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Beyond master planning? New approaches to spatial planning in Ekurhuleni, South Africa

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A B S T R A C T

Traditional master planning has been criticised, but continues in various forms. This paper critically assesses an initiative by a South Africa metropolitan municipality to develop 'local spatial development frameworks': comprehensive integrated plans, dealing with 22 sectors, for some 103 areas, to guide land use decisions and to provide a framework for development. The paper concludes that despite some innovative aspects, several elements of traditional master planning were evident. New approaches to spatial planning were being shaped by older thinking, but also by the impact of a traditional land use management system. The findings point to the need for greater attention to debating alternative forms of spatial planning and their appropriateness in various contexts.

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in urban planning in developing countries among some international development agencies, organisations and countries (Farmer et al., 2006; UN-Habitat, 2009). This revival is centred both on the roles planning could play in promoting sustainable urbanisation, and on new approaches to planning that go beyond the critiques of old style master planning. The broad outlines of current thinking are expressed in the Global Planner's Network document on 'Reinventing Planning' (Farmer et al., 2006), which sees planning as promoting integrated, inclusive and participatory development, in contrast to past technocratic and narrowly physical planning approaches. New approaches to spatial planning have also been emerging for some time (Healey, Khakee, Motte, & Needham, 1997), and there have been initiatives to develop more appropriate approaches for developing countries (Clarke, 1992; Singh & Steinberg, 1996). Traditional master planning nevertheless continues in several contexts (UN-Habitat, 2009), and in some cases there is a reversion to older forms of planning which have been criticised in the past (Berrisford, 2009; Mattingly & Winarso, 2000). Further, new forms of planning sometimes exist alongside traditional forms of planning (UN-Habitat, 2009).

Reasons for the persistence of or reversion to master planning are contextual and remain to be fully explored. Some explanations focus on political dimensions (Roy, 2009) or the dominance of modernist ideas amongst political elites and technocrats (Watson, 2009). Others argue that planning is still being shaped by perspectives and discourses linked to traditional approaches (Devas, 1993). New languages are sometimes in use, but are not always meaningful in practice. There has been insufficient discussion and debate about alternative approaches to spatial planning for developing countries of different types. While there are many manuals to assist governments and practitioners to incorporate elements of the new approaches into planning (such as gender, diversity, environment, participation etc), and the broad outlines of current thinking are clearly available, there has been less work on appropriate forms of spatial planning.

This paper considers an initiative by the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality, South Africa, to develop local spatial development frameworks (LSDFs), a third layer below the level of its broad indicative metropolitan and regional spatial frameworks. Comprehensive integrated plans were to be developed both to guide land use decisions and to provide a framework for development. Since the municipality did not have the capacity to undertake this planning on its own, it developed a detailed generic 'Scope of Work' document which would serve as a brief for consultants. Before commissioning plans, the municipality requested an 'academic critique' of the Scope of Work document. In the process of assessment, it became apparent that while some emphases and elements of the plan were consistent with current thinking, in other respects, the approach adopted represented a return to more traditional forms of spatial planning. This paper draws from that assessment. It was based on analysis of documents, five interviews with officials in the housing, environmental, transport and economic development departments, two sets of discussions with councillors, and a further three with officials in the spatial planning department. The paper provides a critique of the

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LSDF approach, considering the extent to which it moves beyond master planning. Although it is a particular case, it does exemplify one tendency in spatial planning, and provides a platform for continuing debate over appropriate forms of spatial planning in developing countries.

The paper is structured as follows. The first two sections provide an overview of the evolution of approaches to spatial planning internationally and in South Africa, focusing particularly on the critique of master planning in the case of the former, and contemporary approaches in the case of the latter. The third section provides an assessment of the LSDF approach. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the case study, and possible alternatives.

From master planning to contemporary approaches

In many parts of the world master planning became the dominant form of spatial planning after World War II. According to Watson (2008: 19), master plans are 'spatial or physical plans which depict on a map the state and form of an urban area at a future point in time when the plan is 'realized''. Planning was viewed as a technical activity, developing comprehensive plans showing the projected density and intensity of various land uses and their spatial distribution. From the late 1970s, however a wide-ranging critique of master planning developed.

