A more than 21-year odyssey of developmental local government in South Africa: Are we on the right track?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an assessment of 21 years of developmental local government as advocated through the 1998 White Paper on local government. In the 21st century, local governments have developed into hubs for developmental objectives. This suggests that they are now expected to go beyond the fundamentals of providing services. For instance, the agenda of local governments has automatically adopted South Africa's idea of a developmental state that primarily prioritises economic development and the need to consider the most suitable intervention scales. With the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2012, South African authorities formalised their intention to pursue a developing state. The authorities' conviction that the developmental state approach is a factor for development is evident from reading the NDP. Because of the vertical connections between regional, sub-regional and local processes of change, strategies must be well-suited to one another, different interventions may be most effective at various spatial scales, and strategy and implementation may also be most effective at particular scales. This study used a multi-site case study as the sole type of research methodology. The study took an exploratory approach, because it constituted contextual research, allowing the researcher to investigate and record research phenomena in line with diverse participant interpretations. The study discovered that despite the ideals outlined in the 1998 White Paper, National Development Plan, and District Development Model, emphasising the influence of the local sphere as closer to citizens, and thus more responsible for their welfare and development, factors such as public participation, a lack of skills, and sub-par infrastructure delivery have negatively impacted developmental local government outcomes. In the end, local government is unable to fulfill its responsibility for development. The paper contends that local government's performance, assessed against its constitutional purposes, hinders the realisation of a progressive state in South Africa against a backdrop of local government incapacity.

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Introduction

Since democracy dawned in South Africa, the government has committed to being more development-focused to address weak local community management. That development policies need to be updated to play a crucial part in reducing inadequate service delivery in local communities is well-known (Barole, 2013). The government unveiled basic, intrinsic strategies to bring about this shift. (Van der Walt, Venter, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk and Nealer, 2007). Additionally, it introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) - the foundation for developing strategies for elevating communities - in response to the African National Congress's desire for transformation.

The RDP's goal was to improve the social conditions of the underprivileged, underpinned by the principles:integration and sustainability; people-driven development; addressing the fundamental requirements of infrastructural development (RSA, 1994).

To put the RDP into practice, national government intervened at various levels, such as issuing orders compelling local municipalities and districts to create their own strategic development plans (also known as integrated development planning). In particular, the
Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 requires municipalities to design and implement integrated development planning specifically to deal with challenges such as poverty reduction (RSA, 2000; Muller, 2006). Some scholars suggest that despite a combination of interventions and efforts to minimise it, bad governance is still one of the biggest threats to human life (Naledi, 2005). Therefore, the South African local government needs to change to make good governance and developmental local government the top priority of the country's development agenda, especially considering the support of global development organisations such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to Maxwell and Conway (2000), good governance, policy implementation and service delivery are complex phenomena viewed differently due to their multidimensionality, trans-contextuality, and nebulousness. However, some scholars have identified flaws in the government's efforts to combat poverty. These include:

i. a lack of interdisciplinary service delivery analysis
ii. a lack of political and social analysis
iii. a lack of connection between service delivery and other planning and policy instruments (Maxwell and Conway, 2000).

This paper posits that, despite efforts to supplement technocratic and macro-level development thinking, appropriate governance for development is still elusive at both local and global levels. The South African government is envisioned as being progressive in character with the aim of overcoming the novel planning techniques of the past and presently focuses on placing the local population's interests at the forefront of any development planning initiatives of any form. However, if a football team is not winning, the jeering crowd can quickly see why it is not winning. Sometimes it is due to a weak defence or disorganised midfield; at other times, below-par strikers may not score sufficient goals. All these team components must function well and cooperate to produce a winning team. Because the squad isn't scoring the winning goals, the discussion surrounding local government service delivery challenges in South Africa is comparable to shooting the goalkeeper. Service delivery is a team effort. The local government sphere and the rate payers both play a pivotal role in managing the service delivery as guaranteed in the country’s constitution of 1996 chapter 2, bill of rights section 27 (i)(2).

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

**The Role of History**

A lengthy period of colonial conquest and subsequent oppression and exploitation of Africans under apartheid laid the foundation for the past social, political, economic, and service delivery realities in South Africa. According to Gordhan (1998), the ecological, social, and economic conditions in which individuals live, work, raise families, and pursue their dreams have been severely harmed by apartheid. He also identified the crucial role local government must play in re-establishing local environments and communities as the cornerstone of a democratic, successful, and truly non-racial society. As things stood then, the racial issue was intertwined with service delivery goals, underpinned by primitive apartheid ideals polished into a policy of racial accumulation and control.

