

Challenges to Rural Planning in Africa: The Case of Three Post-democratic Sub-Saharan African Countries

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Abstract

The fundamental transformation of Africa is largely dependent on new approaches to rural planning and development, however this remains a major challenge in most African countries. More than 60% of Africa's population is classified as rural yet rural planning and development seem to be paid lip-service. Alternatively, rural planning and development initiatives have either failed or lagged behind because of the urban bias of regional planning policies and strategies. The debate on rural planning and development is centered on an expanding body of evidence which supports the notion of rural-urban interdependence towards harmonious regional development outcomes. The derivation of positive outcomes is dependent on existing and emergent policies and strategies which focus on planned interventions to strengthen rural societies and reduce their vulnerability. Ultimately, these policies must be holistic, going beyond ad hoc service and infrastructure provision, and must encompass a series of short, medium and long-term strategies which can aid in the creation of positive and progressive rural spaces and places. This paper will examine the challenges of rural planning in three post-democratic African countries namely, South Africa, Botswana and Kenya with emphasis to spatial planning and evaluate the extent to which their existing policies and strategies have been successful. It concludes by outlining the importance and new approaches to rural planning in Africa. This paper argues that challenges to rural planning in Africa can be overcome through the formulation of holistic policies and strategies which are focused, innovative and have the tendency to produce balanced outcomes.

Introduction: Africa and its Rural Landscape

The African continent has witnessed a legacy of domination under colonialism; struggle for freedom, internal conflicts and challenging internal spatial differences which have led to the production of extremely unequal spatial regions. 62% of Africa's population is rural (UN Habitat, 2008), yet rural planning and development still lags behind because it is often paid lip-service by most African governments. Alternatively, rural planning and development initiatives have either failed or fell behind because of the biased nature of regional planning policies and strategies which tend to concentrate on dealing with the pressures of urbanisation and enhancing global competitiveness of urban areas.

Rurality in Africa comes in many forms ranging from the agriculturally dominant areas to settlement typology; and the types of governance being practiced. Currently, the definition of rural is blurred by many

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components however, Cloke (2006) defines rurality in terms of areas which are (i) dominated by extensive land uses, notably agriculture and forestry; (ii) contain small, lower order settlements which demonstrate a strong relationship between buildings and extensive landscape, and which are thought of as rural by most of their residents; and (iii) engender a way of life which is characterised by a cohesive identity based on respect for the environmental and behavioural qualities of living as part of an extensive landscape. The aforementioned characteristics outlined by Cloke fits the description of most rural places in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, rural spaces can be divided into two main categories. First are the traditional settlements which are either nucleated or widely dispersed depending on the land's suitability for settlement and historical past. Further, they are often surrounded by commercial white-owned agricultural lands. Second, are the former homelands (of which some were self governed) and townships where blacks were relocated during the Apartheid era which is typical of South Africa. Often, such townships were located far from areas of opportunities yet they provided labour for the declared urban centres.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the extent of rural planning neglect is highly visible in planning strategies right from the national level, down to the lowest structures in place at the local level. If this is the case, how can rural spaces and places be transformed to meet their current expectations of self-sufficiency and provide their quota to the national and global economy at large? The identification of current challenges within rural planning has become critical to Africa's development if the supposed 'dark continent' is to meet the current global goals of progress, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to identify the challenges of rural planning in Sub-Saharan Africa with particular reference to Botswana, South Africa and Kenya. Whilst these three countries may exhibit differences in their systems of planning structures, they face similar problems related to rural planning and the effects thereof. This paper seeks to explore the following: current planning structures in place, the context within which rural planning occurs and the identification of major challenges faced by these countries. Parallel to the discussion will be an explanation on how the limitations of rural planning affect the overall national goals of the respective countries. Selected case studies from all three countries will be employed to illustrate the arguments being put forward.

Summary of Planning Perspectives from South Africa, Kenya and Botswana

Planning policies and strategies in the three countries follows similar structures which filter from the national level down to the local level. The national planning policies and strategies for Botswana (National Settlement Policy) and Kenya (Human Settlement Strategy) provide the overall principles and guidelines to spatial planning. For South Africa, planning is based on an integrated development planning process initiated by district and local municipalities which results in the production of a 5-year statutory planning document. A national plan is yet to be drafted under the auspices of the National Planning Commission. Currently, the National Spatial Development Perspective provides essential guidelines to planning and development in

South Africa. Below in Table 1 is a brief summary of a framework of planning hierarchy which depict different planning processes for different geographical or administratively demarcated regions. These plans are explained systematically in the next section of this paper.

Table 1: Framework of Planning Hierarchy

	Botswana	South Africa	Kenya
National level	National Settlement Strategy	South Africa does not have a National Plan	Human Settlement Strategy (Growth Centre Strategy / Service Centre Strategy / Integrated Network Policy)
Provincial level	Regional Integrated Development Plan	Provincial Growth & Development Strategy / Provincial Spatial Economic Development Strategy	Provincial Physical Development Plan
District level	Integrated Development Plan	District Integrated Development Plan / District Spatial Development Frameworks	District Physical Development Plan
Local Level	Urban Village Dev Plans / Local Plans	Local Integrated Development Plan / Local Spatial Development Frameworks	Urban Plans Market /local Plans

A Planning Perspective in South Africa

Regional policy in South Africa has evolved from being racially biased state to one of equity (RDP White Paper, 1994). Ultimately, South African planning policy has shifted considerably from an unequal apartheid-based approach to a framework of planning practice which seeks development that is spatially, economically, environmentally and socially just (Duminy, 2007: 64). Because of its past planning outcomes, town and regional planners, managers and politicians have been faced with the task of reconstructing the impression of a spatially segregated, highly fragmented and dispersed society (Donaldson, 2001: 1). The process of political change has been followed by an overhaul of policies and legislation concerning urban and rural planning, and land development. Not only that, but also the manner in which policies are formulated have changed from a top-down approach to a more bottom-up approach.