Several critics have argued that master plans were static and rigid. They emerged in part as a method of long-term planning for infrastructure, services and public investment in the relatively slow growing cities of developed countries (Clarke, 1992), but proved to be inappropriate in the context of rapid urbanisation and change in developing countries. In countries where data sources were poor, they took years to produce and were soon out of date. Even in developed countries, unexpected changes in the economy and in the size and type of households in the 1970s undermined this type of planning (Healey et al., 1997).

Further, master planning centred on the production of plans on paper, with little attention to implementation (Njoh, 2008). The plan thus became an end in itself. It was not linked to sectoral departments or to budgets, and the institutional organisation and negotiations necessary to make it operable was seen as outside of its scope. Master planning was also often separate from development control and did not necessarily impact on these activities. Frequently planning was in a department which was not in a position to effect change after the plan was in place (Clarke, 1992; Devas, 1993). In addition, both funds and institutional capacity to give effect to the plans were lacking (Clarke, 1992).

Planning was largely a technocratic process, with little attention to social diversity and little interest in public participation. As Njoh (2008: 20) argues:

> 'master or comprehensive planning makes a number of assumptions of which the following are noteworthy. The first is that there is a 'one best way' for addressing any given planning problem and that trained planners—the experts—are capable of finding this 'best way.' The second is that the planning context can be controlled with modern scientific knowledge and technology. The third is that there is a common identifiable public interest. Finally, there is the belief that planning of the top-down variety—that is, centralized planning—is capable of effectuating socio-economic change.'

The social, political and economic dynamics shaping the city and driving change were typically neglected, as were the many actors and interests involved, and the probability of conflicting interests. Too much power was accorded to the plan. The anti-urban and modernist strand of master planning has also been widely critiqued, particularly its failure to accept and accommodate urban growth and informality, and the repressive actions taken against informal dweller and traders in the name of planning (Harris, 1983; UN-Habitat, 2009). The master plan was also difficult to enforce due to its inability to manage informal growth and the lack of capacity to implement regulations. Estimates of future urban growth were typically low, and soon outstripped by actual growth, exacerbating these problems (Devas, 1993).

Other criticisms were that plans attempted to be 'too comprehensive, covering all possible aspects, like a mini national development plan, rather than focusing on key issues (Ahmed, 1989: 8)' (Devas, 1993: 72). Nevertheless, land use and physical planning remained the central concern, with little attention to environmental, economic and social dimensions (Devas, 1993; McNeil, 1983).

In response to these critiques, new approaches to planning have emerged. New forms of planning are encapsulated in the Global Planner's Network document on 'Reinventing Planning', which defines principles for planning (Farmer et al., 2006). These include, inter alia:

- a focus on sustainability;
- integration between sectors and with budgets;
- participatory planning, bringing in a wide range of stakeholders;
- understanding markets and producing credible plans, backed by public investment where appropriate;
- recognition of the reality of informal settlements and slums;
- development of contextually appropriate, affordable, strategic and effective forms of planning and land use management; and
- pro-poor and inclusive planning, recognising diversity.

In the European context, spatial planning has shifted from focusing purely on land use towards an emphasis on the spatial integration of sectors and policies. Strategic spatial planning has become significant over the past decade as a way of shaping urban growth. In contrast to master planning, there is a strong emphasis on inclusive stakeholder participation processes, and planning focuses only on key strategic elements (Healey, 2006; Watson, 2008). Nevertheless, new forms of master planning focused on urban design have emerged since the 1980s in the context of large property led urban regeneration initiatives in the United Kingdom. Critics argue that these approaches are also inappropriate due to their static nature and their marginalisation of social questions (Giddings & Hopwood, 2006).

In developing country contexts, strategic structure planning, drawing from an action planning base, has been used by UN-Habitat in post-conflict situations (UN-Habitat, 2009). Integrated Urban Infrastructure Development Planning (IUIDP) attempted to provide an alternative form of planning, linking infrastructure development to planning (Singh & Steinberg, 1996). IUIDP involved the development of a city level strategic plan, linking infrastructure development and budgets, and included a broad Physical and Environmental Development Plan (PEDP). Similar initiatives have occurred in Tanzania, with its Strategic Urban Development Plan. There has however been some debate over the efficacy of this type of planning. In India, Indonesia and Nepal, planning of this sort was in some cases displaced by master planning or was marginalised as a consequence of political and institutional processes (Mattingly, 2001; Mattingly & Winarso, 2000). In Tanzania, there are debates over whether the Strategic Urban Development Plan is adequate to guide land development, and there are pressures to return to master planning (Kasala, 2008). While there are often political reasons for the return to master planning, these tensions are also indicative of the persistence of old ideas and approaches persist, and the need for exploration of alternatives. The following section considers the evolution of spatial planning in South Africa, and debates around these issues.

