

4.1 Introducing Mpumalanga – Place of the Rising Sun

The previous chapters of this report have dealt with a range of issues and concerns including aspects of strategic planning, the need for innovative thinking in approaching regional planning as well as the importance of understanding the political nature of policy formulation and decision-making. There seems very little doubt that in the South African context, provincial government has recognised that for them to remain relevant and continue to do the work entrusted to them by the people through the Constitution (1996) some things will have to change...some drastically.

Mpumalanga province (Figure4.1) has seemingly heeded the call and has begun to make significant strides – particularly in the arena of economic development, infrastructure growth and investment as well as the formulation of projects that will take advantage of Mpumalanga's location. However, as one will witness challenges still loom for provincial officials. Still, the province has many valuable lessons to teach development planners specifically and strategists in general.



Figure4.1 Mpumalanga in South Africa – Located in the eastern regions of South Africa, Mpumalanga – which means 'place of the rising sun' is an unusual mix of fast growing urban development and a tourism mecca based predominantly on its seemingly 'rural' and pastoral nature.

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http://www.pactworld.org/images/homepage/south_africa_map.jpg

Given the current revival of provincial-scale planning in South Africa, the Mpumalanga province has embarked on a mission of aligning its planning instruments making them more pragmatic, strategic and relevant to the provincial context. As is the case in most provinces in this country, the formulation and harmonization of the PGDS with other national and local plans is foremost of the province's priority list. In a province like Mpumalanga where there are high unemployment levels, socio-economic disparities, a fragmented spatial landscape and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (DBSA, 2005) a systematic and coordinated approach to planning becomes a necessity. The Mpumalanga PGDS therefore poses as an intervention mechanism or instrument that can promote economic governance in the area. This chapter seeks to:

- outline the process leading to the formulation of the Mpumalanga PGDS;
- detail the efforts made by the province in harmonising the PGDS with other planning instruments at local and national level;
- describe the challenges and opportunities faced by the province in its endeavour to foster strategic planning in the area.

Firstly though, a brief contextual study into the province itself is necessary in order to help the reader to situate the debates and discussions to follow.

4.2 Mpumalanga: The Socio-Economic Context

With Nelspruit as its capital – located 450km east of Johannesburg, Mpumalanga (Figure 4.2) has a population of approximately 3.2 million people of whom about a third (39.1%) live in urban areas. The dominant languages in this area include siSwati, Zulu and isiNdebele – testament to the Nguni heritage that is so rooted in the province. What currently consists of Mpumalanga includes areas of the old Transvaal, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele and Bophuthatswana (Ahmad, 1998).

The largest economic sectors are manufacturing and mining ¹⁵ and are also regarded as the largest employers in the province. However, the unemployment remains high at 36.2% (MISF, 2005) and the vast majority are not highly skilled and trained. In

¹⁵ Refer to Appendix C: Information on Mpumalanga.

addition to rising levels of rural poverty and unemployment, Mpumalanga is faced with the second highest HIV infection rate (at 36.1%) after KZN, but is still struggling to accumulate sufficient physical and human resources to tackle and eventually quell the pandemic. The MPGDS (2005) estimates that the spread of HIV and AIDS coupled with widespread poverty and illiteracy could help to undo all the advances that the province has made over the last decade.

Politically, Mpumalanga has long been perceived as a province riddled with corruption at all levels of the civil service (MISF, 2005) and efforts to root out corrupt officials has been launched by the Premier.



Figure4.2 Mpumalanga in context

Source: 24-8 Cybertravel © 2003

from <http://www.24-8cybertravel.com/images/RegionDevelopment/Maps/MapMpumalangasmall.gif>

But how is this relevant to this discussion?

Firstly, that understanding the movement of people in space – particularly from rural to urban and *vis-versa* will be critical to the regional planners in grappling with issues of income spend, infrastructure and service needs and where communities most in need are located (Mahlangu interview, 2005). Secondly, these figures put into sharp view, the magnitude of the challenges that will have to be faced, particularly in the middle term. It also brings into focus the inter-relatedness of the

rural and the urban with regards to issues of environmental sustainability and the need to understand why it is so important not to sacrifice environmental imperatives for economic ones. As Healey (2004: 46) reiterates, a planning approach becomes strategic if it focuses “on that which really makes a difference to the fortunes of an area over time.”

More positively, for December Mahlangu (Interview 2005) “the PGDS embodies the vision, the dream and the passion of the province” and is therefore is a strategic tool that has a potential of changing the future of Mpumalanga for the better thus creating a new brighter horizon. With regards to issues around responsible and responsive government – Camay and Gordon (2004) point out, the only way South African provinces can tackle the societal and economic challenges they are faced with, is through good *governance* and making the principles of *Batho Pele* ¹⁶ a reality in the everyday workings of provincial government. Having realised the importance of being “strategic” in its decision-making, the Mpumalanga province is in the process of implementing the PGDS.

4.3 A Review of the Mpumalanga PGDS

Mpumalanga’s first attempt to devise and formulate a strategic plan for the province was in 1996 (Mahlangu, 2005) and like in most provinces at the time, lacked the strategic thinking and execution – it was excessively lengthy, too complicated to follow and simply unfocused (Gwagwa, 2004 cited in Mahlangu, 2005: 4). Given the political context at the time, the lack of experienced government officials in the planning positions and the novelty of the concept of integrated planning in South Africa, the first PGDS of the province failed to accomplish its objectives. The 1996 PDGS therefore represented a learning curve, and a building block which laid a foundation for current planning initiatives.

