at community level ("bottom-up"), but also by central government ("top-down") through various initiatives such as the Localism Act 2011, which aims to reinvigorate civic society by devolving more power (Roxburgh, 2010: 37). The primary measures contained in this Act include new freedoms and flexibilities for local government, new rights and powers for communities and individuals, reform to make the planning system more democratic and effective, and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally (Department for Communities and Local Government, UK, 2011: 3).

In Western Europe, a representative localism approach has been developed based on the legal principles that define the nature of basic relationships between the central government, local government and citizens, idealising the independence and representative nature of local government.

Öztürkmen (2005: 60) describes the reasoning for this approach as placing value on the local knowledge of communities to provide essential information when developing policies for localities. These are set out in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe, 1985), which has been signed by nearly all European governments, including the UK. In this charter, local authorities are placed at the heart of local governance in a democratic system and are seen to have an essential role to connect with and enable citizens to achieve their basic democratic right to participate in the conduct of public affairs (Hildreth, 2011: 708).

When evaluating localism, three principles give definition to the concept, namely freedom from central interference (local autonomy), freedom to effect particular outcomes (local governance), and the reflection of local identity (Pratchett, 2004: 358). These aspects resonate with the sociopolitical aspect of development. The first principle at the centre

of localism is local autonomy, as applied on global, national and local levels. This can be understood as the pursuit of social equity, where basic services and entitlements are available to everyone at national and local level, achieved through the right balance between national consistency and local autonomy (Roxburgh, 2010: 37). The converse (but equally important aspect) of local autonomy is active citizenship, which is the belief that with the granting of rights come certain responsibilities, specifically regarding the community and the environment (Tich, 2010). The definition of community implies responsibility. Assadourian (2008: 152), drawing on the work of Metzger (2005), describes community as a group of geographically rooted people engaged in relationships with one another and, through these relationships, having shared responsibilities, as the Latin roots of the word suggest: *com* (with) *munis* (duties).

Local governance, the second principle, is frequently advanced as a reaction to centralisation. Localists such as Silberstein and Maser (2000: 190) argue that central authority should be devolved to communities, using natural geographic and historical boundaries to organise society politically along community lines. According to Moyer and Bohl (2019: 199), it is essential that development strategies such as effective local governance be pursued, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

Curtis (2003: 85) describes the third aspect of localism, namely the reflection of local identity, as the fact that 'place matters', where 'place' refers to specific, unique locations with their eco-systems, communities, and resources. This dimension emphasises the social construct of 'place-making', where spatial and social characteristics intersect (Dupre, 2019). In addition, local 'place-making' development contributes to social sustainability and successful community-based design (Križnik, 2013: 415).

Localism as a viable decentralised development approach is not without its shortcomings, however. Three significant concerns that relate to localism are specifically the rights and responsibilities debate, the central-local balance in the devolvement of powers, and the unwillingness of the public to participate. Concerning the rights/responsibilities debate: While the rights of communities are often clearly defined within legal frameworks, those of stewardship (O’Riordan, 2004: 245) or responsibilities are not. A specific South African example is that, in South Africa’s Constitution, everyone is guaranteed the right to water, but the responsibility to use it judiciously is not stipulated.

Secondly, the issue of the central-local balance of power relates to the tension that exists between local and national standards and priorities. According to Parvin (2009: 355), the protection of the democratic rights of all citizens is the responsibility of civil government, but it may not always be possible to execute this responsibility when decision-making power is devolved to local communities. Central government has a primary role to play in ensuring territorial justice, equity and the collective provision of public goods (Stoker, 2004: 117). In exercising this role, it circumscribes local autonomy. Thus, there is an inevitable tension between local autonomy, local democracy and the maintenance of a broader democratic polity (Pratchett, 2004: 373).