South Africa: from master planning to spatial frameworks and beyond

Under apartheid, spatial planning in South African cities largely took the form of master planning (Dewar & Uytenbogaardt, 1991) and was fragmented and differentiated along racial lines. Several authors have noted the influence and importance of modernist planning ideas of the time in terms of both the spatial concepts in use and the form of spatial planning (Harrison, Todes, & Watson, 2008; Mabin & Smit, 1997; Watson, 2002). The main focus of spatial planning was on the physical design of areas and the management of land use change through 'town planning schemes' which detailed the land uses allowed and their intensity. Simplified schemes existed in areas reserved for black people. Although some level of strategic planning existed in the form of 'guide plans' and later 'structure plans' to manage the overall growth of areas (Mabin, 1994), these were developed unevenly across cities, and both infrastructure planning and Group Areas planning were more important in shaping the spatial organisation of cities.

In reaction to both the form and content of South African planning, and influenced by critiques of master planning internationally (Mabin & Smit, 1997; Todes, 2006; Watson, 2002), South African planning in the post-apartheid era tended to emphasise strategic spatial planning focused on macro-level urban restructuring. From 2000, spatial frameworks were required as an element of statutory integrated development plans (IDPs): strategic plans intended to guide the work of municipalities. In terms of regulations linked to the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 and the 2001 White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management, spatial frameworks were intended to give effect to the principles and priorities of the IDP, and to act as a flexible instrument to manage urban growth and change within municipalities. Spatial frameworks were expected to include, inter alia: a physical plan showing the desired spatial form of municipality; the major directions for growth and change, and areas for strategic intervention; a strategic environmental assessment; guidance on capital expenditure over a 5-year period; and policy and basic guidelines on land use management. Although a new set of principles was put in place at national level through the 1995 Development Facilitation Act (DFA), legislation at national level to give effect to new forms of land use management remains outstanding, hence old systems remain in place.

In practice, many of the spatial frameworks which were produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s were very broad plans that were too loose to achieve their intentions. Critics have argued that they did not sufficiently understand and engage with spatial dynamics in cities (Harrison et al., 2008; Todes, 2008; Turok, 2000; Watson, 2002); they were poorly linked to infrastructure development and the work of other departments (Todes, 2008; Watson, 2003) and were contradicted by both public and private sector developments (Todes, Pillay, & Krone, 2003; Watson, 2002, 2003). Further, they were so loose and vague that they could be interpreted in many different ways from the perspective of land use decisions (Turok, 2000). Critics argued that land use decision-making did not link sufficiently to spatial frameworks (Harrison et al., 2008; Watson, 2002), nor did they reflect the principles contained in these plans or in the DFA (Oakenfull, 1998). In many provinces, land use management is still governed by provincial ordinances from the apartheid period, and decisions on land use change are made in terms of the older discourse and logic of these ordinances (Todes, 2006).

The breadth of plans was in part linked to the way they were conceptualised, but also reflected the fact that they covered huge municipal areas. In the South African context, local government has been consolidated into some 258 local, 52 district municipalities and 6 metropolitan municipalities covering very large populations and physical areas.

In response to both the very large scale of metropolitan spatial frameworks, and critiques of their ineffectiveness, several metropolitan municipalities have been exploring ways to 'ground' their spatial plans. Initiatives include, inter alia, attempting to link spatial planning and spatial frameworks to infrastructure planning, and to develop regional and local spatial frameworks beneath the level of metropolitan spatial frameworks. In Johannesburg, for example, some 7 regional spatial frameworks linked to regional urban management structures have been developed. In Cape Town, eThekwini (Durban) and Ekurhuleni between three and four regional spatial frameworks have been formulated to move beyond the breadth of the metropolitan spatial framework, but these do not link to land use management systems. Several municipalities are using precinct and local spatial plans or frameworks, but these are generally linked to spatially selective area based management systems or to specific problem areas (Ahmed, 2008; Sim, 2008; Walker, 2008). The Ekurhuleni municipality is relatively unusual in proposing the development of generic local spatial frameworks and in attempting to produce a systematic brief to guide them. The following section explores and critically assesses this initiative.