At the wake of a Post-Apartheid South Africa in 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was born. Later in 1995, the Development Facilitation Act (DFA) was promulgated to facilitate a new development planning process in accordance with the RDP. The DFA contains a number of land development principles which are to govern development and spatial planning in South Africa, including “the promotion of integrated land development in rural and urban areas in support of each other” (RSA, 1995). This principle aligns to the importance of the rural-urban interdependence which flows within current thoughts in regional policy literature. Unfortunately, the opposite is rampant in terms of regional policies of Sub-Saharan countries like Kenya, South Africa and Botswana. In reality, current theoretical and practical experiences have proven to exacerbate the unenthusiastic nature of rural planning among many development

stakeholders. The principle of interdependence is only relevant from an extractive perspective by the urban, thus undermining the true essence of a give-take situation in equal favour of rural spaces and places.

With no national plan in place, the commissioning of the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) in 2006 has provided rather broad guidelines to socio-economic and environmental development on a spatial dimension. The ultimate purpose of the NSDP in the South African setting is to fundamentally reconfigure apartheid spatial relations and to implement spatial priorities that meet the constitutional imperative of providing basic services to all and alleviating poverty and inequality (NSDP, 2006, ii). It is to a great extent formulated on the basis of economic potential and opportunity areas in South Africa. Immediately, one is able to recognise the bias of this document to equitable planning in South Africa since urban areas are the ones which command higher economic potential than rural areas which are often underdeveloped for example, in terms of infrastructure and subsequently, lack investment confidence.

The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) is intended to identify provincial-specific challenges and formulate strategies to tackle these challenges. This document is drafted and needs to be adopted by the respective provincial cabinets before they can be put to use. Parallel to the PGDS is the Provincial Spatial Economic Development Strategy (PSEDS) which is to provide the spatial context to the PGDS (DED, 2009). Aligned to the principles of the NSDP, the PSEDS uses the concept of nodes and corridors as a backdrop to the distribution of economic investment within the Province. It represents a broad spatial framework formulated on economic principles. One of its focus areas is its determination of where government directs its investment and development initiatives. Clearly, the PSEDS is also economically driven and is targeted towards places where returns on investments are feasible. From a spatial perspective, the use of nodes and corridors has not been favourable to rural regions. For example, the juxtaposition of the PSEDS agricultural potential and corridor maps showed a mismatch between actual agricultural potential areas and the actual paths followed by these activity corridors. In some cases, the PSEDS has failed to recognise the areas of economic potential which are mapped out by local municipalities in their respective Spatial Development Frameworks. For this reason, it has been realised that provincial priorities and local municipal priorities are often in conflict of each other.

Essentially, the principles of the NSDP, PGDS and PSEDS need to be considered in Municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and their Spatial Development Frameworks. The IDP as a local level holistic development planning policy requires comprehensive situational analyses in order to adequately inform development and planning decisions. The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) as a broad spatial representation of IDPs marks the initial process to a series of low level spatial plans to facilitate meaningful planning. Unfortunately, the reality is that most rural municipalities are still unable to develop detailed spatial plans, making it difficult to exercise planning control at a much lower level. Thus rural spaces and

places have been left desolate with little or no planning but only benefit from *ad hoc* stand-alone projects with limited bearing to a holistic planning and development.

Spatial Planning Framework in Kenya

Spatial planning framework policies in Kenya are well developed and have been implemented since the 1970s. The spatial planning at the national level is guided by the Human Settlement Strategy which was an instrument utilised in the identification of growth and service centres covering the whole country. It also guided the development of network of communications linking the settlements and to adopt standards of infrastructure which closely related to what was affordable by the country (Awuor-Hayangah, 1996).

Within the Human Settlement Strategy are three main branches: first is the Growth Centre Strategy which is urban centred; second is the Service Centre Strategy which facilitates service delivery and is of direct relevance to rural planning in Kenya. The third is the Integrated Network Policy, which on the other hand, is aimed at achieving some level of equity between geographical areas and integration between urban and rural areas. It was used to facilitate transport linkages between principal towns and growth centres to national trunk roads. All Market and Rural Centres are linked by minor roads as a minimum requirement (PPD, 1986) of this Network policy.

The Service Centre Strategy is based on an hierarchy of designated service centres which cover the entire country. It is to ensure a spatially equitable national distribution of infrastructural facilities and social services; guides development and services into an hierarchy of centres that provide services to rural people (PPD, 1986; Ohas, 1985). This strategy consists of designated service centres in which the standard of services (such as sanitation, water, power and education) are provided according to a defined hierarchy of ranking assigned to that centre. One of the functions of the lower ranking centre is to stabilise the rural settlement pattern and to provide services accessible to the population (Richardson, 1980). The extent to which these objectives have been achieved is varied, however, most parts of the country are able to access some services at the local market centres. It is at this discrete (local) level of planning that the spatial planning policy has a direct influence as to what happens in the rural areas in Kenya. The areas outside these local centres are generally left to develop organically. In a nutshell, no formal rural planning process is initiated.