¹⁶ *Batho Pele*, means ‘People First’ and consists of a set of principles that government at all levels is required to implement and make a part of their operations. It is centered on improving service delivery and making government more user-friendly for its citizens (Camay and Gordon 2004).

The current PGDS (2004-2014) promises to be far more strategic in terms of being more context-sensitive. Essentially, that “the current PGDSs are certainly a great improvement from the 1996 ones...there is more of an attempt to pitch them at strategic level” (Gwagwa, 2004 cited in Mahlangu, 2005: 3). The strategic nature of the current PGDS lies in the fact that the process that led to its formulation was relatively thorough and more goal-oriented. Reinforcing this is that the highest office in the province – that of the Premier was involved in the formulation process.

4.3.1 The Process

The review of the current Mpumalanga PGDS began on 10 March 2003. The Chief Directorate, *Macro Policy and Strategy Management* (MPSM) in the Office of the Premier was assigned to take full responsibility of strategic planning in the province. Furthermore, the Premier of Mpumalanga and the Executive Council “are the custodians of the PGDS” (MPGDS, 2004: 10). In one of his speeches, the Premier Makwetla (2004) emphasised the importance of strategic planning in the province:

The mandate of the Office is to *coordinate, facilitate, advise, monitor and evaluate Provincial performance*. The role of the Office of the Premier is therefore to support, monitor and evaluate policy implementation within the Province and to provide *strategic planning*, management and executive decision-making intelligence.

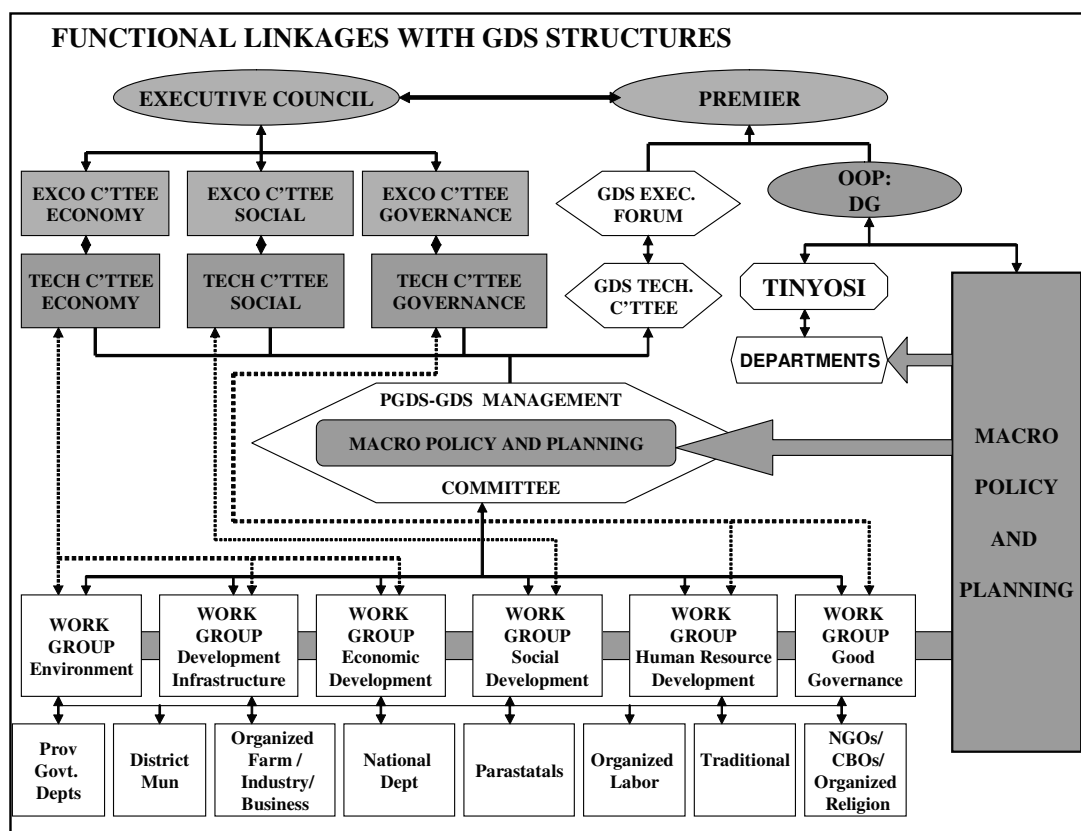
As mentioned in the Netherlands case study, the buy-in of political leaders is important in realising provincial-scale planning objectives. In Mpumalanga, the Premier called for the involvement of strategic stakeholders in the formulation of the current PGDS. Consequently, those within the private sector and different elements of the civil society have participated in the PGDS review process. Certainly an effort on the part of the Mpumalanga PGDS to be considered as a document that had culminated from a top-down as well as bottom-up process.

The involvement of representatives from district and local municipalities, parastatals, business as well as NGOs emphasises the broad-based nature of the Mpumalanga PGDS (Figure 4.3). One should also point out that the Steering Council

(comprising of MPSM personnel and other representatives from different provincial sector departments) was instrumental in identifying key role players that had to take part in the PGDS review process (Mahlangu interview 2005).

Figure4.3 Functional Linkages with GDS Structures – the MPSM plays a leading role in shaping and moulding strategic planning in Mpumalanga. There is an endeavour to include as many stakeholder in the PGDS process as possible although structures are in place, more commitment will be needed from those who are bestowed with influence and power to make decisions.