Assessing the local spatial development framework approach

Context and approach

The Ekurhuleni municipality is one of three metropolitan municipalities in the core Gauteng region. It covers an area of some 190 147 ha and has an estimated population of 2.5 million. It is an amalgamation (in 2000) of 9 previously independently administered towns into one city, and is spatially highly fragmented both socially and economically. As a legacy of apartheid some areas are well located in relation to current economic opportunities while others (mainly the former township areas previously reserved for African people and located on the periphery) have remained locationally disadvantaged. One challenge in this metropolitan area is thus to integrate these areas into the historic nodes and to improve their economic opportunities. The municipality is an important manufacturing centre but has experienced some level of industrial restructuring, as well as the decline of mining. Managing local economic change and promoting economic development and enabling livelihoods are thus of some importance. Other significant challenges facing the municipality include: poor linkages across the area; decaying central business districts; service backlogs in previously disadvantaged areas; the legacy of mining, coupled with geotechnical problems across parts of the area; uncoordinated land use management approaches between various former towns and uneven distribution of social and institutional infrastructure.

Further, there is a common perception among planners and politicians that the municipality lacks a specific identity as an entity, as the nine towns still have stronger identities than municipality as a whole. While it might be debated whether such a single identity is necessary for the efficient functioning of the region, the current institutional structures, which are still based in the nine towns, appear to be hindering planning coordination between the various sectors within the municipality.

The current spatial planning structure includes an over-arching metropolitan spatial development framework, which informs three regional spatial development frameworks. These have been regularly prepared and reviewed. In addition, several local spatial development frameworks have been prepared. These are currently being reviewed in response to new developments, but are also seen as too generalised to deal with specific development pressures within the area. These pressures have come from two broad sources, firstly from private developers in selected areas, and secondly from other government departments or agencies encouraging the municipality to apply for

grant finance for particular types of developments. The most important of the latter is the Neighbourhood Development Grant, which aims to promote economic and social development through urban regeneration projects in former townships. In response to the perceived inadequacies of existing local spatial development frameworks, the spatial planning department within the municipality developed a detailed brief (or Scope of Work document) to improve their quality, and to enable stronger guidance on development initiated by both the private and public sector. Planners hoped to provide greater certainty on how the municipality would respond to development applications in particular areas, as well as on the future development of different parts of the municipality.

The stated objectives of the LSDFs were however broader, namely to (EMM 2008: 3):

- 'provide a strategic development vision for the study area…in line with broad development objectives';
- 'draft a comprehensive spatial development framework for each study area';
- 'address specific development issues and challenges in the study area';
- 'provide a strategic context for the integration and implementation of existing studies applicable to the study area';
- 'to identify specific interventions to realise the vision'; and
- 'to ensure sustainable integrated development.'

In addition, the LSDF should (EMM 2008:3):

- 'inform, improve and guide cross-sectoral policy/project implementation and integration';
- 'inform the decision-making capacity for spatial development and guide infrastructure investment';
- 'inform long-term policy/strategy formulation processes'; and
- 'improve and enhance interactions between [the municipality] and its citizens/residents'.

Some 103 areas for LSDFs were set out using a range of criteria. In the South African context, each municipality is divided into wards, from which a local councillor is elected. Ward committees representing a range of interests are set up in each ward. Since wards were not demarcated along functional lines and since they sometimes change between elections, the LSDF areas cross-cut ward boundaries. The LSDF areas varied in size, but on the whole were relatively small. Some 12 LSDFs were to be piloted in the short term.

The Scope of Work document for the LSDF was wide-ranging and all inclusive. It was based on 22 comprehensive sector-specific modules dealing with municipal facilities and infrastructure, urban space, economy, housing, environment, and security as well as aspects of management. Each module had a set of key deliverables which included a 'Status Quo Report' as well as a corresponding 'Plan'. Together, these provided a detailed analysis of sector-related issues, proposals and requirements (see Table 1). Several modules include an implementation framework, requiring project proposals linked to budgets and phasing. An additional two modules provided for project management and public participation.

With around 70 planners working in the spatial planning and land use management departments in the municipality, and most focused on the latter in nine municipal offices, it was recognised that the municipality did not itself have the capacity to produce the LSDFs. Thus LSDFs were to be developed using consultants, at a cost of around R2m (around US$269,264 in November 2009) per plan. Consultants were expected to manage a team of specialists, and to develop an integrated product over a period of a year.

