

# Whither planning? The state of planning in South Africa

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## Abstract

Our future lies in the present. In 2050 there may be 9 billion people on earth. We must start now to manage all the people. Land is important to sustain all the people while preserving the earth. Technology can be an answer, but technology can't be neutral. Our approach should be a call for integrated planning for sustainable management of land resources. Humanity's association with land springs from the enduring nature of land: it is the basis of food, shelter and livelihood. Accessible participatory structures should be created to allow interested and affected parties to express their concerns or support for any land use or land development decision at sufficiently early stage in the decision-making process.

## WAARHEEN NEIG BEPLANNING? DIE HUIDIGE STAND VAN SAKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

Ons toekoms lê in die hede. In 2050 kan daar 9 biljoen mense op die aarde wees. Ons moet nou al begin om al dié mense te bestuur. Grond is belangrik om mense te onderhou, maar ook om die aarde te bewaar. Tegnologie kan antwoorde gee, maar tegnologie is nooit neutraal nie. Ons houding moet gerig wees op geïntegreerde beplanning vir vouhoubare bestuur van ons hulpbronne. Die mens se verhouding tot grond hou verband met volhoubaarheid, vir voedsel en skooling – as lewensbronne. Dit is belangrik dat die mensdom 'n besluit neem oor hoe onderhandelbaar bestuursbeginsels ten opsigte van die gemeenskap en sy omgewing is. Toeganklike strukture vir deelname moet ingestel word sodat die betrokke partye vroeg reeds hulle besorgdheid kan verwoord hetsy betrokke raak by die besluitnemingsproses aangaande enige grondgebruik of -ontwikkeling.

Leibniz once said: "Das Gegenwartige geht swanger mit dem Kommenden." Translated it says: "The present is pregnant with what is coming." It means that future problems are already present in the systems under which we live. We should be able to detect our future, to read it, as it were, from the present. We should just be very attentive. That is what I am asking of you today.

Let me state one aspect of the problem. The world population, mankind, passed the 6 billion mark in 1998. It may reach 9 billion in 2050. That is the year to look for. That is where our children are going. Every year the population of the earth increases by 70 million people. That is a lot of human beings. Some annalists were actually relieved when the number of

9 billion was calculated recently. It was previously assessed as even more. The question is how manageable the 9 billion is. But management cannot wait. It has to start now.

Let me illustrate the magnitude of the problem in one of the areas. How does the earth feed 9 billion people? For any person belonging to the middle classes in the world today, it does not seem to be a problem. You just go to the supermarket every other day and get more than you need, that is not the case with the majority of the people in the world today. The long and the short of the story is that the earth cannot feed 9 billion if we go on as we are at the moment. How and where are the 9 billion going to live? How many will work? Under what economic conditions will they live?

And look at the conditions in the world of humankind today. How should it develop, and how is it developing, this complex relationship of humankind and planet earth? After all: that is the reason why we have planning; planning of all kinds, in the (sometimes) forlorn hope which all systems based on rationality and modernism have, that reason can change the world, the hope which was shattered so deeply by the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and confirmed by post-modernism. What we do know is this: land is an asset; land is scarce; and land is fragile.

These three statements reflect the basic relationships of humankind with land: social, economic and environmental. Humanity's association with land springs from the enduring nature of land: it is the basis of food, shelter and livelihood. The important insight is to realize that humanity must decide how *negotiable* the organizing principles of the linkages between society and the landscape are. *Negotiable* are the ways in which human society adapts to the constraints given by the natural system, and how people act in the landscape in their efforts to cope with the environmental pre-conditions while satisfying human needs and demands. These interactions more often than not happen in such an unwise fashion that the quantitative and qualitative sustainability of society itself may be undermined.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former Premier of Norway, once, with reference to the relationship between mankind and planet Earth, said that this relationship exists because "our souls are too long for this short life." She was referring to the capacity of humans to look beyond themselves, to care about posterity, and to think in intergenerational terms. But not all human beings are able to make a

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choice. Millions of human beings face a cruel choice. That choice is between surviving in their lifetime alone, and disregarding the future, knowing that they limit future choices. It is human under such conditions to choose life now. But that does not satisfy everyone. We feel an obligation that goes beyond ourselves. The point is that at present – for perhaps the first time in human history – we have the knowledge and technological capacity to leave for posterity an inhabitable planet. Our challenge today is to organize our knowledge and tremendous scientific and technological potential and address the survival issues of our times. The problem is however not the knowledge and techniques, but the political will to act. But the instruments of political will are planning and technology. Let us examine the concept of technology for a moment. Goethe once said: "Am Ende hangen wir doch ab von Kreaturen, die wir machen" (In the end we are dependent on what we have created ourselves).