Today, we must concentrate on local government’s *capacity* for development (as stated in the 1998 White Paper), to comprehend possibilities and limits of change in South Africa’s unique developmental local government context. It is tenable to argue that the degree of service delivery to erstwhile black areas connects with the measuring of the transformation of South African society from its colonial and apartheid past to a more democratic environment. However, this paper does not intend to present a comprehensive historical account of service delivery; rather, it advances the claim that addressing local government and service delivery is essential to the fundamental transformation of South Africa. It contends that to be successful, South Africa's local governance must be based on the principles of locally developed, transparent government.

After decades of struggle for freedom and the end of apartheid in 1994, the fight for good governance began and has gone on for over three decades, with varying degrees of intensity. This research project is inspired by the desire to understand two related “crises” in the local government space in South Africa:

i. the democratic local government sphere, which is closer to its citizens
ii. the National Party’s failed developmental reform programme during the apartheid era.

Immediately post-apartheid, local government was in crisis: undemocratic and unrepresentative. This threatened the very existence of national government – hence the introduction of the White Paper on local government in 1998 (COGTA, 1998). The paper contained an ideology supporting sustainable local government that satisfies community needs, while collaborating with citizens to actively improve their lives. It epitomised decades of struggle against apartheid, forced removals and later lobbying for pro-poor service delivery reform programmes in post-apartheid South Africa.

The provision of services, democratisation of local economic development, and facilitation of empowerment and redistribution were, and still are, among the envisioned responsibilities of local government. Together with the other spheres of government, the local government sphere has made some strides toward fulfilling its responsibilities since 2000. However, due to capacity issues, conflict, the expanding population, inadequate policy management, and flawed finance formulae, among other factors, it has also faced its fair share of difficulties, particularly in service delivery, local economic growth, and fiscal management.
The local government challenges that keep playing themselves out in the context of service delivery protests by communities seem to have hit an impasse. After twenty-one years of developmental local government, only 41 out of 257 municipalities – around 15% - have reportedly received a clean audit, according to the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA, 2022). This shows a clear failure of oversight by our leaders deployed in the local government sphere. The failures are further accentuated by emerging patterns of corruption and lack of accountability. A democratic government is therefore perceived by poor, disadvantaged communities as failing to address service delivery problems – and stealing resources instead.

**Materials and Methods**

This literature evaluation was conducted using a systematic review methodology. As demonstrated in Figure 2, utilising this strategy has the advantages of enabling transparency, accuracy, and duplicability. The chosen method follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria, which have been employed in earlier systematic reviews on research by Zhou, Slayi, Ngarava, Jaja and Musemwa (2022), as stated by Cooper (2010) and Monroe et al. (2017). (Barth and Thomas, 2012; Berrang-ford et al., 2015). Two main strategies were employed to collect the data: (1) finding and selecting relevant literature; and (2) data management, coding, and analysis.
Literature Search and Selection

Several search databases were used between July 4 and July 27, 2022, to perform a thorough literature review. The sole researcher who searched for and chose the relevant literature is the primary author. The current paper employed data from searches in the following databases: Google Scholar, Science Direct, Cab Direct, Sabinet, Semantic Scholar, White Paper, Government Prescripts, Annual Performance Plans, Operational Plans, Annual Reports and the Constitution. Only items that were published and written in South Africa after 2000 were included in the search. The paper exclusively considered material that was written in English. Only papers that discussed how Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Public Participation implementation are affecting better service delivery output were included in the study. Also considered was the literature proper policy implementation’s potential for reducing service delivery challenges and adapting to better local governance. The sole focus of the search approach was full-text articles. To collect the data, a variety of important search phrases were combined. Terms like "good governance," "capable state," and "effective local government" were used to describe statistics on developmental local government. In addition, the researcher utilised phrases such as "supply of basic services" and "performance management" to search for literature on service delivery, while impact searches were done using key terms searches for community participation and satisfaction surveys. The initial results of the search were 128 articles (including duplicates). However, 68 of these 128 articles were found to be relevant to the literature synthesis in terms of context and content once the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to them (Figure 2).

Data Synthesis

The selected articles were uploaded on Mendeley referencing tool to reduce human error in data coding and content analysis. One of the benefits of using this referencing software is that it automatically generates the bibliographic information once imported. Microsoft Excel was used to sort and organise the data according to individual articles. The information of interest included type of the manuscript (review, experimental, or survey), year of publication, the province where the research was conducted, livestock species, etc. Data summary was transformed into quantitative measures and the results were presented in the form of tables and graphs.