Economic Planning Framework

In conjunction with the three strategies above, is an Economic Planning Framework. This constitutes national five year development plans with budgetary allocations for various ministries for the preparation of regional (provincial and district) development plans. In the 1980s, the District Focus strategy for Rural Development was adopted which led to the devolution of planning to the people in theory. This led to a plethora of activities at the district level including the preparation of District Development Plans (Ministry

of Economic Planning) and District Physical Development Plan (Ministry of Lands & Settlement) just to mention a few. Their implementation is undertaken on a sector by sector basis. The District Development Plans are largely project oriented with little direct linkage to the District Physical Development Plans. Their emphases are on the implementation of the district projects without necessarily referring to the physical development plan. Activities of any two public agencies concerned with planning of districts (largely rural areas) are not coordinated, thus follow the inherited traditional approaches that favoured sector-based planning approach to development.

Constituency Development Fund Framework

Not too long ago, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Framework was introduced and is controlled by the Ministry which involves funds being sent to the constituency do their own plans and implement selected projects. The projects implemented are politically identified under the sitting Member of Parliament with minimal input from professional experts. The CDF is seen as an attempt to involve local people in the management of their projects according to their priorities and makes up a fusion of both participatory and bottom-up approaches to development. The major flaw is that it is often exclusionary in that it is driven by the Member of Parliament and hence the inclination to favour their supporters; issues of nepotism and favouritism are not guarded against; ad hoc implementation of projects which are not necessarily linked to the overall district plans and projects not completed within the parliamentary period are likely to be abandoned, hence the problem of lack of continuity. This is compounded with the lack of issues of maintenance beyond the establishment of a facility.

Spatial Planning Framework in Botswana

Spatial planning in Botswana at the national level is guided by the National Settlement Policy which was introduced in the National Development Plan (NDP) 5 of 1979. The goal of the policy was to provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for national physical planning and to provide a framework for guiding the distribution of investment in a way that reflected the settlements' population size, economic potential, level of infrastructure and settlement's role as service centres (DTRP, 1998). It identified four planning regions which has guided the preparation of lower level plans in the country (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of Botswana showing planning regions



Source: Department of Town & Regional Planning, Botswana, 1998

The range of spatial plans produced in Botswana (in order of their ranking) are: Integrated Regional Development Plans; District Settlement Strategy; District Land Use Plans; Urban Development Plans; Urban-Village Development Plans and Village Development Plans. For purposes of this analysis, examples will be cited from the South Eastern Region which has the full range of plans.

It is noted that spatial planning in Botswana has adopted a physical planning approach in which the range of plans prepared for urban, urban-village and villages end up in the production of long term structure plans (over 20 years). It is possible to prepare village master plans because of the nature of nucleated settlements which characterise the rural landscape in the country. This has been facilitated by the fact that the typical settlement structure at both the urban-village and the village level comprise of land for residential purposes; land for agriculture and land reserved for cattle post. This has created very unique and highly mobile population when one considers the number of journeys which a typical middle class person who is employed in a nearby city; lives in the village; owns a small agricultural land and has a cattle post. This presents special problems but from an infrastructure provision point of view, it is an advantage since the resident population is geographically concentrated. This is in direct contrast to situation in rural Kenya and South Africa where dispersed homesteads have made the provision of infrastructure such as water a major challenge to local authorities. In most cases, these regions have been left to further develop organically, with the provision of minimal services at the local centre level.

SETBACKS TO RURAL PLANNING – CASES FROM SOUTH AFRICA, BOTSWANA AND KENYA

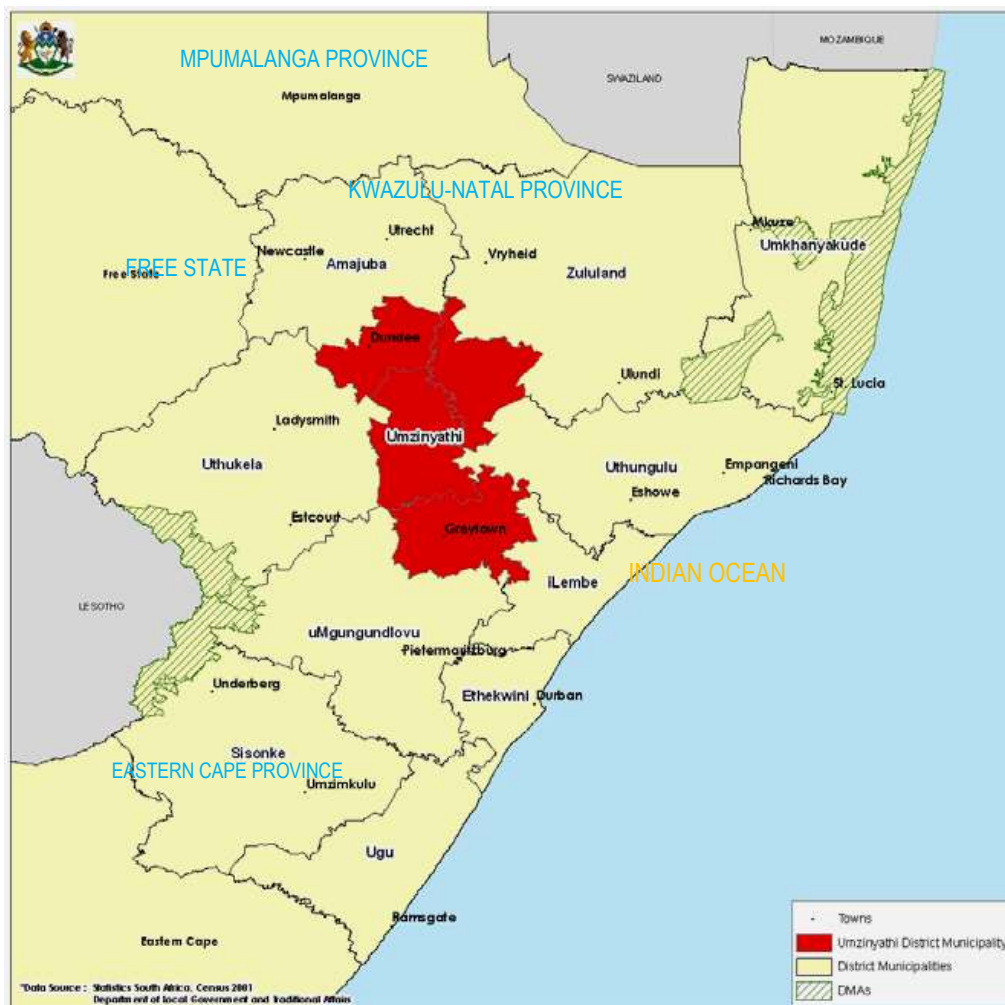
This section identifies setbacks and challenges to rural planning in the three countries. It focuses on analyses of selected case studies. The Umzinyathi District Municipality¹ (see Figure 2), South Africa has been used as the basis for comparison for this discussion. This is because it possesses typical rural characteristics which surpass those of Botswana and Kenya in terms of challenges and rurality. Umzinyathi's topography ranges from almost flat to hilly and mountainous terrain, posing a major challenge to infrastructure development and basic service delivery particularly in Msinga and Nqutu Local Municipality. Most of the rural inhabitants are extremely poor and are subjected to a traditional mode of governance often resistant to formal planning.