While science is knowledge about reality, technique or technology is about building a reality, building a life-world. Science is to know, to uncover what is as it is. But to work, to use technology, is to establish a world in which we live. We build these worlds with instruments and procedures and the only building material we have must somehow come from the earth. The challenge for mankind is that in establishing a world, the work must also preserve the earth. In a very definite sense the essence of work and technology entails the establishment of a struggle between earth and world. Why is this so? Man's existence is precarious; it is marked by insecurity.

Life-support does not come easily to mankind. His search for security cannot come to an end. His life is marked by the will to security. For security mankind needs power. But man never

has enough power; security is always inadequate. Technology is the organization of this lack of security. Everywhere where there is too little of what is – and increasingly there is too little of everything – technology must leap into the breach and create Ersatz and use up raw materials. Thus technology determines the shape of our world. As modern man puts himself in the place of God and seeks to secure his existence, he subjects himself to an endless process of planning and calculation.

The progressive organization of everything can come to no end and knows no limits. The danger is to reduce man himself to raw material and subject to the same planning that already transformed nature into a source of raw materials. The danger is that the triumph of technology may destroy the essence of man. To save that essence has become the quest of our time. It is the quest against the tendencies towards totalitarianism and one-dimensionality, the quest against uniformity, against the destruction of the essential being of man and the earth, against a dreary rage of unchained technology and the bottomless organization of ordinary man.

The crucial point is to see that technology is not neutral. Technology is a normative matter; it is about values. That is why the application of technology calls for a political will. Instead of allowing technology to become a danger, threatening to destroy the essence of man and the earth, it should be understood, appropriated and surpassed. For our destiny has been and will be shaped by technology. The authentic response to technology cannot be a simple refusal. It must be an appropriation, which recovers the origins, and 'purpose of technology and which preserves man and the earth, because that is the origin of technology. That is why the question of land, its possession, its use, the planning of it

and its management is so important. The technology that is brought to bear on land, and the organizing of it, is fundamental for the future of the planet and humankind. Let me illustrate why this is a matter of values, and not a neutral question.

The provision of life support systems requires interferences with the landscape where the natural resources, like biomass, energy resources, minerals, water and land-space, are to be found. Physical interference in the land, like building, clearing and drainage, takes place, and chemical interferences are introduced: thus humanity creates its cultivated life-worlds on the earth.

What is clear is that life-support of the population is a very basic, pro-active imperative expected from the leaders of society. Human activities in the landscape are not only driven by demands for life-support, but also by population growth and growing aspirations within the economic-industrial sectors. National leaders *have* to secure and facilitate the availability of services that accommodate these needs, as well as giving due attention to hazard prevention.

This duty is the motivation for the White Paper approved by the South African Cabinet earlier this year, which provides policy perspectives and anticipates land use legislation to enable a structured process. It was influenced in a very definite way by Chapter 10 of *Agenda 21*, which resulted from the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. In relation to land resources *Agenda 21* states: "The broad objective is to facilitate allocation of land to the uses that provide the greatest sustainable benefits and to promote the transition to a sustainable and integrated management of land resources." Conventional land-use planning has frequently failed to produce a

substantial improvement in land management or to satisfy the priority objectives of land users. In recent years planning has come to be viewed as one step in land resources management, as a mechanism for decision support rather than a technical evaluation procedure. An improved approach should thus call for *integrated planning for sustainable management of land sources*. The White Paper intends to show practical ways in which South Africa may move to this approach. The system should satisfy the following specific needs:

- The development of policies, which will result in the best use and sustainable management of land
- Improvement and strengthening planning, management, monitoring and evaluation
- Strengthening institutions and coordinating mechanisms
- Creation of mechanisms to facilitate satisfaction of the needs and objectives of communities and people at local level.

Integrated planning for sustainable management of land resources should thus ensure that:

- Development and developmental programmes are holistic and comprehensive so that all factors in relation to land resources and environmental conservation are addressed and included. In considering competing needs for land, and in selecting the 'best' use for a given area of land, all possible land-use options must be considered
- All activities and inputs are integrated and coordinated with each other, combining the inputs of all disciplines and groups
- All actions are based on a clear understanding of the natural and legitimate objectives and needs of individual lands users to

obtain maximum consensus

- Institutional structures are put in place to develop, debate and carry out proposals.