Local Government in Context: A Brief Overview

According to South Africa’s Local Government Handbook (2022), South Africa is a constitutional democracy, with a three-tiered government structure and an independent judiciary. The powers of the government, the judiciary, and the legislature (collectively referred to as "legislative authorities") are distinct from one another. One of the three spheres of government, along with the provincial and national spheres, is local government. Municipalities make up local government and provide many of the services that people depend on daily.

The Constitution recognises three types of municipalities: local, district, and metropolitan municipalities. There are 278 municipalities in South Africa, including 226 local, 44 district, and eight metropolitan municipalities. Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution define each aspect of government’s role in detail. Each Schedule’s Part B lists the duties of the local government. Each of the three spheres must work together. The powers mentioned in Schedule 4 are shared by the federal and provincial governments, including control over the police and disaster relief. The sole authority for the services mentioned in Schedule 5, such as ambulance services and provincial roadways, rests with the provincial government. The national government is responsible for the military and higher education.

For some tasks, like "housing", all three sectors share competencies and duties. On the list of shared responsibilities between the local and provincial governments is "housing." Although “water and sanitation services” are stated as a local government duty, they are an element of housing implementation. Other services that local government must provide include electricity, refuse removal, parks and recreation, and public spaces. Municipalities are governed by local councils, which are chosen through elections for local officials. They are assisted in their duties by the municipal government. Through ward committees, public involvement meetings, submission of statements and recommendations, and direct interaction with councillors, the public has the right and the obligation to participate in municipal decision-making.

How Are Municipalities Structured in South Africa?

The Municipal Demarcation Board (2020) describes municipalities as geographic areas. Municipalities are created by the provincial Minister of Local Government and are managed by Municipal Councils. In South Africa, as per the constitution of 1996 (RSA, Constitution of 1996) there are three types of municipalities:

i. local

ii. district

iii. metropolitan.

In each of the eight largest cities, there are metropolitan areas, or metros. According to Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution, the local sphere of government is the formal lowest tier of democratically elected administration in the country. Local municipalities are used to group areas outside major metropolitan areas. Multiple local municipalities that are part of the same district make up
district municipalities. All municipalities, except for district municipalities, are organised into wards. While Chapter 7 of the Constitution lays the groundwork for the creation of municipalities, numerous Acts of Parliament have further defined these municipal institutions.

Municipalities are governed politically by an elected Municipal Council, with tenure limited to five years. The Municipal Council elects its office holders and appoints members to its executive and other committees. The Municipal Council employs the executive management and staff required for the efficient discharge of its responsibilities.

To manage South Africa's most urbanised areas, metropolitan municipalities have been developed. Municipal executive and legislative powers are solely vested in metropolitan municipalities in their separate jurisdictions. In South Africa, there are eight metro municipalities. 44 district municipalities are responsible for overseeing the remaining South African area, according to the Local Government Handbook South Africa (2022) (Also known as Category C municipalities). There are numerous minor local municipalities inside each district municipality (also known as Category B municipalities). For instance, the Emfuleni, Lesedi and Mid-Vaal Local Municipalities are included in the area managed by the Sedibeng District Municipality. For their jointly governed areas, district and local governments share legislative and executive power. Building capability and district-wide planning are the main responsibilities of district councils. Additionally, according to the Local Government Handbook South Africa (2022), there are 278 municipalities in South Africa overall, including 08 metropolitans, 44 district, and 226 local municipalities. Following the 2016 local government elections, several important demarcation modifications went into effect.

Discussion and Analysis

At the outset, I argue that the 1998 White Paper on Local Government is unusual, as it addresses an entire area of government, rather than a specific sector policy. It is also apparent that transforming South African state institutions is predicated on the idea that a new democratic state must achieve new developmental goals to contribute to overall improvement of quality of life.

Local government is on the cusp of a dynamic and innovative period in which it can and will have a considerable influence on the recovery and growth of our fledgling democracy. It might even be considered a “mini-constitutions” for municipal government. Local government is the branch of government that interacts with communities the most, oversees the infrastructure and services that are vital to the well-being of our citizens and is tasked with ensuring that communities grow and develop in a way that fosters community participation and accountability. South Africa was offered a unique and historic opportunity to change local government to tackle 21st-century problems immediately following the democratic elections of 1994, which saw a former liberation movement in power. Although the Local Government Transition Act, 1993, which governed the local government transition process, was in place until 1999, the new Constitution (SA, 1996) envisions a full overhaul of the local government structure. Local governance is now considered to be a separate area of government and no longer a responsibility of the local or provincial governments.

