# 11

## Spatial Planning

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of spatial planning, starting with the role that British colonialism and the Afrikaner apartheid system played in spatial planning during apartheid colonialism. It also outlines the main policies, laws and other initiatives that have been pursued, with regards to spatial planning, since 1994. In that context, the chapter also explores how and whether the new policies and legislation for spatial planning are redressing the colonial apartheid geography. In the main, it would seem that South Africa is still largely characterised by apartheid geography.

Spatial planning in South Africa has predominantly been influenced and, in most instances, shaped by racial laws and policies dating back to British and Afrikaner white minority rule. One of the main laws that began the process of systemic spatial planning in South Africa is the 1913 Land Act, discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The 1913 Land Act forcibly put into place mechanisms and tools to displace African indigenous peoples from their ancestral land and economic base. Furthermore, in enacting the 1913 Land Act and its subsequent legislation, white minorities were allowed the opportunities to develop their rural economies and urban development into world class centres of living and education while Africans, and later on blacks in general, were relegated to the peripheries of underdevelopment.

The chapter begins by giving a brief background and a historical context on spatial planning in South Africa, before and after democracy. It then discusses the various spatial planning laws and policies. That is followed by a discussion of the characteristics of post-1994 spatial planning and the principles guiding post-apartheid spatial planning.

## Historical Context

Spatial planning is both a theoretical and practical governance challenge, as well as a detailed field of study. Spatial planning is a contested concept and one that varies according to different regions and countries.[341] As both a concept and a practice, spatial planning is very diverse and, in many instances, it is concerned with trying to interpret how socio-economic development in form of policies and laws (at both regional and national government levels) within a country can be better planned and executed. Spatial planning is a government's development tool which also assists government's planners and citizens to interpret and implement effective socio-economic development initiatives. In simple terms, spatial planning refers to processes aimed at better use of land for socio-economic development.

South Africa's first encounter with both the concept and execution of spatial planning occurred in two ways or waves: the first was the colonial period in which European settlers began to trade and encroach more and more on African kingdoms. The second and more legally binding action of spatial planning occurred when 'the Native Land Act of 1913 prohibited Africans from purchasing or leasing land outside the reserves, from people who were not Africans. It also prohibited share-cropping in the Orange Free State. The Act listed areas totalling about 22 million acres, or about 7 per cent of the area of the Union of South Africa.'[342]

The legal and policy decision of what was then known as the Union of South Africa set in place the future of how South Africa's spatial planning history would (a) operate; (b) create socio-economic inequity; (c) set in place homeland operations; and (d) create a conglomeration of 'small South Africas' based on race. As time went on, the National Party majority in parliament began formulating more spatial planning laws and policies that created homelands (otherwise known as Bantustans) and ensured that the white minority received the best and most productive land.

Thomson[343] explains that:

> In 1936, fresh legislation created the South African Native Trust, managed by whites, and empowered it to buy more land for Africans from funds provided by parliament….Those areas, which were destined to be treated as the Homelands of all the African inhabitants of South Africa in the apartheid era, were scattered throughout the eastern half of the country. The land thus proclaimed as African formed a small proportion of the territory that African mixed farmers had occupied before the Mfecane and the white conquest.

It is due to this aforementioned history that the post-1994 South African government, the African National Congress (ANC) has sought to put in place

numerous policies and legislation to redress spatial planning injustices emanating from apartheid colonialism. Numerous initiatives have also been undertaken to change the apartheid economic geography, as discussed below.

## Spatial Planning Laws and Policies

As indicated above, the first major legal and policy considerations in relation to spatial planning in South Africa is the Land Act of 1913, which created a socio-political and socio-economic environment that: (a) allocated a white minority with the best available land; (b) stripped the majority of the African population of the economic means of sustaining themselves; and (c) ensured that the government would decide who resides where and who receives the best government aid in socio-economic development.

The other policy that greatly influenced how South Africa's spatial planning would function is the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Act can be said to have been an upgrade of the practice of apartheid in that it sought to create personal and business areas in urban centres for each racial grouping.