Thirdly, there is a general perception of unwillingness among the public to participate in local decision-making (Hopkin & Atkinson, 2011: 621), which is mostly ascribed to a lack of evidence of good service delivery on the ground (De Vente, Reed, Stringer, Valente & Newig, 2016: 478). Other constraints listed by Dalal-Clayton *et al.* (2003: 161) include the distrust of community members about government authorities (central or decentralised), government emphasis on participation without concomitant increase in rights and income possibilities (participative

burden), and a lack of effective representation of community interests.

Micro-level development or ‘localism’ as an approach to development planning that adequately and effectively addresses the needs of a specific community has been shown to provide a viable approach that should be considered in sustainable rural livelihood planning.

4.2 Examples of micro-level development in Africa

In an African context, there are numerous studies corroborating the success of a micro-level approach towards sustainable rural livelihood development (Jouve *et al.*, 1996; Dalal-Clayton *et al.*, 2003). However, Ndaro (1992: 195) argues that local initiatives will remain marginal to the development process, unless they are integrated with the planning efforts of government. It is encouraging that, in this regard, micro-level development is being promoted in South Africa by national policies such as the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012) and the draft Urban Spatial Development Framework (RSA, 2014). These policy documents make provision for village development, supporting the stance that effective sustainable rural livelihood development needs to take place at village level.

De Satgé, Holloway, Mullins, Nchabaleng and Ward (2002: 9-14) provide an illuminating illustration of this approach, where the use of a livelihoods methodology supports sustainable development at a micro-level. This approach, Learning About Livelihoods (LAL), has been developed from the sustainable rural livelihoods approach of the DFID (as discussed previously), the Southern African Drought-Resilient Livelihoods Programme and the Policy Guidelines for Integrating Environmental Planning into Land Reform (PGIEP) programme. The Southern African Drought-Resilient Livelihoods Programme was developed during 1997 under the auspices of the Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (DiMP) in the Department of Environmental

and Geographical Sciences at the University of Cape Town.

This framework was based on research undertaken by livelihoods practitioners working in Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe to determine a shared conceptual framework for livelihoods analysis and vulnerability assessment in drought-prone communities.

The Policy Guidelines for Integrating Environmental Planning into Land Reform (PGIEP) programme was developed by the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) in conjunction with the Danish funding agency DANCED. It essentially endeavours to broaden and increase people’s access to the asset base, diversify livelihood opportunities, improve attainment of desired livelihood outcomes and limit risk and vulnerability. From these approaches, the LAL developed a holistic framework to determine how households in different categories of well-being are moving towards greater resilience and livelihood sustainability or falling into increased vulnerability.

Further afield in Africa, Yang and Yang (2018: 950) provide an example of a micro-level development project that benefits the rural areas of East Africa, specifically in terms of electricity provision. They state that without capital investment subsidies (most often macro-level intervention), the poor in rural communities find it extremely difficult to connect with a conventional power grid. However, context-specific renewable energy provision options such as solar photovoltaics with a lease-to-own financial model may provide solutions. Such a model has been initiated and developed by several private companies for rural communities in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. It is envisaged that, with the current development and scaling up speed of these solar PV kits under this financial model, all these communities could be provided with electricity by 2030.

Duguma, Atela, Ayana, Alemagi, Mpanda, Nyago, Minang, Nzyoka, Goundjem-Tita and Ngo Ntamag-Ndjebet (2018) use the example of

forest management in sub-Saharan Africa to promote micro-level development. They state the necessity of local communities' involvement in the contribution of natural resources to community development and at the same time improving resource management. This is in contrast with centralised (government-led) schemes that have failed to ensure proper management of natural resources, as some protected areas experienced loss of biodiversity, due to the lack of genuine engagement of local communities. This underscores the crucial role of the local context and micro-level planning, as rural communities depend on land, wood for energy and construction, and other non-timber forest products.

Kim, Sohn and Park (2019) describe the Saemaul Zero Hunger Communities Project (SZHCP) implemented in Tanzania. It has a broader focus than the two previous examples and aligns more closely with sustainable rural livelihood development. The project targeted some of the most vulnerable communities to improve their livelihood and initiated community-based (micro-level) rural development programmes that encompass food security, income generation, education, and infrastructure improvement. This focus on micro-level development significantly improved the livelihoods of beneficiaries in relation to zero hunger, increased income generation and promoted positive social changes. It also helped strengthen the capacity of communities to run development projects themselves.