Table 1 provides an indication of the focus of various modules.

Assessment

The proposed LSDF is an ambitious attempt to forge a new form of spatial planning that would help to guide decisions on land use management, public sector investment, and to enable integration between sectors. It is innovative in attempting to address a wide range of issues that are frequently left out of or poorly integrated into spatial frameworks in the South African context, including environmental planning (Todes, Sim, Singh, Hlubi, & Oelofse, 2005); infrastructure (Todes, 2008); informal trade; public land; safety; and economic development (Harrison et al., 2008). In including these issues, the LSDF approach addresses elements of the critique of master planning, which focused on the narrow, physical end-state approach to spatial planning, and its lack of attention to the real economy, to land and property market dynamics, and to the key social issues. Integrated development and inter-sectoral coordination – a core focus of contemporary planning – is central to the plan and its process. In addition, considerable attention is paid to participation – an important deficit within master planning. Further, in accepting informal trade and focusing on its management, the LSDF goes beyond traditional modernist planning, with its tendency to suppress informality.

Nevertheless, in several respects, the proposed approach to LSDFs is open to criticisms levelled at traditional forms of spatial planning.

First, a detailed comprehensive approach was used. Although only a few pilot LSDFs were initially proposed, the intention was that wall-to-wall plans would ultimately be produced. Further, extensive analysis and planning is required in each module. While pilot LSDFs focused mainly on selected modules, some level of coverage for all 22 modules was required for each LSDF. This approach belies the capacity of the municipality to even manage and engage with the process. The extensive requirements of the modules, the number of meetings, and extent of coordination would be challenging for consultants, and could compromise quality. Further, while plans are expected to be revised every 5 years, avoiding the criticism that comprehensive plans of this sort take years to produce and are soon outdated, the costs and difficulties of doing so could prevent this from occurring.

Second, notwithstanding the reference to implementation, projects and phasing, much of the emphasis is on producing plans on paper – a common criticism of traditional forms of planning. Yet the desired integration between sectors is rarely achieved through merely plans on paper: it requires ongoing discussion and negotiation between departments, and through this process, the emergence of common understanding and agreement. Although the participation process does include inter-sectoral and inter-governmental coordination meetings, they would be unlikely to be sufficient to make such coordination possible. Similarly, developmental aspects of the plans, such as an informal trade management plan would need to be negotiated with stakeholders and departments, and ongoing structures would need to be set up. As critiques of master planning have suggested, a technocratic planning process is insufficient to enable co-operation within large complex institutions. Analyses of South African initiatives with more macro integrated development planning, and more developmental and action oriented area based planning have shown the difficulties of securing intra-institutional co-operation (e.g. Harrison, 2006; Robinson, McCarthy, & Forster, 2004). In eThekwini (Durban) a local spatial development planning process focused simply on land use-infrastructural links in a growing area took some two years to achieve agreement between departments (Sim, 2008). In the municipality studied, securing collaboration between departments is already difficult in many cases, as was evident even in the production of the briefs for the LSDFs and in the metropolitan and regional spatial frameworks processes. Problems here also reflect the position of the spatial planning department as

Table 1
Summary of proposed LSDF contents.