Botswana's South Eastern Integrated Development Plan and Kagleng District Settlement Strategy (2003-2027) are regional development plans and have focused on the identification of the range centres and the determination of the level of infrastructure. These are applicable to the given centres within the district depending on whether they have been classified as primary, secondary or tertiary centres. They refer to the whole range of social and economic which is desirable but without the inclusion of a budgetary plan for implementation.

The Mochudi which is an urban-village has a structure plan which bares little difference from that of a typical urban centre in terms of population density. It as such requires similar standards of infrastructural development. The only difference is that unlike a typical urban centre in Botswana, 75% of its residents are engaged in agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The same status is accorded to Molepolole which is also an urban village in Kweneng District still within the South Eastern Region.

Mogoditshane, Gabane, Metsimotlhabe and Mopane Development Plan (2003 - 2027) (identified in the Kweneng District Settlement Strategy 2000-2024) are examples of how village plans in the rural areas are prepared. They are a ring of villages within fairly close proximity to Gaborone City and indeed a number of people commute daily from these villages into the city. This is a statutory plan provided for in Sections 6-8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Cap 39:09). Its table of content is similar to that of the higher level plan in the settlement hierarchy which begs to question the extent to which some of the provisions proposed really reflect the needs of the people. The following challenges outlined below were gathered from interviews with planners and are a reflection of challenges of rural regions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 2: Umzinyathi District Municipality within the context of KwaZulu-Natal



Source: DLGTA (2006)

1. Lack of Uniform Legislation to Regulate and Protect Planning Practices

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal until October 2008 used the Town Planning Ordinance (No. 27 of 1949) as its prime legislation for development and land use management. It was used for planning and development control in previously declared urban areas². The KwaZulu Land Affairs Act (No. 11 of 1992) on the other hand, applied in former KwaZulu where land ownership was governed traditionally by chiefs or Amakhosi³. Whereas the Town Planning Ordinance required urban areas to prepare town planning schemes to control land use, this was absent in the KwaZulu Land Affairs Act. Currently, the KwaZulu-Natal Planning and Development Act (No. 6 of 2008)⁴, repealed these sets of legislations.

The main objective of this new Act is to transfer decision-making processes with regards to planning and development to local municipalities as opposed to that previously done by the authorised Provincial body. It requires municipalities to prepare land development schemes for their entire municipal areas which includes land held under traditional ownership. The new legislation is to facilitate spatial planning and land use management in rural areas. For this to succeed major emphasis is being placed on meaningful and extensive

consultation during the planning process to harness and enable the use of indigenous knowledge. This challenge was found to be peculiar to South Africa whereby its constitution allows for provincial planning legislation to be drafted⁵ unlike in Kenya and Botswana. Kenya and Botswana do not have devolved governance systems thus they use a common legislation which guides planning and development activities throughout the country. However, each local authority particularly within their areas of jurisdiction can pass respective by-laws.

2. Traditional Government Setup Versus Municipal Planning and Implementation

Another major challenge which hinders formal rural planning lies is the nature of land ownership in rural areas which are governed by traditional leaders. The Umzinyathi District Municipality has about 47% of its total land area under Traditional Authorities and which are also concentrated in the Msinga and Nqutu Local Municipalities. Such lands are held under the Ingonyama Trust Board⁶. The traditional system of land ownership has hindered spatial planning in the sense that tenure arrangements only provide for “permission to occupy” rather than freehold. Freehold title is impossible on traditional land thus poses a major setback to proper planning and potential private investment. It was reported by planners that public authorities had often been subjected to cumbersome traditional procedures concerning development planning and implementation process. Whilst the system of land ownership is similar in Kenya and Botswana, planning is possible through national legislation directives with little resistance from traditional leaders. In South Africa, traditional leaders are of the view that any formal planning process could strip them of power over their land, a reminder of the land dispossession and atrocities associated with the apartheid regime as was attested to by interviewees. Spatial planning principles like accessibility are rather difficult to incorporate into rural planning processes as Amakhosi prefer to be the sole determinants of such so as to portray their calibre of leadership to their respective communities whereas in Kenya and Botswana, these are determined by legislatively approved plans.