Source: Mahlangu © 2005



In an endeavour to be strategic in their decision-making, the MPSM selected six task teams to deal with six areas of development (Magagula interview, 2004). The six areas include:

- Economic development;
- Development infrastructure;
- Human resource development;
- Social infrastructure;

- Environmental management and;
- Good governance (MPGDS, 2005).

The task teams' roles involved the collection of all documents, reports (departmental and research) and strategic plans pertinent to its development area and the identification of gaps and opportunities for the compilation of the development profile of the province (Mahlangu, 2005). The information gathered was then taken to the MPSM for analysis. The idea behind data collection was to try and understand the challenges faced by the citizen within the community thus being able to set the provincial priorities first. In a sense the whole process was a Geddesian "survey before plan" approach, an effective way of involving the community at the same time applying professional knowledge and expertise needed for strategic priority identification.

However, the process of strategic plan-making in South Africa has increasingly dominated by consultants, precipitated by lack of professional, skilled human resources and capacity in most provincial and local government entities. Although justifiable, the involvement of consultants in drafting and formulating planning policies has been lambasted by some critics who believe that these professionals are too detached from the situations they are planning for. This has often resulted in provinces paying out exorbitant amounts of money to consultants who ultimately have no direct stake in whatever results from the work they have been hired to do.

To promote community participation in the PGDS review process, the province organised road shows aimed at making the PGDS known to the citizens. Workshops were also conducted within municipalities as a way of incorporating the municipal challenges into the PGDS. This was also a way of aligning provincial planning goals with local ones. Presentations were made at the IDP forums and in specialised workshops as ones held in eNkangala and Ehlanzeni Gert Sibande district municipalities in June 2003. Within these workshops, consultants were appointed to

try and find ways of aligning the PGDS with the IDP process (Mahlangu, 2005). As in Groningen, Mpumalanga did spend time and resources in ensuring that the current PGDS was a region-wide planning strategy, and after a long deliberative process, the Mpumalanga PGDS was launched in February 2005. The current PGDS seems to be strategic (at least on paper) and identifies the areas of potential at the same time proposing solutions for the developmental challenges faced by the province. However the review process was not without its pitfalls and contestations (Mahlangu, 2005).

4.3.2 Challenges to the Process

Achieving a broad-based participation in planning has always been a challenge, but Mpumalanga can be commended for forming the multi-stakeholder forum. The commitment of the MPSM to try and include as many stakeholders in the PGDS review process is indicative of the provincial leaders' desire to make the PGDS a strategic tool representing provincial-wide interests. For Mahlangu (2005) there are many factors which affected the review process:

- ❶ "The participation in the Steering Committee as well as the task teams was limited to junior managers due to the unavailability of senior managers.
- ❷ The representation and participation of the private sector and the civil society was limited and unsatisfactory. This resulted in the PGDS review being undertaken by the public sector stakeholders in the IDP forums.
- ❸ Political will was not visible during the crucial times of the review, which diminished the significance of the whole process.
- ❹ Administrative will and assertiveness that places policy review process on the daily agenda of politicians and the administration was also not adequate.
- ❺ Private sector remains a challenge since it depends on how importance they view the process rather than a call of dues as is the case with government institutions.

⑥ Consultants' performance posed a serious cause for concern. It was mainly limited to data gathering with very little interpretation and analysis of the data. It is hoped that the above experiences and challenges provide a good springboard policy development and strategy review processes."

Thus, the lack of political will as well as the reluctance of the business community and civil societies to participate in planning matters, is a major drawback for the province and the country as a whole. This lack of determination is not confined to the Mpumalanga province, it is widespread. In a survey made by the CSIR, Boutek, there is evidence that the formulation and alignment of strategic planning instruments in all spheres of government is thwarted or slowed down by lack of participation from political leaders as well as the reluctance of the business community to take part in the planning process (Meiklejohn, 2005). Realising that the business community is not obliged to take part in the public sector-led processes such as the formulation of PGDS, one cannot bank on their participation.

Commenting on the lack of planning professionals in the Mpumalanga province, one government official (2005)¹⁷ put it to me that, "although there is a general shortage of qualified planners in South Africa, political appointments tend to slow down the recruiting process." Instead of appointing people on merit, some people's appointments are based on their political affiliation. If for instance, KZN is an IFP stronghold, most of the civil servants in that province are bound to be from the IFP – the same in the case of the ANC or any other ruling party. Without engaging too much in the *politics of appointment*, one should disclose that the appointment of senior planners in provinces should be based on the individuals' merit and competence not on their political affiliation. In the case of Mpumalanga, there are only three people who are directly responsible for the implementation of the PGDS. As one respondent pointed out, it took the province at least two years to fill in vacant planning posts and this has led to a situation whereby very few people are

¹⁷ The name of the government official cannot be disclosed in this report.

overworked. Such tendencies in provinces have led to the slowing down of the NSDP – PGDS – IDP alignment and harmonisation process.

4.4 Assessing the PGDS

At this juncture, one should try and assess the content of the Mpumalanga PGDS. As noted by Meiklejohn (2005) in most provinces, government officials spend more time of the process of formulating planning strategies such that they negate the substantive element of planning. In an attempt to fully engage with the Mpumalanga PGDS, the following questions will be addressed:

- Does the vision statement made in the PGDS *correlate* and *align* to what has been outlined in the strategic plan?
- Does the PGDS effectively address and outline how they will tackle *all* the elements or ‘domains’ of sustainability?
- Do the plans strike a balance between provincial-scale imperatives with those of the broader, national and local developmental agenda?
- Are the tenets of responsive management and responsible governance actively articulated and highlighted in the plans?
- Has the PGDS clearly outlined where and how resources for implementing the plan will be obtained?