According to the South African History Archives, the Group Areas Act of 1950...[344]

> ... had the effect of entrenching the NP [National Party] policy of separate development, or 'apartheid', by assigning group areas to different racial groups. People were not free to choose where they wanted to live. The majority of both urban and rural land was allocated to the minority white population. The Act also cleared the way for nation-wide forced removals that ruined countless lives. One of the focal points, in opposition to the apartheid regime, was bringing an end to the system of influx control sanctioned through the Group Areas Act. Over the years, the system evolved and changed, but it retained the fundamental principle of separate development.[345]

Other laws and policies that were aimed at entrenching apartheid include the Black Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and other policies and laws which had a profound effect on African and black people's lives. In the post-apartheid dispensation, the main policies that have reshaped spatial planning include the Constitution, which repealed most of what apartheid rule implemented. The other important policy initiative pursued since 1994 is the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP).

The NSDP set in place firm spatial plans to attempt to reverse the colonial apartheid economic geography. As the NSDP[346] explains, 'the spatial reorganisation of a country can induce the release of tremendous physical and mental energies, whose practical outcome is certain to give rise to the socio-economic

transformation necessary to launch a country on to a path of self-centred, self-reliant and self-sustaining development'. It is for this reason that the NSDP of 2006 is such a crucial and important post-1994 policy document, as it actively attempts to systemically engage with the spatial planning policies and laws of the previous era.

## Characteristics of Post-1994 Spatial Planning

Although there are many, seemingly informal, initiatives to redress the ramifications of the colonial and apartheid spatial planning, the discussion here is limited to the NSDP. The NSDP[347] explains its mandate and the identification of the main characteristics of spatial planning as follows:

> The ultimate purpose of the NSDP in the South African setting is to fundamentally reconfigure apartheid spatial relations and to implement spatial priorities in ways that meet the constitutional imperative to provide access to basic services and economic opportunities to all, to alleviate poverty and inequality.[348]

### *Principles Guiding Post-apartheid Spatial Planning[349]*

The NSDP, in an effort towards achieving what it terms its core mandate or ultimate purpose, is guided by five principles:

- **Principle 1:** Rapid economic growth that is sustained and inclusive is a prerequisite for the achievement of other policy objectives, among which poverty alleviation is key.

- **Principle 2:** Government has a constitutional obligation to provide basic services to all citizens (e.g. water, energy, health and educational facilities) wherever they reside.

- **Principle 3:** Beyond the constitutional obligation identified in Principle 2 above, government spending on fixed investment should be focused on localities of economic growth and/or economic potential, in order to gear up private-sector investment, stimulate sustainable economic activities and create long-term employment opportunities.

- **Principle 4:** Efforts to address past and current social inequalities should focus on people, not places. In localities where there are both high levels of poverty and demonstrated economic potential, this could include fixed capital investment beyond basic services to exploit the potential of those localities. In localities with low demonstrated economic potential, government should, beyond the provision of basic services, concentrate primarily on human capital development by providing education and training,

social transfers (such as grants and poverty-relief programmes). It should also reduce migration costs by providing labour-market intelligence to give people better information, opportunities and capabilities, to enable them to gravitate – if they choose to – to localities that are more likely to provide sustainable employment and economic opportunities.

- **Principle 5:** In order to overcome the spatial distortions of apartheid, future settlement and economic development opportunities should be channelled into activity corridors and nodes that are adjacent to or that link the main growth centres. Infrastructure investment should primarily support localities that will become major growth nodes in South Africa and the SADC region to create regional gateways to the global economy.

The principles found in the NSDP[350] can be said to ensure that South Africa's spatial planning character, post-1994, is one that: (a) has local government at its core; (b) aims to rectify human settlement or living conditions of the previously disadvantaged people' and (c) desires development to occur within the ambit of local or municipal areas.

As indicated earlier, spatial planning is a multidimensional tool of analysis and also a practical socio-economic development framework. Therefore, when measuring how far democratic South Africa has come with regards to spatial planning, especially as laid out in the five NSDP principles, judging South Africa progress is very challenging but important. One of the key issues this chapter could raise in challenging whether spatial planning is occurring to the level needed to socio-economically grow all South African provinces is found in the fact that

> Gauteng generated 35.6 per cent or an estimated R675 billion of the gross domestic production last year, consolidating its position as a single largest contributor to the economy of the country. Thus, even though Gauteng has the smallest land area of 1.4 per cent in the country, its economy is more than twice that of KwaZulu-Natal or the Western Cape. Gauteng also contributed 7.7 per cent to the gross domestic product of Africa, an indication of the province's importance as one of the economic hubs of the continent.[351]

While it is understandable that Gauteng, as the economic hub of not only South Africa but also of the African continent as a whole, would generate such high GDP percentages, it is critical to remember that the history of Gauteng is closely entwined with the history of mining, manufacturing and subsequent economic development phases. Therefore, large numbers of Gauteng's citizens in the past migrated to South Africa from other south African provinces and neighbouring countries.