Module	Focus
1: Project management	• Management, integration and coordination of the production of the LSDF.
2: Spatial plan	• Guides planning work in other modules • Spatial analysis, spatial objectives and spatial development concept/framework (map and text) • Includes projects and project plans
3: Land use plan	• Requires 'erf level proposals for the LSDF area' (EMM 2008:13); • Includes 'proposed development control measures; ' • Details existing and proposed development proposals and development applications.
4: Strategic environmental assessment	• Concerned mainly with environmental assessment, management and the potential impacts of development on the natural environment.
5: Geotechnical study	• General evaluation of geotechnical conditions • Specifically requires site investigations that involve 'test pitting, sampling and mapping…at a density of 6–10 test pits per 10 hectares' (EMM 2008: 18).
6: Local open space plan	• Inventory of public and private open space and its use. • Local open space plan and projects.
7: Housing plan	• Evaluation of housing in the area • Development of a general housing plan for the LSDF, including addressing, inter alia, a variety of housing needs, impact of housing, and projects. • Development of detailed housing plan for each housing area, including design guidelines.
8: Economic plan	• Analysis of economic conditions, sectors and trends • Economic plan, exploring potentials, developing economic strategies and projects.
9: Informal trade plan	• Analysis of informal trade conditions, trends and needs. • Plan for informal trade areas and their management.
10: Public land implementation plan	• Description of all public land and its use • Assessment of optimum use of each piece of public land and development of proposals.
11: Urban design plan	• Detailed urban design for specified areas, including attention to safety and aesthetics.
12: Roads Planning and access management plan	• Current conditions and capacity; strategic roads master plan; road access management plan; road hierarchy plan; local area traffic management plan.
13: Stormwater management plan 14: Public transport plan 15: Water local master plan 16: Waste water local master plan 17: Electricity local master plan 18: Solid waste management plan 19: Social facilities plan 20: Transport modelling and traffic assessment	For each of the listed modules, inter alia: • Assessment of existing capacity, conditions and future requirements; • Assessment of requirements generally based 'on the assumption that the total future (or proposed) land use rights have been taken up' (EMM 2008: 59). • Electricity plan looks at scenarios • Public transport includes promotion of this aspect and inter-modal coordination.
21: Safety and security plan	• Analysis of conditions related to safety, emergencies, disaster management and services addressing these issues; comprehensive plan addressing these aspects.
22: Marketing strategy	• Marketing strategy for the area.
23: GIS and mapping	• Integration of GIS and mapping.
24: Participation	• Five chapter participation report is intended to provide a highly detailed record of the process and outcomes; • Requires holding sixty meetings over a fifty two-week period in the five phase participation process (data collection; analysis; spatial plan; sectoral and service plans; implementation); • Requires inter-departmental forums and external stakeholders forums, sectoral meetings including external stakeholders and meeting with councilors and portfolio committees. • One public meeting in the first phase of the process, and another in the last phase; • One ward committee meeting in each of phase of the process.

one amongst other departments, rather than being in a more powerful overall co-ordinating position.

Third, in practice, the focus of the LSDF is far more on planning to assist in land use decisions than on developmental interventions. Some of the briefs for the plans nevertheless include elements of the latter, for example an informal trading plan includes a management plan for trading; housing and economic projects are to be developed within the housing and economic plans. No institutional structures or managers are however anticipated to give effect to projects, or to co-ordinate across sectors. Further, issues of poverty, gender and HIV/AIDS are not considered in the briefs. In discussion with councillors and the spatial planning department it emerged that there was a concern that considerable funds would be spent on planning which would essentially enable private sector development, largely in the areas formerly reserved for whites. Respondents feared that it would do little to address the needs of the poor in the former township areas and informal areas.

Fourth, the LSDF approach reverts to a form of master planning in that the land use plan requires projected or recommended land uses on a site-by-site basis. It thus moves away from a strategic approach concerned with long-term visions providing a broad guide to decisions, towards a highly detailed land use management scheme, used to direct any departures from the existing town planning scheme. This is likely to restrict flexibility and innovation on the part of both developers and municipal officials.

Fifth, for several infrastructural sectors, the LSDF requires projections of capacity requirements in terms of the land use plan at levels that are fully developed. Only in the electricity plan is any sort of scenario planning used. In effect, infrastructure plans are to be developed in all LSDF areas on the basis of end-state planning. Even if this approach is accepted, there are real difficulties in developing appropriate estimates and projections of population, economic activity and land required for various uses at this scale, not least due to the lack of data which can meaningfully be used for this sort of

analysis. While some population figures exist at ward level, LSDF areas do not correspond to wards, and figures relating to employment and economic activity are only available at much larger scales.

Sixth, there are problems associated with the scale and scope of LSDFs, which compounds the difficulties associated with treating each as comprehensive 'mini-national development plans'. Several aspects of the modules included in the Scope of Work document could not be adequately dealt with at the specified local level such as elements of environmental planning, housing, economic and roads planning. What is useful as 'local scale' planning for various issues (such as roads or housing) is not necessarily the same, and it is counterproductive to box them all together. The requirement to produce a 'plan' for each of the topics addressed by the modules, rather simply asking for attention to these issues as appropriate compounds this problem. Similarly, some spatial concepts used in the regional and metropolitan spatial frameworks, such as corridors, cross-cut areas, and would not be appropriately addressed within a series of LSDFs. Further since each LSDF is likely to be produced by different consultants, the task of alignment between various plans would be considerable.