In South Africa, a new local government strategy was created against the backdrop of globalisation, a redefining of the nation state, and a renewed emphasis on decentralisation. Additionally, the local government was given a special position and responsibility in fostering socio-economic progress and democratic growth. The former Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development in 1998 started a policy-making process to put the new local government vision into practice. The White Paper on Local Government is the result of a thorough 18-month period of consultation and research. The foundation and programmes for the drastic transformation of the current local government system are outlined in the 1998 White Paper.

Every effort was taken to ensure that the process of developing the White Paper was inclusive, interactive, and transparent, according to Moosa (1998). All stakeholders were included in the consultative process over an 18-month period, owing to a three-phase strategy. The initial strategic questions to be addressed in the White Paper were included in a discussion document issued in April 1997 following the first phase of consultations. The Green Paper on Local Government, which was published for public comment in October 1997, was the product of the second phase, which included issue-focused research procedures, provincial and local workshops, and other channels for public input. The White Paper on Local Government, approved by Cabinet, is the product of the third phase, which included hearings before the Portfolio Committee, a summit on local government, public comments, and sectoral consultative conferences. The necessary legislation was created to implement the White Paper's policy recommendations.

Conceptualisation of Integrated Development Planning

An intensive and cooperative planning process, known as integrated development planning, results in a strategic plan that directs municipalities and its entities in methodically eliminating service delivery backlogs. The plan’s main purpose is four-fold:

i. to promote socio-economic growth

ii. to protect and conserve the environment

iii. to address past development disparities in specific areas

iv. to conduct priority projects with definite outputs and goals in a five-year planning cycle.

This five-year plan is evaluated annually to account for newly identified urgent priorities (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2000). The distinction between integrated development planning and integrated development plans (IDP) must be made
to understand this paper. The former alludes to the procedure for municipal planning, while the later alludes to the result of the procedure. Consequently, an IDP is a product of the integrated development planning process. The IDP is a crucial strategic document that all municipalities must publish as a comprehensive plan directing all services and development within a municipality's jurisdiction (RSA, 2000). Additionally, it strives to coordinate the efforts of regional and other domains of government in a unified strategy to enhance the standard of living for everyone residing in the area (Mautjana and Miapuri, 2014). However, the developmental responsibility of municipalities to improve service delivery – as outlined by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (2000), did not go according to plan, owing to lack of skills and good management acumen (Ngumbela, 2022).

According to Tsatsire, Taylor and Raga (2010), municipalities are required by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to organise and manage their administrative, financial and planning procedures in a way that prioritises meeting the fundamental needs of their constituents and fosters social and economic development. Van Niekerk (2014) argues that the local government is given the task of creating an IDP for the local region as part of the function of integrated development planning. Integrated development planning is seen in this study as a method that helps identify the least serviced and most underdeveloped areas and indicates where municipal expenditures should be spent (Borole, 2013).

**Developmental Local Government Within A South African Context**

The 1996 Constitution specified five objectives for local government and made provisions for all municipalities to work toward achieving these goals within their financial and administrative capacity, shaping the nature of the current system of local government (DPLG, 2000). According to section 152(1), the local government's goals are to:

i. provide local communities with democratic, accountable governance
ii. ensure that services are delivered to communities sustainably
iii. bolster social and economic progress
iv. advocate for a secure and healthy environment
v. encourage local organisations and communities to participate in local government issues.

The White Paper states that a local government is developmental if it is dedicated to working with residents and groups in the community to identify long-term solutions to address their social, economic and material needs and enhance the quality of their lives. Target populations should include those who are marginalised or excluded from communities, such as women, those with disabilities, and the extremely poor (RSA, 1998). Therefore, it is clear that a primary goal of South Africa's local government development programme is to address local poverty and inequality, which are on the rise due to the apartheid system's failure to support local governments in their efforts to meet community needs (Asha, 2014).