For provinces in South Africa to be pro-active players in strategic planning the PGDS must be one of the principal tools embodying the aspirations of the province at the same time being pragmatic enough to take cognisance of the challenges and potential that the province has in attaining its developmental goals (TCPA, 2003). The process, content, implementation and monitoring of a plan determines whether the plan is strategic or not. This section therefore seeks to analyse the process leading to the adoption of the Mpumalanga PGDS at the same time scrutinising its content and implementation plan.

4.4.1 The Content....

The vision statement of the PGDS: 'Reconstruction, development and sustainable growth; with employment and redistribution' captures the developmental goal of the province at the same time acknowledging the importance of improving the quality of life of the people of Mpumalanga. As Mahlangu (2005) explains the first part of the report is a detailed outline of the province's development profile. Being developed from the departmental annual reports, provincial sectoral plans and research conducted on the province by the DBSA (2005) in particular, the first part of the Mpumalanga PGDS succeeds in capturing the problems and challenges faced by the province.

Having said that, the Mpumalanga PGDS strives to address the provincial challenges which include poverty, HIV/AIDS and lack of critical skills in the province due to brain-drain (MPGDS, 2005). For Mahlangu (Interview, 2005) poverty is a challenge in the province as most of the people live in rural areas and have limited access to the opportunities and amenities offered in an urban context for instance. In the PGDS, it is not clear however as to how the province will deal with issues around poverty at the same time ensuring that the province is economically competitive. The ability to striking a balance between ensuring provincial economic development on one hand and promoting social justice on the other determines the strategic nature of the province.

According to Pieterse (2004) strategic planning should strive to deal effectively will issues such as economic, social, ecological, physical, and political sustainability (Figure4.4).

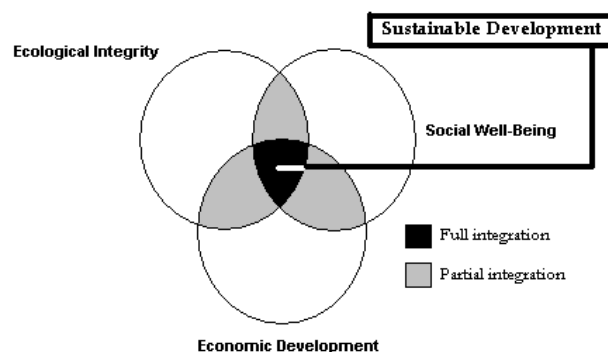


Figure 4.4 Three Spheres of Sustainable Development.

Source: Pieterse, 2004

The Mpumalanga PGDS expresses the need to promote economic, social and environmental development (MPGDS, 2005). Furthermore,

key priority areas such as promoting tourism and agriculture in the province are outlined. What seems to be lacking however is a clear-cut strategy on how these key priority areas could be harnessed. To give an example, the PGDS sets a target of increasing the agricultural sector contribution to the GGP from 6.1% to 10% by the end of 2008 | 2009 financial year (MPGDS, 2005: 24). Although the Departments of Agriculture and Land Administration as well as Economic Development and Planning are identified as potential drivers of the project, it is not specified how they will realise the set target of improving the agricultural sector.

In a research conducted by Meiklejohn (2005) on the status of PGDSs in the country, it was concluded that most provinces, Mpumalanga included, seem to have grasped the *jargon* of strategic planning – in other words, all PGDSs use words such as *strategic thrust*, *harmonisation* and *alignment* of planning. However, these words are not supported by clear strategies as to how planning at provincial level could be carried out and in the case of Mpumalanga, the first part of the PGDS does acknowledge the challenges faced by the province but the so called “strategic thrusts” (MPGDS, 2005: 24) do not detail how the challenges can be dealt with strategically. This lack of a clear-cut strategy renders the Mpumalanga PGDS “weak and not very strategic” (Meiklejohn, 2005: 7).

4.4.2 The Harmonisation of the PGDS with National and Local Strategies

As a response to the disjointed and fragmented planning in South Africa, the Presidency as well as the CSIR embarked on a mission to try and ensure that local and provincial planning instruments are in line with the national imperatives (Mohamed et al. 2004). According to the research team the harmonisation of planning instruments is one way of ensuring that the developmental goals of the nation are realised:

“Alignment and harmonisation [of planning] is a process entailing structured and systematic dialogue within government with a view of bringing about coordinated and integrated action among spheres of government and between the spheres and other organs of the state to achieve common objectives and maximise development impact” (Mohamed et al. 2004: 8).

Thus, the PGDS and the local IDP should be informed by the NSDP which spells out the national development priorities. The Mpumalanga PGDS does acknowledge the importance of aligning the provincial goal to local and national development priorities (MPGDS, 2005: 7). During the Mpumalanga IDP Hearings however, municipalities voiced out their concern that the provincial PGDS is not fully informed by local and district IDPs. Like in most South African provinces, the contents of the Mpumalanga PGDS and the IDPs are not well aligned with each other, or with the MTSF (Mohamed, 2004: 27). This lack of a synchronised approach to planning is a major challenge for planning. As functional spaces (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; McLeod, 2001) provinces such as Mpumalanga need to be original and ground-breaking in their approach to planning. The PGDS therefore must not be a vague document that only list the challenges faced by the provinces; it must offer strategic solutions to the problems.