Finally, the process formulated by the municipality with regard to its mandate for broad based participation at various phases of the LSDF process essentially reflects the attitude and approach that has generally marked the document – an attempt at strategic, yet comprehensive vision and implementation. At one level, the municipality has suggested processes that could be seen as progressive in that a very wide range of actors and stakeholders are to be included: formally elected councillors, local ward committees, sector representatives, business, civil society organisations, officials and laypeople. Yet the complex but rigid process set up, requiring frequent meetings with a multitude of stakeholders over a short period of time, would necessitate very tight scheduling and seamless execution, with very little room for error and iteration. Further, since LSDF areas do not correspond with ward boundaries, several ward committees would need to be involved in each plan, increasing complexity, confusion and logistical difficulties. Lastly, despite the attention given to participation, groups which are not formally organised would have little voice in the process. Those working in planning and participation in South Africa and elsewhere (Sandercock, 2004; Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992; Watson, 2003) have highlighted the need to actively and consciously include those on the margins of formal processes of resource allocation and distribution, such as stakeholder groups like foreign nationals, the elderly, women and child-headed households, in this instance.

Conclusion

The paper has shown that the LSDF approach contains some innovative aspects that are consistent with current planning thought, but it also includes elements of traditional spatial planning approaches which have been criticised in the past: a highly comprehensive approach which belies institutional capacity and which would be difficult to manage and execute; a reliance on paper plans and insufficient attention to institutional issues and questions of implementation; a relatively technocratic approach combined with a labyrinthine approach to participation; end-state land and infrastructural planning; and difficulties in the 'scale' of planning.

There are tensions in the form of planning – between a strategic and a comprehensive approach, and between the objectives of a plan to direct land use management and those related to development and to inter-sectoral integration. While there is considerable emphasis on 'integrated planning', in effect 'integrated' equates with comprehensiveness, which is likely to be difficult to achieve. Mechanisms to achieve integration are not well developed. Although the forms of integration anticipated here might be possible in specific cases and around particular projects, it seems unlikely to occur on the systematic basis that is anticipated here. In practice, there is greater focus on planning to direct land use change than on more developmental planning, but the overly detailed end-state planning is likely to make plans inflexible and unable to respond to change.

In the case of Ekurhuleni, the alternative would be to opt for a more focused approached – to undertake more detailed planning in areas of strategic importance, development pressure, expected change, and areas where significant interventions are anticipated. In these cases, the nature of planning – the sectors considered and the way they are addressed – need to be shaped by the concerns and issue to be addressed. There is also space for a stronger focus on developmental planning linked to implementation as a way to improve conditions in poorer areas. Area based institutions to drive change may be useful in this contest. Planning of this sort is concerned with facilitating development, with operational management, and with 'soft' projects as much as with capital works.

The research findings beg the question of why Ekurhuleni reverted to what was in effect master planning. In the study conducted and in the interaction with the municipality, there was no evidence that this was occurring for political reasons as suggested in some of the literature (Roy, 2009; UN-Habitat, 2009) although modernist notions of planning were evident. The shift towards master planning was not deliberate, but rather emerged from the pressures towards greater certainty in responding to development applications, and from a conception of 'integrated development' as comprehensive planning. Indeed planners were responsive to the critique presented, and were prepared to shift to a more strategic approach. Although the need for a flexible approach is written into legislation, it is in tension with the persistence of traditional forms of land use planning. In the case of Ekurhuleni, this tension is exacerbated by the dominance of land use management as a focus for planning. It is also apparent that the broad spatial frameworks which have been in use in South Africa are insufficient to manage urban development. While several municipalities have attempted to introduce forms of planning which go beyond these limitations, there has not been much formal interaction between municipalities around these issues. Ekurhuleni was relatively isolated in this regard.

Beyond the case of Ekurhuleni, there is a need to debate and explore alternatives to traditional forms of spatial planning. While the perpetuation of master planning or a reversion to traditional forms of planning often occurs for political reasons, this is not necessarily the case. Modernist conceptions of planning remain or even are resurgent as is evident even in relation to urban design schemes in the United Kingdom. The intersection of new approaches with older land use management systems provides part of the explanation. And exploration of alternatives is sometimes shaped by modernist perspectives and discourses linked to traditional forms of planning. New languages are sometimes in use, but are not always meaningful in practice. In addition, new strategic spatial planning approaches being put forward as an alternative to master planning are not necessarily being developed in ways that are sufficient to manage urban development. There is a surprising lack of debate and exploration on alternative forms of spatial planning, yet there is an urgent need for such engagement.

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