### **Why land use principles and norms?**

The principles and norms collectively form a vision for land use and planning in South Africa. They constitute a single point of reference, and an overarching coherent set of policy guides to direct and steer land development, planning and decision-making in all spheres of government including other public agencies involved in land use so that outcomes thereof are consistent with the national objectives. The principles and norms are to promote the normative based spatial planning, land use management and land development system first introduced by the Development Facilitation Act.

The objective of the principles and norms is the direct influence of the substantive outcomes of planning decisions, whether they relate to spatial development frameworks or decisions on land use change or development applications. The overall aim of the principles and norms is to achieve planning outcomes that:

- Restructure spatially inefficient settlements
- Promote the sustainable use of the land resources in the country
- Channel resources to areas of greatest need and development potential, thereby redressing the inequitable historical treatment of marginalizes areas
- Take into account the fiscal, institutional and administrative capacities of role players, the needs of communities and the environment
- Stimulate economic development opportunities in rural and urban areas
- Support an equitable protection of rights to and in land.

In addition they promote:

- Accountable spatial planning, land use management and land development decision-making by organs of state
- Cooperative governance and wider information sharing in plan-making and implementation
- Maximum openness and transparency in decision-making.

Both the principles and norms are focused on and correlated to the field of spatial planning, land use management and land development, but, as is the case with all principles and norms, need further actualisation in specific, concrete contexts. Thus, in the practical implementation of the principles, spatial planning, land use management and land development will be guided by the principles and norms.

### **Wise land use: application of the principles and norms**

The normative approach proposed in this White Paper and the forthcoming Bill, is presented in the form of principles and norms. The principles are conceived of as *first principles* in the sense of general or fundamental values of a democratic and open society, on which the norms are based or from which the norms are derived. The norms emanating from the principles are understood as principles of right action, as authoritative rules or standards asserting or denying that something has to be done or has value.

The purpose of a normative approach is to ensure wise land use. Wise land use is inspired by humane considerations regarding a responsible society, and the state has to preserve the earth's natural assets for present and future generations in a sustainable and economic way. Wise land use is premised on the consideration that by rational planning of all uses of land in an integrated manner, it is possible to

link social and economic development with environmental protection and enhancement, making the most efficient trade-offs, and minimizing conflicts. Such an integrated approach is based on relating sectoral and different spheres of government's planning and management activities to the capabilities and limitations of landscapes to support various land uses.

The principles and norms do not prescribe black and white, yes-or-no outcomes, but serve to ensure that decisions are made with reference to a uniform and coherent set of desired policy outcomes. It is important, however, to emphasize that the interpretation and application of the principles and norms is context specific since conditions upon which principles and norms have to be applied are not uniform throughout the country.

### **Principles and norms**

#### *The principle of sustainability*

The principle of sustainability requires the sustainable management and use of the resources making up the natural and built environment. Land use and development decisions must promote a harmonious relationship between the built and the natural environment while ensuring that land development is sustainable over a longer-term period. The principle demands a holistic approach to land development in order to minimize the long-term negative impacts of current land use or development decisions. The long-term adequacy or availability of physical, social and economic resources to support or carry development should be thoroughly investigated. The life cycle costs of land development and its likely side effects on the environment, community, and the economy need to be understood and taken into account to sustain its benefits, while minimizing or mitigating any likely

negative impacts.

In the past the planning and management of land use has been characterized by extreme inequality. Not only are principles and norms required to ensure equity in the way that decisions are taken in the future but also that they address the inequitable legacy inherited from decades of planning in the interests of a racial minority. The spatial planning, land use management and land development norms based on this principle are:

- Land may only be used or developed in accordance with law. The primary interest in making decisions affecting land development and land use is that of national, provincial or local interest as recorded in approved policy
- Land development and planning processes must integrate disaster prevention, management or mitigation measures
- Land use planning and development should protect existing natural, environmental and cultural resources
- Land, which is currently in agricultural use shall only be reallocated to other uses where real need exists and prime agricultural land should remain in production.

#### *The principle of equality*

The principle of equality requires that everyone affected by spatial planning, land use management and land development actions or decisions must enjoy equal protection and benefits, and no unfair discrimination should be allowed. In the past the planning and management of land use has been characterized by extreme inequality. Not only are principles required to ensure equity in the way that decisions are taken in the future but also that they address the inequitable legacy inherited from

decades of planning in the interests of a racial minority. The spatial planning, land use management and land development norms based on this principle are:

- Public involvement in land use planning and development processes must be inclusive of all persons and groups with an interest in the matter being decided
- Land use regulators and planning authorities must ensure that benefits and opportunities flowing from land development are received by previously disadvantaged communities and areas
- The appropriateness of land use must be determined on the basis of its impact on society as a whole rather than only the applicant or immediate neighbours.