Figure 3: Imagery of Msinga Showing its Rugged Terrain



Source: Google Earth, 2010

3. Physical Land Characteristics as a Deterrent

Dominated by extensive undulating terrain, KwaZulu-Natal is often faced with the challenge of high costs in terms of preparation and implementation of spatial plans. Botswana, on the other hand is generally flat posing little constraints to physical planning projects. For example, the Msinga and Nqutu Local Municipalities in Umzinyathi among other factors, have experienced very little economic prosperity due to their rugged topography (see Figure 3), limited funding, among other factors. This poses a major setback to basic service delivery and infrastructural development. Secondly, settlement patterns in these regions have developed traditionally and are often scattered over a large surface area due to the uneven nature to the terrain. Spatial planning efforts which require relocation to ideal sites are often resisted by locals due to deep-rooted social networks and cultural practices.

4. Outdated Statistics and Budgetary Allocation

Budgetary allocations in South Africa are made solely on the bases of population sizes within municipal boundaries. It was reiterated by interviewees that rural municipalities are often bound to receive budget allocations which do not commensurate with their existing population requirements and needs. This is because the National Treasury only accepts population figures provided by Statistics SA (the National Statistics provider) to determine its budgetary allocations for municipalities. The challenge lies in the fact that Statistics SA only provides figures based on population projections made from the 2001 census and in some cases to the Community Survey of 2007. Whereas organisations such as Global Insight and Quantex also provide statistics which are updated annually, these are refuted by the National Treasury as 'unofficial sources'. The effect is that allocations are often lower than the current population, thus posing a funding

challenge to development planning process of rural municipalities. The end result is that plans are prepared but not implemented or plans in process of preparation are never completed. In the Kenyan context, there is no budget set aside for the direct implementation of the physical development plans. As such, physical plans remain largely advisory. District Development Plans and District Physical Development Plans are in effect, not synchronised. As a result there is often a mismatch between the priorities of these two plans and this impact directly of the spatial planning outcomes.

5. Lack of Human Resource Capacities

The planning profession has gained wider recognition in the Sub-Saharan context. Whereas the planning profession had a “white face” particularly in South Africa, this is slowly changing. Given the job opportunities that exist in the planning field however, rural municipalities have failed to attract planners of high calibre. In Botswana, most planning documents are often prepared by consultant planners leading to what can be termed as ‘Consultant Led Planning’. In Kenya, planners are present in almost every district; however, their willingness to stay in hardship districts has thus resulted in a high turnover of planners. This has affected the continuity of plan preparations and implementation as well. These setbacks present a myriad of constraints for rural planning in Sub-Saharan Africa. Another constraint hindering retention of permanent planning staff is that rural municipalities do not attract substantial budgetary allocations to fund their operations. In most cases, rural municipalities such as Msinga have been reported to have a single planner who is responsible for all planning responsibilities. This situation adversely affects the output of these planners, not withstanding the negative impacts on planning as a whole.

6. Neglect of Indigenous Knowledge and Practices

Another major setback to rural planning in Sub-Saharan Africa is been the limited consideration of indigenous knowledge and practices to inform planning decisions. From interviews held with planners, it became clear that grassroot engagement with communities have not been adequately harnessed. Often, both resident and consultant planners find themselves relying on documented information which have little bearing on the real situations of rural regions. The result is a mismatch between planning outputs and what is actually needed. The use of indigenous knowledge and practices has proven to be greatly relevant to identifying real situations and needs of rural communities, for example in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN Development & Planning Commission, 2006). Knowledge of grassroot social networks and cultural practices have become necessary elements which can inform practical planning decisions and to produce better results for rural areas. Most planners reside in the urban areas but are responsible for planning of rural areas which has led to a technocratic approach to planning that has been criticised by local people, for instance in Kenya and Botswana..

7. Lack of Coordination among Multiple Actors

One of the major challenges to rural planning in Kenya and South Africa is the multiplicity of public actors (sectoral), NGOs, regional authorities, politicians that operate in the rural areas. Each strives to pursue their own agenda without due consideration of what others do, yet their overall goal is to improve the quality of life of the rural dwellers. In South Africa, the preparation phases of Integrated Development Plans require sector inputs. However, experiences by most rural municipalities are that some sector departments fail to attend IDP forums thus affecting the intended holistic approach to municipal planning. Sector departments are often interested in ad hoc infrastructural development within their respective sectoral obligations. Often, this has been a way of *speedily spending budgets* before the end of the financial year or as a response to service delivery protests as has been evident in the past two years in South Africa thus defeating the ends of holistic planning practices.

There exist a number of NGOs working in the rural parts of Botswana and some planners have argued that they tend to align their activities to match the needs of the rural people. The view of one of the planners interviewed was that some NGOs are making genuine input into the lives of the rural people while others have their own agenda. The lack of direct linkages between various development planning agencies operating in the rural areas as revealed by the cases reviewed, is a major constraint to rural development and hence the need for a new approach to rural planning where coordination becomes a key element in implementation. This calls for a holistic approach which could be achieved through the establishment of rural planning framework within which meaningful and beneficial linkages in the implementation of sectoral plans and programmes must be addressed.