In the process of interviewing senior provincial officials in Mpumalanga (Mahlangu 2005; Magagula 2004) there was a realisation that the alignment of provincial and local planning strategies is impeded by a number of factors. Firstly, provincial sector departments have their own plans and they have not yet practically committed the PGDS as an over-arching strategic tool that can lead to provincial-wide development. Secondly, the PGDS has only been finalised (late 2004 and early 2005) and therefore provinces are still trying to devise ways of making the provincial planning instrument known to the municipalities (CSIR, 2004). Thirdly, there is lack of skilled professionals who can fast-track the alignment process. In Mpumalanga for instance, there are only two provincial IDP coordinators who are in charge of aligning planning instruments at the same time monitoring planning at local level (Meiklejohn, 2005; Magagula, 2004; Mahlangu, 2005). Such lack of capacity is a drawback and a major challenge not only for the planning system but also for the delivery of services to the majority of the population which is dependent on the efficiency of the government machinery.

Thus the harmonisation of planning in South Africa is a challenge that can be tackled through a concerted effort from politicians, planners, the public and business sector as well as the civil society. Efforts are being made by the Presidency, the CSIR and academics from South African universities to try and invent a harmonised and purpose-driven strategic planning. For provincial-scale planning to take root, there is a need for those directly involved in planning to be more creative in their approach to planning. As Camay and Gordon (2004: 13) relate, the accountability of public officials is crucial, as it determines the outcomes of policy objectives set by the government.

Governance by the state/government is ...a manner, method or system of governing in a society. It refers to the structure and assignment of offices and their respective areas of responsibility and authority, and how they relate to each other and to the governed. It also relates to the accountability that needs to be exercised – especially of the state/government to the governed.

Apart from promoting accountability, governance “refers to a broader range of processes which contribute to the aggregation of interests and demands and to the coordination of social activities” (Pinson, 2002: 478). Government officials such as provincial premiers, provincial IDP coordinators, and those directly involved in the planning process therefore owe it to their citizens to think outside the proverbial box when engaging with planning matters. A strategic PGDS should be informed by as many stakeholders as possible and the implementation process must be well managed.

4.4.3 Responsive Management and Governance

The success of the PGDS implementation in Mpumalanga depends on the responsiveness, determination and creativity of the management team. As outlined in the sections above, the MPSM is responsible for the management strategic planning in Mpumalanga. As a principal directorate, the MPSM is at the forefront of strategic planning in Mpumalanga and for Magagula (Interview, 2004) and Mahlangu (Interview, 2005) the MPSM is the centre for the development and maintenance of provincial and macro-policies and strategies. The main role of this programme is to offer guidance and advice to decision-makers “through an integrated research and the formulation of multi-sectoral policies and strategies at the macro level, and the facilitation of integrated and coordinated development planning and implementation” (Mpumalanga, 2005: 104).

The MPSM therefore is responsible for the co-ordination of the formulation of Provincial strategies and plans (Mpumalanga, 2005). The programme played a major role in identifying stakeholders for the review of the current PGDS. Apart from publishing and reviewing the PGDS, the MPSM coordinates and facilitates the formulation of strategic and operational plans (MTSF) for provincial departments and other government agencies annually (Interview with Mahlangu, 2005). Although the MPSM has a major task of managing and monitoring strategic

planning in Mpumalanga, this programme is faced with a number of challenges that tend to impede or slow down its activities.

The lack of experienced people with a strong planning background within the programme is a major challenge for province. As Mahlangu (Interview, 2005) elucidated, the development and maintenance of the critical skills and capacity necessary for the effective and efficient performance of existing key functions as well as the filling of vacant planning posts in the province is a major drawback – and in Mpumalanga, there are only *four* people in charge of strategic planning. Those responsible for the formulation and subsequent implementation of the PGDS have other managerial functions and responsibilities and this leaves them with little time for concentrating on the strategic planning issues (Magagula interview, 2004). Moreover, with only two provincial IDP coordinators in the province (Meiklejohn, 2005) the overwhelming workload tends to slow down the efficiency of those working within the planning programme in Mpumalanga.

Although the MPSM has managed to garner support from different stakeholders for the review of the PGDS, there is a need for the development of research capacity that would ensure effective management of information within the province. Effective provincial-scale planning can only take root if the province has a sound information management system and its presence would promote coordination between provincial office-bearers as well as effective alignment of projects within and between different spheres of government (Harrison, 2003).

4.4.4 The Implementation Plan

Writing on the emerging trends in regional development planning in East Asia, Misra and Prantilla (1983: 36) suggest that regional planning “becomes a meaningful activity only if it leads to implementation...otherwise a plan becomes an end in itself instead of being an instrument for achieving the development objectives.” Although the formulation of a PGDS is important, the implementation plan

becomes an integral part of the planning process. In a workshop organised by the Mpumalanga province on the status of the alignment of PGDS and IDPs as well as the NSDP (CSIR, 2004) it was highlighted that the 1996 PGDS was not as strategic as it was expected to be, in part because the PGDS process was neither informed by the MTSF nor the IDP process and consequently, the implementation plan was weak and less strategic.

With the review of the PGDS in late 2004, effort has been made by the MPSM in particular, to try and ensure that the PGDS is a process embodying the aspirations of all stakeholders and that includes the private sector and the civil society (Mahlangu, 2005). The current PGDS implementation, monitoring and evaluation plan is modelled on the guidelines provided by the DPLG (2005b: 16). The Mpumalanga PGDS acknowledges that the implementation of the provincial planning instrument is dependent on the alignment of the PGDS with the NSDP and the IDP processes. Furthermore, the MTSF is viewed as a budgetary instrument that can assist the province in the implementation of the strategic plan.