However, in democratic South Africa, this has created new problems and raised new questions. For instance, with Gauteng being the financial capital of South Africa, can its provincial and municipal governments be able to service all incoming citizens? Secondly, how will continuing influxes of people be catered for within the national and provincial budgets if numbers keep streaming in an undocumented fashion? Thirdly, how has the exodus of people from rural areas like Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape affected those areas and South Africa's rural land dynamics?

**Perspective Box:** Spatial Planning

| Pros | Cons |
|------|------|
| • Good spatial planning ensures basic amenities, e.g. housing, sewerage, transport services are better incorporated into planning for cities. | • Executing spatial planning could that mean having to work against the wishes and rights of people, in order to assist them. |
| • Spatial planning, when thoughtfully done, ensures that the quality of life of people is well catered for. | • It can be dangerous when left to untrained and unskilled bureaucrati personnel. |
| • Spatial planning in the modern era, when executed in a forward thinking manner, can and does assist in saving natural environment and resources of state. | • Spatial planning procedures and systems work in a world that is dynamic and ever changing; means certain mistakes are likely to be made in an attempt to apply hard spatial planning goals and objectives. |

## Explaining Development Dynamics

There remain many spatial challenges in South Africa. The case of Gauteng, as aa example, represents three key spatial planning challenges:

- Large unplanned migration numbers from South Africa and other African states: Gauteng, over the last two decades, has experienced large influxes of people from rural provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces. In addition to this, due to numerous socio-economic problems in countries such as Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique, other African citizens have also come to Gauteng, making the province a melting point of culture in South Africa, and Africa as a whole.

- Physical strain on housing, healthcare and treasury resources: The large number of people that have come into Gauteng, has meant that the Gauteng government has to spend vast resources to ensure that the system works. Over the last five years, various service delivery strikes and protests have shown how challenging managing the province is despite large influxes of differing peoples.
- Transport challenges and movement: Due to the large numbers of people and also the Apartheid spatial planning (where townships and cities are spread apart), the province has had to invest large amount of capital on ensuring that buses operate, roads are maintained, new roads are built, new transport systems are delivered, and so on. These developing challenges clearly illustrate why Gauteng, as a province, is one of the most spatially challenging regions to work and live in.

The North West province, and Rustenburg in particular, illustrates the challenges rural areas and non-dynamic economies (Rustenburg and North West, rely heavily on mining royalties) in South Africa face. The North West therefore provides three key interesting points for discussion relating to spatial planning:

- Non-traditional migration patterns: Due to the job-specific industries such as mining, the North West, especially Rustenburg, has migration that is purely predicated on people mining. It is therefore no surprise that in areas such as Marikana and its surroundings, the major problem has been housing, basic amenities and other developmental problems.
- Challenges of fast-paced development: The economy of Rustenburg and North West faces the challenge of having to develop while being predicated on a non-dynamic economic entity like platinum. While it has helped the province and city to have this entity, it does make it difficult to develop using an entity that has its value firstly in the stock exchange and private sector-led companies.
- Managing smaller resources: While the Rustenburg area is served by a single municipality, the municipality does not derive its capital directly from the mining houses and entities, but from the national government. This means that smaller non-metro municipalities have to contend with the challenges of migration, housing shortages, and stagnant socio-economic and other problems with limited resources, as these smaller municipalities lack additional sectors to add additional capital to their revenue streams.

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to briefly discuss key phenomena affecting spatial planning in a country that has been severely affected by unjust spatial planning which favoured a white minority at the expense of indigenous African and black population. The chapter merely discussed and described what has previously taken place. The post-apartheid administrations have pursued various policies to correct apartheid spatial planning. However, although many initiatives have been undertaken to reverse apartheid spatial relations, there is still a very long way to go.

## Key Terms

**National Spatial Development Perspective:** The post-apartheid policy aimed at addressing some of the problems caused by British colonialism and Afrikaner apartheid rule in the areas of spatial planning and economic development in South Africa.

**Spatial Planning:** How land (or even space) is utilised for purposes of development.