8. Mismatch of Priorities

Common to the three countries is the emphasis on creating employment opportunities in rural areas, yet spatial planning in rural areas has failed to use agriculture to create jobs or ignored non-agricultural opportunities. There are often no plans dealing with employment creation in the plans produced for the rural areas even though it is identified as one of the critical factors acting as a push factor for rural-urban migration particularly amongst the youth. Even if there are such, they are ad-hoc, short-lived and not sustainable in the long run. For example in Botswana, performance management where the Minister for Lands under which DTRP is situated often asks how many plots (erven) have been planned. As such planning is being *equated with plots* which is misnomer and has serious consequences to the broad vision and goals of planning.

This has major implications for the rural areas whose priorities are not the generation of plots but access to other services and facilities. In this context, the implementation of plans is shelved as the planners focus on production of plots. A planner interviewed argued that the physical planners are supposed to be coordinating implementation of projects for which they have been trained but this is not happening. “There is a *yawning gap* which needs to be interrogated”. The question is “is rural planning taught in universities linked to practice; and what kind of training is given to the planners? Why should a planner think that they are there to

produce plots rather than to produce plans which address issues of poverty reduction endemic in rural areas? Secondly, how can the youth be retained in the rural areas to stem their systematic departure to the urban areas given this is contributing to under development of rural areas? In Botswana for instance, funds are made available by the national government but there are no tangible programmes which are yielding the intended results in the rural areas. Proper implementation of the plans is therefore crucial to the achievement of development in rural areas.

9. Lack of Rural-based Standards

The question being asked is whether the current planning in Botswana is focused on rural areas? Spatial planning in Botswana is from national to village level albeit with challenges. Anything below the small villages as specified in the National Settlement Strategy is guided by the land use plan. This involves the identification of *masimos* which are reserved for agriculture but one finds in practice that villages sprawl onto agricultural land. This has serious implications to the food security of these settlements and the country at large given that Botswana is essentially a drought prone country and large parts of the rural areas are not suitable for crop production.

Unfortunately, the Department of Town and Regional Planning (DTRP) is not directly involved in rural development planning. Their involvement is minimal because it has not recognised rural areas (villages) as having activities which need to be maintained like those in the urban areas. For instance, when village centres are planned, the plan is silent on the issue of livestock keeping which is a major source of livelihood and the assumptions made in the planning of villages are less tolerant on keeping animals within a residential area. Moreover, there is no analysis of the impact of the plan on people's life style. The plans prepared have been criticised for applying urban based standards to the rural areas. A case in point is the Mogoditshane planned village which is supposed to be an "animal free zone" but livestock can be seen roaming the village freely. One could argue that in this instance, livestock keeping needs to be encouraged since it is a major source of livelihood for some of the residents of the village but planners are often silent on such issues and do not embrace it as an activity which should be encouraged under specific guidance.

10. Dominance of Sector Specific Planning

The dominance of sectoral planning is costing the rural areas a lot. There is no direct linkage between the agricultural sector and spatial planning for rural areas in Botswana. For example, often, the report of survey for most of the spatial plans (e.g. Botswana) might have only two pages on agriculture out of 100 page report. Indeed the plan will not talk in detail on how to improve the rural economy. It appears as if planners assume that reserving land for industry will necessarily result into economic growth of the rural settlements. *This is a false assumption that planning industrial plots will necessarily result in the creation of jobs in the rural areas.*

11. Limited Reflection

There is limited evidence that the spatial planners in the cases are evaluating or reflecting on the whether traditional way of doing things was succeeding or not in the rural areas. Urban areas have witnessed many shifts in the way in which detail or local planning is undertaken and yet planning for rural areas is undertaken as if the planners are oblivious to the changing trends. It is argued that in the towns the voices of the citizenry is heard while those of rural dwellers are silent, hence limited influence on the way in which rural planning is undertaken. Indeed, do the planners hear the voices of the rural people when preparing the plans and why have the planners consistently retained a mindset that rural areas are *only agricultural areas*? A reflective planning approach is therefore long overdue if planning is to succeed in meeting the needs of the rural dwellers.

12. Weak Implementation Strategies

The lack of appropriate implementation strategies has greatly hampered the effectiveness of rural planning as demonstrated that none of the spatial plans examined had an appropriate implementation plan neither were the proposals linked to any budget. For example, Umzinyathi may have implementation strategies, but inadequate funds and lack of human resource capacity hampers implementation. This is coupled with the lack of or limited documentation of the rural experiences and the related livelihood strategies in any tangible form in the respective results of survey.

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL PLANNING

Given the interdependence between rural and urban regions, the time has come that these inter and intra linkages are enhanced to protect the vulnerability of rural spaces and places as is often the case. The essential linkages between the rural and the urban can be enhanced through a series of balanced planning interventions by addressing the challenges discussed. Regional planning has a major role to play in strengthening the opportunities and potential of the rural areas. During the conceptualisation of regional plans, consideration must first and foremost be given to the rural and urban as a single and equal spatial unit. In doing so, initial thoughts of prejudice are almost absent and this can provide a platform for coherent approach to the planning process. Such plans must be strategic but flexible to accommodate the continuous socio-cultural changes occurring particularly in rural areas.