The Provincial and Integrated Planning Forum (PIPF) is identified as an institutional body that facilitates and oversees the implementation and monitoring of the PGDS (MPGDS, 2005: 57). Being coordinated by the office of the premier and informed by all spheres of government, the business sector and civil society, the PIPF will be expected to:

- Facilitate and coordinate all development planning and implementation in the province;
- Review the implementation and performance of the PGDS;
- Align growth and development strategies of all spheres of government, parastatals and organised business;
- Appoint an Appraisal Team that will be responsible for the evaluation/appraisal of strategic plans of sector departments and district

municipalities to ensure that they are aligned to the development objectives of the PGDS and IDPs.

- Develop a marketing strategy of the PGDS (MPGDS, 2005: 58).

The PIPF therefore is the driver of the PGDS implementation and monitoring process. Its tasks are quite challenging given the lack of human capacity in the province as well as other factors that characterise semi-urban provinces such as Mpumalanga. In the PGDS, only two pages are dedicated to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategies (PGDS, 2005) and there is no detailed plan as to how the monitoring process will be undertaken. Although the MTSF is mentioned as the budgetary tool that would finance various projects that are a part of the PGDS, no other sources of capital are cited. For the PGDS development objectives to be realized, the private sector should be persuaded to buy-into the process as it possesses the financial muscle so needed for the realization of strategic planning in the province.

Any planning instrument that claims to be strategic should have a spatial component (Harrison, 2003; TCPA, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones, 2003; Vigar *et al.* 2000). The PGDS therefore must have a spatial component that enables policy-makers and planners to make sound judgments, particularly with regard to infrastructure investment. With the NSDP acting as a premise that informs the PGDS, there is a need for the latter to have a comprehensive spatial development planning dimension that sketches out the developmental potential of the province in space.

4.5 Missing....A Spatial Component

In a discussion with one of the government officials in Mpumalanga (Mahlangu Interview, 2005) the success of any provincial strategic planning depends on the understanding of the province's resources as well as its areas of potential was emphasised. The Mpumalanga Integrated Spatial Framework (MISF) of 1999 was an attempt towards understanding the geo-spatial landscape of the province thus being able to identify areas of potential. With the change in institutional structures and functions at local level the MISF was to provide:

- “guidelines which will indicate the required spatial development to facilitate economic and social development based on provincial issues and trends;
- growth and development - resource based economic development;
- management, containment and redirection of urban growth;
- rural development – functions and hierarchy of rural towns with their unique surroundings; and
- Mobility – to focus resources and efforts onto existing networks and capacity” (MISF, 1999: 10).

Thus, the 1999 ISF sought to provide a framework within which sustainable development could be promoted, and was a tailor-made strategy indicating the developmental goals of the province as well as possible ways of attaining them. It is unfortunate though that the 1999 ISF was not linked or aligned to the 1996 PGDS (Personal Communication Britts, 2005) consequently both plans were not strategically utilised (Interview with Mahlangu, 2005).

In the case of the current Mpumalanga PGDS, although purported to be more strategic than the 1996 version, does not mention the importance of incorporating spatial planning into the PGDS process (Gwagwa cited in Mahlangu, 2005). There has been a realisation in the province that the MISF and the PGDS are two sides of the same coin (CSIR, 2004).

According to Andre Britts (Interview, 2005), one of the people responsible for the formulation of a strategic MISF, the spatial framework is not a mere spatial planning tool, but it is an instrument for understanding the provincial geographic space thus being able to maximise the resources and potential that the province possesses. The current ISF therefore seeks to assist the province to:

- gain and develop a provincial-wide perspective on social, environmental, economic, transport, settlement and land-use factors and other development trends and impacts in Mpumalanga;
- use this understanding as a common platform for debate, to inform planning in the respective sectors and line departments in the province, as well as for IDP and SDF preparation and review in the various district and local municipalities in the province;
- develop a spatial rationale (at a provincial and district level) of the scope and location of areas with economic (e.g. tourism, agriculture, petro-chemical) development potential, as well as the areas with the major challenges in terms of addressing poverty, service backlogs, etc. in the province and for the various district municipal areas;
- use this understanding as a common platform to inform co-coordinated and strategic infrastructure investment and development spending by the respective sectors and line departments in the province, as well as for IDP and SDF preparation and review in the various district and local municipalities in the province;
- in line with the NSDP and other key development policies and acts, interpret the implication of key development guidelines, including spatial principles, as the underlying platform for alignment in the province between national, provincial and municipal spheres, various sectors in government, as well as other role players (MISF, 2005: 11)

The ISF therefore, has the potential to give direction to the current PGDS, providing a provincial perspective of planning and development directions and alternatives in

the province, and would act as a premise for interpreting the PGDS objectives, various provincial sector and departmental strategic plans, municipal IDPs and SDFs (MISF, 2005). One might also add that the synchronisation of the ISF and the PGDS in the province is likely to help Mpumalanga to make strategic choices especially with regard to resource allocation. As a strategic spatial tool, the ISF could also foster networking and governance within the provinces, bringing together all stakeholders and working towards more concerted provincial developmental goals. As highlighted in the current ISF, the ISF will act as a tool that promotes intergovernmental planning in the province (Figure4.5).