Another example is that of the Millennium Villages initiative operating in 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Millennium Promise, 2006). Millennium Promise believes that villages can transform themselves and meet the Millennium Development Goals if they are empowered to implement inexpensive, community-led interventions. In addition to actively engaging communities to lead the implementation of these

interventions, there is also the provision of low-cost, practical and integrated investment. This occurs with the understanding that the development of millennium villages (micro-level development) cannot take place in isolation, but needs the support of government, partner organisations and, of course, the village members themselves.

Micro-level development strategies for sustainable rural livelihood development in South Africa also require a specific focus on the needs and priorities for women, considering that they constitute a large percentage of the rural poor (RSA, 2012: 42). Issues such as unequal access to ownership of land and the other social and power relationships which are included in the concept are particularly important (Taylor, 1992: 236). Access to safe drinking water, electricity and quality early childhood education, for example, would greatly ease the burden of women having to generate survivalist strategies in rural areas (RSA, 2012: 218). This needs knowledge of the diversity of rural areas and agricultural activity being practised, so that the exclusion of households due to ignorance can be avoided and interventions be contextualised and focused (Laurent, Van Rooyen, Madikizela, Bonnal & Carstens, 1999: 190). A case in point illustrating the effectiveness of micro-level approaches towards sustainable rural livelihood development in an African context, with a specific focus on women, is the Boma Project in Kenya (BOMA Project, 2009). The NGO Boma Project in Kenya aims to alleviate poverty and build resiliency through their Rural Entrepreneur Access Project (REAP). It consists of an ongoing programme that provides a cash grant (seed capital to launch a business), sustained training in business skills and savings, and hands-on local mentoring by village mentors to business groups of three women. In this manner, local knowledge and support is leveraged to provide a diversified income, while Boma savings associations provide women with access to resources that

assist them in their particular needs such as school fees, medical care and responding to shocks (such as drought or family emergencies).

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this discussion was to provide a specific framework for understanding sustainable rural livelihood development and micro-level planning, specifically within a South African context. It is clear from the preceding discussion that there is tremendous potential for village-based rural livelihood development to result in sustainable development and poverty reduction. Village-based rural livelihood development, as a manifestation of micro-level development, would reflect many aspects of sustainability on a small scale. It may also address the current needs of many rural people and realise some of the objectives of the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012).

However, the importance of local initiatives should not be over-estimated. Ojo (2014: 944) states that local initiatives should not be pursued to the detriment of the provision of effective public goods and services, as it would undermine sustainable development. The promotion and consolidation of localised decision-making (micro-level development) can provide an implementable compromise between top-down policies and bottom-up social networks (Magnaghi, 2008: 200-201). It is imperative to acknowledge, in this regard, that a workable and flexible balance between localism (micro-level development) and the place of communities in the wider system be sought. In addition, micro-level development is, by nature, too detailed to be easily included in broader policy, although it could inform the direction thereof (Dalal-Clayton *et al.*, 2003: 127). Nevertheless, in view of the NDP's statement that the complexity of 'rural' South Africa requires different and specific strategies in accordance with different settlement types, in order to develop rural sustainability (RSA, 2012: 204) and the advocacy

of the draft NSDF for self-sustaining and 'off-grid' settlements in certain rural areas (RSA, 2018: 85), efforts need to be made to place rural communities at the centre of rural livelihood planning and increase their participation to enable them to achieve the kind of sustainable livelihoods they want and need.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that, while centralist policies are pursued in South Africa to support sustainable rural development, the actual realisation of sustainable rural livelihoods may well require micro-level development planning strategies. The implication for academics, planning professionals and politicians is that the support and development of micro-level, sustainable, rural livelihood planning should be pursued to attain the goals of the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012) of eliminating poverty and encouraging citizens to be active in their own development.

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