The identification of opportunities must be undertaken decisively, giving reason to the unique features of rural spaces and be able to capitalise on them. In cases where no significant opportunities exist, it would be relevant to harness and improve the potential of other non-spatial elements. Key informants to rural policy and planning according to Moseley (1997 and Ray (2000) must include (a) territorial and integrated focus (b) an endogenous development accent (c) the use of local resources (d) local contextualisation through active public participation (cited by Scott, 2006: 814). These informants will form the bases for an integrated land use plan whereby issues of centralisation and decentralisation are incorporated. Accessibility through

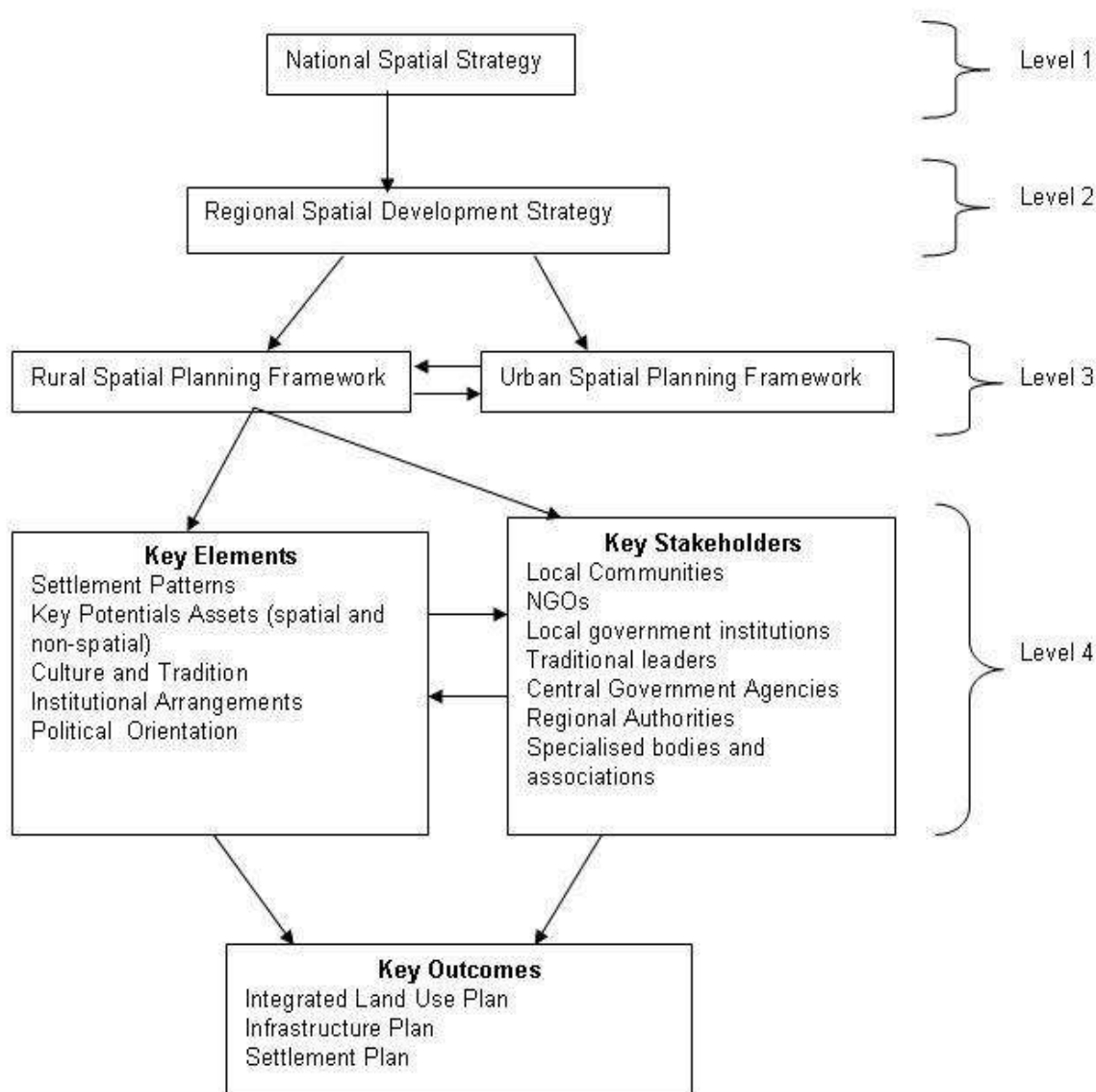
better transportation infrastructure must remain basic to rural planning as this enhances the use of rural activity centres and reinforces healthy linkages between the urban and rural.

Figure 4: Harnessing Potential of Natural Resources in Msinga Local Municipality, South Africa

For example, Msinga's rugged terrains characterised by mountains offers an enormous tourism potential where activities such as hiking and paragliding can be harnessed. Essentially, this would require infrastructure to enhance that potential, providing an employment avenue for local tour guides and increasing its revenue base. Quarrying activities can also an important revenue source to finance local development planning. All these would require a comprehensive land use planning and management system to ensure an optimal progression of rural spaces. (Msinga IDP, 2008/09 Review)

Lastly, the preparation of comprehensive rural plans is only as good as its implementation. Implementing agencies should therefore consist of specialised institutions with high competencies in their specific domains. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the consideration of NGOs as implementing bodies is not a new phenomenon; however, their roles are often detached from local government processes. NGOs are often known to be more involved at the grass-root level and have the ability to personally interact with local communities and are often deemed void of political interests. New partnerships with such agencies are necessary in this regard. A workable framework for rural planning which takes cognisance of the setbacks and challenges identified above is proposed (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: A Workable Rural Planning Framework for Sub-Saharan Africa



Insights into the Framework

The National Spatial Strategy is conceptualized on relevant and applicable planning principles and include guidelines to rural planning. The national landscape must be seen as a single spatial entity without any initial delineation between rural and urban. This is to allow for an unbiased position in terms of planning and enable policy makers to visualize or construct a singular meaning to facilitate a proper planning process which will inturn influence their outcomes. Most importantly, the use of economic indicators must not be dominant in order to help erase the ‘venerated social constructs’ of rural and urban economies.