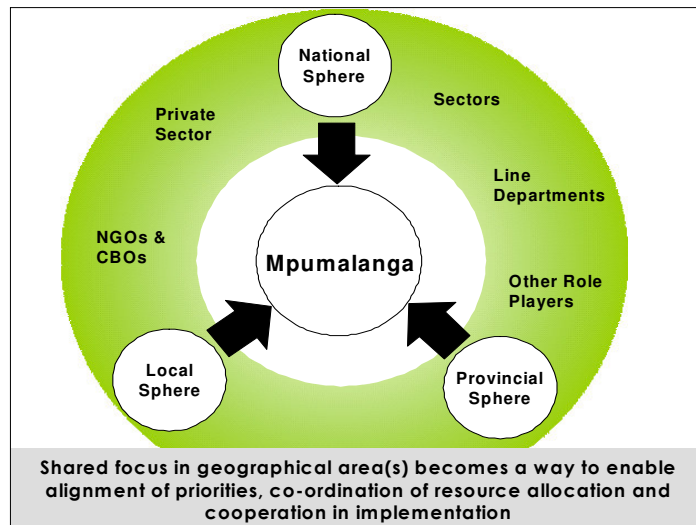


Figure4.5 The Importance of Synchronisation – and the need for broad-based participation in achieving this goal. The diagram also illustrates the importance for planning to look at the broader picture as well as the narrower context of regional planning.

Source: Mpumalanga Integrated Spatial Framework © 2005

As articulated in the current ISF (2005: 15) the

premier's office and the MPSM, a Chief Directorate responsible for strategic planning in the province at the same time supporting the developmental targets outlined in the Mpumalanga PGDS. The ISF therefore "provides invaluable opportunities for interaction and concrete coordination the three spheres of government" (MISF, 2005: 12) at the same time making it possible for other role players such as the business sector to buy-into the PGDS process.

By the end of the PGDS-ISF synchronisation process, Mpumalanga should be having a more integrated strategic planning system that could lead to the realisation of provincial goals as stipulated in the provincial PGDS (Figure4.6). As highlighted in

the ISF (2005) the PGDS and the municipal IDPs will be the core of the provincial ISF.

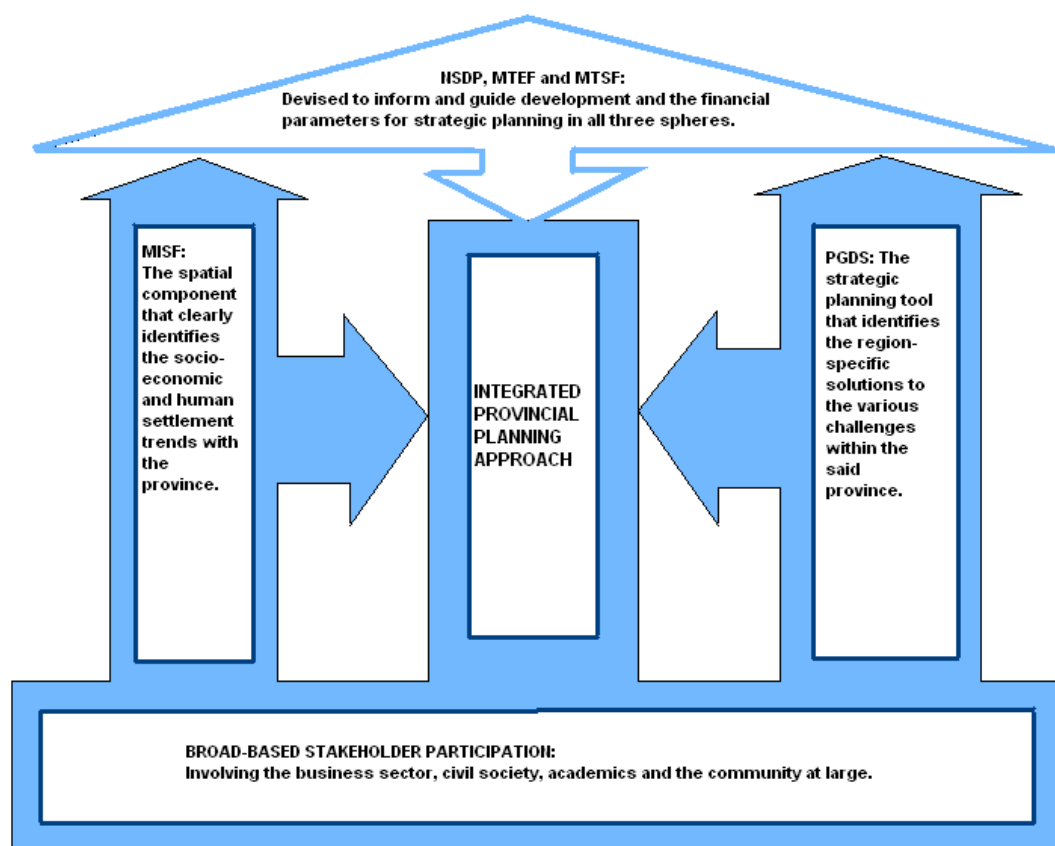


Figure4.6 The House of Integrated Planning.

Source: Author's Own © 2005

Furthermore, provincial development alternatives and interventions can be strategically determined, thus allowing the public and private sector to identify areas where there can be investment. The identification of development corridors (Figure4.7) for instance, gives all concerned stakeholders a vivid picture of the provincial developmental trends. Development opportunity areas in Mpumalanga appear to be concentrated like proverbial beads along the N4 corridor (CSIR, 2005).