#### *The principle of efficiency*

The principle of efficiency requires that the desired result of land use must be produced with the minimum expenditure of resources. This principle aims to achieve efficiency in institutional arrangements and operations, adopted procedures, the settlement form or pattern, and the utilization of man-made or natural resources during land planning and development. The spatial planning, land use management and land development norms based on this principle are:

- Land use planning and development should promote the development of compact human settlements, combating low intensity urban sprawl
- The areas in which people live and work should be close to each other
- Plans of contiguous municipalities and regions should relate positively to each other.

*The principle of integration*

The principle of integration requires that the separate and diverse elements involved in development planning and land use should be combined and coordinated into a more complete or harmonious whole. The principle of integration reflects the need to integrate systems, policies and approaches in land use planning and development. This principle finds particular expression in two areas. Firstly it requires that the planning process is integrated, taking into account the often disparate sectoral concerns, policies and laws and their requirements, and reaching conclusions that are efficient and sustainable from a management and governance point of view. Secondly it requires an integrated 'on the ground' outcome, one that breaks down not only the racial and socio-economic segregation that characterize our country but which also look at spatial integration of different land uses, places of living with places of working and shopping and relaxing. The spatial planning, land use management and land development norms based on this principle are:

- Land use planning and development decisions should take account of and relate to the sectoral policies of other spheres and departments of government
- Land use and development should promote efficient, functional and integrated settlements
- Land use and development should be determined by the availability of appropriate services and infrastructure, including transportation infrastructure
- Land use and development should promote racial integration
- Land use and development should promote mixed-use development.

*The principle of fair and good governance*

The principle of fair and good governance requires that spatial planning; land use management and land development must be democratic, legitimate and participatory. Land use planning is a centrally important government function, directly affecting the lives of all people. It is therefore particularly important that it is characterized by fairness and transparency and that people are afforded a meaningful right to participate in decisions. When public authorities formulate new plans, they must put in place processes that actively involve citizens, interest groups, stakeholders and others. Also, where land development projects are initiated by the private and non-governmental sectors, there must be procedures that ensure that interested parties have an opportunity to express their views or to object.

In the interests of good governance it is essential that there be effective coordination between the different sectors and spheres involved in land use and development. The greater the coordination, cooperation and transparency of the planning process within government the greater will be the prospects of members of the public being able to engage with the decision making in a constructive manner. The spatial planning, land use management and land development norms based on this principles are:

- Affected parties have a right to access information pertinent to land use and development plans that are under consideration by land use regulators
- Capacities of affected communities should be enhanced to enable them to comprehend and participate meaningfully in development and planning processes affecting them

- Decisions must be made in the public domain, with written reasons available to any interested party on request and no planning decisions taken behind closed doors
- The names and contact details of officials with whom the public should communicate in relation to spatial planning, land use management and land development matters must be publicised
- Land use and development decisions must be taken within statutorily specified time frames
- Accessible participatory structures should be created to allow interested and affected parties to express their concerns or support for any land use or land development decision at sufficiently early stage in the decision-making process.

**The state of planning in South Africa**

*The spatial economy*

Any description of the state of planning in South Africa, should realize the conceptualization of the national space economy in terms of the categories of developmental potential present in it, like areas where innovation is possible and latent, where management and control, retail and services, tourism and welfare is spatially distributed in South Africa. This conceptualisation is not the same as empirical descriptions used in other spatial perspectives and seeks to focus the bulk of the fixed investment of the government on those areas where productive activity is promising. The government obviously has objectives such as promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, delivering basic services, making social investments, creating labour market intelligence and providing social transfers.

The general purpose in a developing situation such as South Africa is to

provide better opportunities for economic growth. In other words, the impetus is to create a better alignment between infrastructure investment and development programmes than is presently the case. The point is that the spatial consequences of national investment and development programmes were not fully addressing the distortions of the past Apartheid space economy. The challenge for the Government is to guide investment and development spending and to develop a mechanism to operationalise this spending. The government needs an instrument that can align Government and other investment in an effective and efficient process.

To this end it is acknowledged that the new dispensation of metropolitan and local councils are primary agents to prepare integrated development plans. This should be communicated in close interaction to the funding agencies, *videlicet* at local, provincial and national spheres, and this to the Cabinet. What we need ultimately is a system that provides a clear set of spatial priorities to the national government. At present we do have the untenable situation that no spatial criteria are available to guide the choices made on account of the rationalizing of budget choices. In fact I am quite certain that the basis of choices made for governmental investment are in terms of those communities that have attracted the most attention. A spatial perspective is simply imperative to assist in effective prioritisation.