At the Regional level, spatial strategies must include a set of applicable principles and guidelines relevant to their particular regional characteristics. At this stage, although the regional strategy still remains conceptual

(but not as broad as the National Strategy), it should be able to provide enough details to inform other lower plans that follow. It should also give consideration to linkages with neighbouring regions rather than *boxed up* strategies which have little or no bearing on what happens or affects its border areas. This move has the potential of harnessing opportunities; utilizing resources from neighbouring regions; and promotes better planning outcomes; and generates revenue for further development. The acknowledgement of the rural and the urban is highly recommended at this stage to facilitate the process of change being envisaged. This would form the basis upon which appropriate principles would apply to different spatial characteristics at a much broader planning level (see Figure 5).

The regional level plans should include both the urban and rural spatial planning frameworks (Figure 5, level 2). The rural at this stage would have been easily identified and decisions taken would be appropriately based on peculiarities and similarities to its urban counterpart. The issue of connections between the rural and urban will have to be fully explored as this will offer the possibility of formulating spatial plans which adequately acknowledge and demystify the significant interdependence between rural and urban spaces (Figure 5, Level 4). Concurrently, potentials and opportunities are identified and mitigations are provided for any existing and possible threats.

Elements to be considered include existing settlement typology, culture and tradition, etc. These must relate directly to the actual rural landscape in question to enable context-specific decisions to be made. For example, agricultural potential can be identified and traditional leadership or custodians of the land must be consulted so as to remove any conflicts of interest on the land parcel and land use in question. A high level of certainty is required at this point to facilitate the successful formulation and implementation of spatial plans. Within this Rural Spatial Planning framework will be the context-specific low level plans (such as land use plan, infrastructure plans, etc) which inform the overall planning vision of the rural region (Level 4). Caution must be exercised to limit conflicts between these plans as this could stifle the planning implementation process and threaten the certainty of plans. Whilst these are being done, stakeholder involvement at all the different stages must be comprehensive enough to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Effective and efficient democratic procedures must be utilized to allow rural communities to take ownership of planning outcomes and further promote their active involvement during implementation.

Conclusion

The arguments for rural (spatial) planning is to articulate the local economy, to provide a base for service delivery, to provide some context-appropriate urban functions, and to enhance accessibility remain persuasive for developing countries with substantial rural populations (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1976; Pradhan and Routray, 1992; Owusu, 2005; Robinson, 2005). The battle against rural deprivation is not only about designing and monitoring suitable pro-poor rural development projects but above all a contest to convince the majority of the citizens that rural planning and development is a key task for humanity. This requires a

development planning strategy that entails a spatial redistribution of resources at various levels so as to be able to create more wealth without the stigma of poverty (Kay, 2006: 496) and rurality. The aspiration to enhance economic opportunities in rural areas is one that can be won if strategies are contextualised to fit particular situations. Thus, Delius and Schirmer (2001:5) propose that a workable development strategy must be based on a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that have shaped and are shaping Africa's rural areas.

The success of rural planning can be viewed from many workable angles through the lenses of context specific approaches. Currently, the role of rural regions in Africa's development cannot be underestimated since they act as incubators for their own growth and also, for the growth of urban regions. This interdependence must be able to produce a win-win situation without crippling the very same rural spaces which provide resources for global consumption.

Being able to formulate and implement a comprehensive rural spatial plan is commensurate with the socio-economic, environmental and cultural progression of rural spaces. It has the potential of easing the challenges of urban areas such as housing and curbing rural-urban migration when regions are holistically planned without the socially constructed rural prejudice. The reality is that rural spaces are unique and must be preserved. Rural spaces offer tranquility for the urban dweller away from the high levels of pollution and congestion of cities. They possess peculiar characteristics which must be enhanced yet preserved to make them equally productive spaces to urban spaces.

Spatial and Strategic Planners can no longer remain silent on rural planning by merely identifying service centres at the district level, but move a step lower to prepare focused rural spatial plans. This will force closer engagement with the particularities of including community priorities in the plan and co-ordination of sectoral development activities.

As portrayed by high level planning strategies like the HSS (Kenya) and the NSP (Botswana) planning is very much an economic and political activity and thus the sensitivities attached to the possible designation (and non-designation) of growth centres would undoubtedly have placed the spatial strategy at the centre of politico-economic controversy in the run-up to voting day (Murray, 2003). The use of economic determinants for regional planning currently diminishes the principles of equity and equality often contained to policy documents. Refraining from such practices is a step forward to successful regional planning in Sub-Saharan Africa, with enormous benefits to rural regions. Rural capacities will need to be enhanced to support the long-term implementation of rural planning interventions to facilitate the production of positive rural spaces and places.

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Interviewees

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Abbreviations

DFA- Development Facilitation Act

DPSS – Development Planning Shared Services

IDP – Integrated Development Plans

NSDP – National Spatial Development Perspective

PGDS – Provincial Growth and Development Strategy

PSEDS – Provincial Spatial and Economic Development Strategy

RDP – Reconstruction and Development Programme

SDF – Spatial Development Framework

HSS – Human Settlement Strategy

NSP – National Spatial Policy

¹ It is made up of four local municipalities namely Endumeni, Msinga, Nqutu, and Umvoti. Msinga and Nqutu are typically rural in nature.

² Also refers to areas which formed part of Natal

³ Amakhosi means traditional leader in the Zulu language

⁴ Came into effect on May 1, 2010

⁵ Only KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape has own planning legislation, the remaining Provinces uses the Development Facilitation Act.

⁶ Ingonyama Trust Board was set up to administer land tenure arrangement and land development which falls under traditional leadership in KwaZulu-Natal Province.