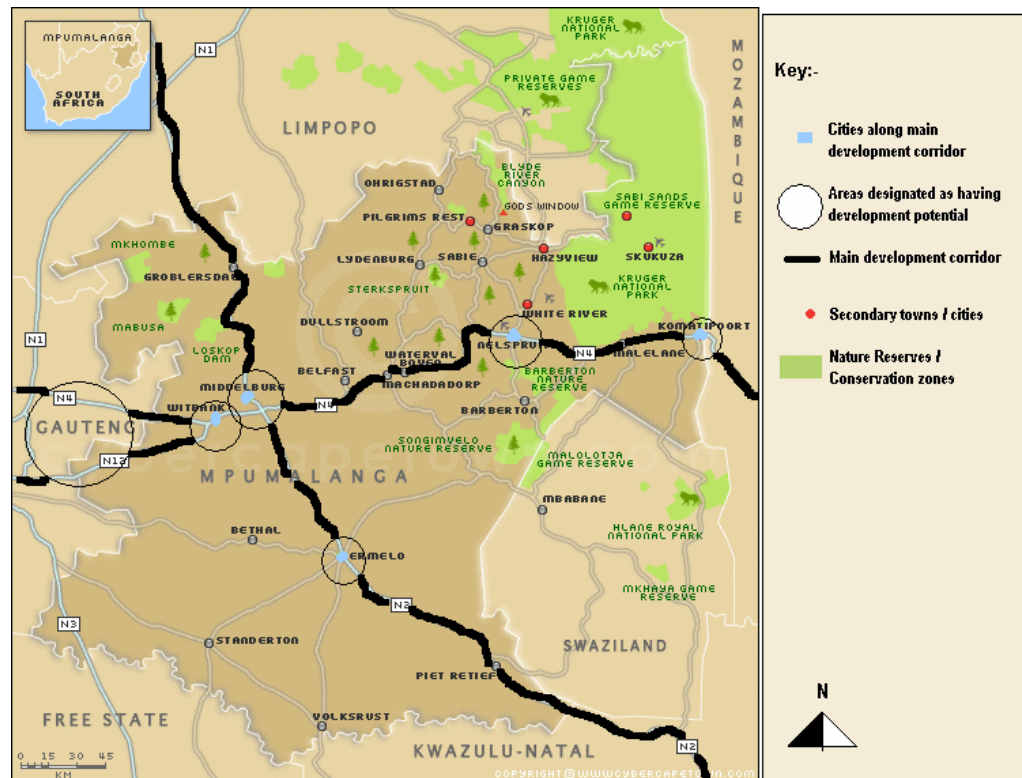


Figure4.7 The Developmental Corridor in Mpumalanga – put in context.

Source: Adapted from information in CSIR © 2005

From Mahlangu's perspective (Interview, 2005) when fully implemented, the harmonisation of the PGDS and provincial ISF could result in a new planning system in the province. The PGDS for instance embodies the vision and the developmental goals of the province. Put in other words, the ISF contextualises the vision and developmental aspirations of the province, spelling out the spatial implications as well as pointing out the specific areas that can be developed. Thus the "trends, implications and impacts" as well as the "weaknesses, opportunities and threats for development" (MISF, 2005: 15) can be mapped out leading to a well-informed strategic planning.

4.6 A Way Forward

The future of strategic planning in Mpumalanga is promising. With a reviewed PGDS as well as a comprehensive ISF on the line, there is no doubt that Mpumalanga is determined to create a brighter horizon, taking the province to a strategic developmental plane. As highlighted in the assessment of the PGDS, there are some issues that need to be clearly pointed out in the Mpumalanga strategic plan. The PGDS should not identify problems that exist in the province but it must also come up with pragmatic solutions as well.

The effort of the MPSM in successfully reviewing the PGDS is a step towards the right direction. There is a need however for the province to try and employ people with planning experience and skills to fill in the vacant posts. Being based in the premier's office, the MPSM can certainly make strategic decisions that can lead to a well-coordinated planning system. The formation of a multi-stakeholder forum that is responsible for the decision-making in Mpumalanga strategic planning is indicative of the province's quest for involving as many people as possible in provincial-scale planning. There is a need however for the province to specify the role that the business sector should play in promoting economic governance and sustainable development. The business sector has the financial muscle that can help fast-track the implementation of planning projects and agendas.

The incorporation of the provincial ISF into the planning system is a strategic move that can give concerned stakeholders a clear direction of where the province is headed insofar as social and economic development is concerned. With regard to sustainable development, the ISF is a tool that can identify the environmental concerns and potentials within the province thus enabling the province to intervene strategically.

It will take a while for the PGDS to be aligned with other planning instruments like the IDP at local and the NSDP at national level. However, the realisation and

acknowledgement of the need to harmonise these planning instruments and perspectives is indicative of the provinces [and the nation's] strategic shift in thinking. Effectively addressing socio-economic disparities that characterise provinces such as Mpumalanga will take determination and political will from political office bearers such as the Premier and those directly involved in the planning processes.

Thus, the zeal and determination portrayed by those involved in strategic planning such as the CSIR, DPLG and the Mpumalanga office of the Premier shows the importance of the province as a sphere with influence. Like most provinces, Mpumalanga has very weak municipalities who are in need of support and guidance. The province therefore becomes a developmental sphere that capacitates and strengthens planning at local level at the same time ensuring that national perspectives such as the NSDP find expression in provincial and local planning policies and activities.