In other words, what we lack at the moment is a scientific, and grounded, perspective that provides a framework within which a discourse on the future development of the national space economy can take place, reflecting the localities of severe deprivation and need, of resource potential and of current and potential economic activity by describing the key social, economic and natural

resource trends and issues and thus reflecting the national geography. We need a spatial narrative, a set of maps and a strategic response. What is the national resource base, what is the state of the population and their settlement, what are the trends in the national economy in the national space, where are infrastructure spending and developmental spending taking place and where should it be? Are the growth and developmental priorities of the Government spatially justified, what is the vision of the Government in spatial terms? What we do not need is a national plan or framework. It never works out right. Such a plan cannot be used unilaterally at national level. What is needed is to align and guide line departments, provincial and local governments' decisions with regard to infrastructure and development spending in terms of a cooperative model.

I have little doubt that South Africa can not successfully operate without such a national perspective, which should not have the power to enforce compliance by any of the three spheres of government, but do create a dynamic dialogue about the nation's spatial priorities and provides the options for consideration by decision-makers in terms of the land use planning and management systems that we are presently proposing. I intend to write this into the proposed Land Use Bill. The leadership and management of this discourse on the spatial economy should rest at the place where all the threads come together: the Presidency and the Cabinet.

#### *The status of land use planning and management in South Africa*

It is clear to me that South Africa needs a consolidated, progressive and integrative system of land use planning and land management as the basis of all possible development and growth within the parameters of a perspective on the national space

economy. The present situation can be described as chaotic, disempowering and foolish. The future is too demanding to proceed in the haphazard, unwise, materialistic and divisive, even fractitious, manner which we inherited from the apartheid past. We need to be united in our diversity, we need to cooperate and to coordinate, and we need to pool our resources. The potential of South Africa and the value of the people of this nation are too great to waste and to mess up this precious landscape and not to realize the inspirations of the dreams this nation dreamt.

Let me be specific: The economic, social and environmental future of South Africa depends on the wise use of our land resources. Conventional land use planning has frequently failed to produce a substantial improvement in land management to satisfy the priority objectives of land users. In recent years planning in South Africa has come to be viewed as one step in land resources management, as a mechanism for decision support rather than a technical evaluation or control procedure. An improved approach should thus call for integrated planning for sustainable management of land resources.

Apartheid planning was integrally linked to blueprint or 'master' planning as the dominant planning approach. This approach had as its focus the manipulation of the physical environment to implement the plan as inflexible, static physical representation of a desired future: an orderly, racially separate and unequal development. The approach was comprehensive in nature, striving to predetermine all land parcels in order to achieve the desired end state of separate development.

In South Africa there is a fragmentation of planning legislation and systems brought about by the

apartheid era. It is not streamlined or rationalized as different areas have different pieces of legislation to be used for planning (spatial planning, land use and its management).

Many provinces are also in the process of drafting their provincial planning legislation without adhering to the Constitution that demands coordination of such legislative efforts and thus is susceptible to charges of invalidity and unconstitutionality. The question is how these individual, often laudable efforts, will add to the general confusion and lack of a patriotic concern towards the national good.

There have been a number of fundamental changes to policy at national level in respect of the structuring of the sphere of local government that has a profound effect on land use planning and management. This emanate from the Municipal Demarcation Act, through the

Municipal Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act, which calls for the drafting of Integrated Development Plans by local and district municipalities. This is an initiative that brings about cooperative governance by ensuring that all role players are involved in drafting the IDPs. The land use planning and management requirements of the proposed Land Use Bill are designed to fit into this system.

I have mentioned the *White paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management*. It intends to show practical ways in which South Africa may move forward towards an improved and integrated planning system for sustainable management of land resources on the basis of some sound principles.

Emanating from the White Paper, a Land Use Management Bill is available for comment at this stage. This Bill provides the basic principles

to guide spatial planning, land use management and land development in South Africa. It will regulate land use management uniformly and provide for the enactment of national land use frameworks. There is provision for the adoption of municipal spatial development frameworks and land use schemes. Provincial land use tribunals are established and provision is made for the consideration and decision on applications to change the use of land. The Bill also provides for the consideration of the national interest.

It is hoped that the present initiatives may lead to a more successful outcome, and especially to strengthen local institutions to be capable of addressing and solving the problems of South Africa related to human needs and land use. Ultimately we are all responsible, while creating our worlds, not to be forgetful of the earth and the essence of humanity's life on it.