According to several academics, the apartheid planning system's flaws included being a fragmented structure that prioritised racially segregated planning and directed resources and infrastructure development towards white communities (Ameir Issa, 2004). As a result, the system contributed to widespread infrastructure backlogs, a sharp drop in service delivery, and widespread poverty. The local government was recognised as a separate entity, hence the centralised governance structure that was in place did not constitutionally protect it (Williams, 2006). The latter prevented the local administration from acting independently in planning and conducting development programmes. As a result, in South Africa, local government development had to sharply focus on services, reducing poverty and local governments (Thornhill, 2008). Given this context, the apartheid regime presented difficulties for the new South African government in addressing historical inequalities.

**Local Government in Action**

Local government, through developmental local government strategy, demands that municipalities structure and manage administration, planning and budgeting quite differently to overcome the apartheid legacy (DPLG, 2000).

The White Paper states the foundational elements of systems that municipalities should embrace, and which demonstrably support local government's commitment to development, as outlined in the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000. The Act states that with integrated development planning, governments can create a cogent, long-term strategy for coordinating all construction and service provision in their locales.

Included in this strategy are the following:

i. a guarantee that plans must be conducted
ii. all municipal areas must work together to achieve goals and targets
iii. performance measurement and good management are helpful
iv. mechanisms and structures for community/citizen participation on municipal issues are in place.
The South African Paradigm Shift in Local Government Trajectory

Beginning in the early 1990s, as the local government forum was being negotiated, the ideal transformation of local government in South Africa began to take shape. The reform was deemed essential for eliminating discriminatory practices to inspire and promote the modern local government system in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, the Local Government Transition Act, 1993 was introduced and gave instructions for reforming the nation's new local government structure (RSA, 1993).

The creation of several councils, including municipal, district, and metropolitan councils, was mandated under the Local Government Transition Act. The establishment of the comprehensive socio-economic development policy in South Africa also led to the reform of local government planning and implementation. Among other things, the 1994 White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was presented. To address people's basic requirements, including employment, land reform, housing, water, sanitation, social welfare and security, the programme sought to advance socio-economic development (RSA, 1994). The Development Facilitation Act of 1995 was further adopted, focusing on the change from a technocentric or top-down approach, that does not fully represent actual community needs, to development planning (Asha, 2014).

The South African government has consistently embraced integrated development planning as a method for modernising and facilitating local development planning (Beyers, 2015). The concept of local government planning is a paradigm shift, moving from macro-level development thinking to an integrated, developmental approach at local level, led by the IDP and not only focused on service delivery, but also on leadership, management and playing an active role in social and human development (Van Niekerk, 2014).

A Plethora of Problems

Despite the existence of this progressive legal framework and a plethora of policies encouraging public involvement in all three sectors of government, effective public engagement in decision- and policymaking continues to be a challenge. Research shows that government only promotes public participation to satisfy its compliance needs, (Fu, 2015; Baez-Camargo and Gatwa, 2018; Theron, Maxhewana and Draai, 2015). This is particularly obvious in local government, which is the branch closest to the people and charged with the most responsibility for enabling public engagement (Eglin and Ngamlana, 2015).

Public Participation

In any local government environment, one of the fundamental foundations of a democratic system and a cornerstone of effective governance is public engagement. The right of citizens to participate in policy and decision-making has been widely accepted in South Africa – it is requested, defended and safe-guarded. According to Ngamlana (2017), as one of the fundamental tenets of the Constitution, public involvement is ingrained in the legal system. The Constitutional Court has determined in several cases that public involvement is so crucial in South Africa that it is the only criteria for which an exemption cannot be granted (O'Regan, 2017). This way, people can be given the opportunity to participate in the making of laws and decisions that may have an impact on them under South African law.

A Plethora of Problems

An increasing chasm between government and citizen has resulted from the public’s lack of real opportunities to participate in local administration. The execution of sub-par government development programmes and an increase in service delivery protests are indicators of this (Eglin and Ngamlana, 2015; McCrindle and Selebalo, 2016; Munshi, 2016). According to Ngamlana (2017), corruption in local government appears to have grown to worrisome proportions in the absence of effective accountability procedures. In South Africa, barely a third of municipalities are currently able to operate at the minimum level of efficiency required of them. The remainder require varied levels of assistance (CoGTA 2018, CoGTA, 2009). Stakeholder holds an important position, while an "invited visitor" reflects the gap between government and citizen and is not given the opportunity to actively participate in local government decision-making. The public’s role is to offer suggestions and opinions while those with the most knowledge - public servants, elected political representatives and technocrats - make the choices they feel are best for the community. Experts and technocrats are given more room to influence choices, often at the expense of others who have a claim to participation. As a result, there has been a lack of ownership of the infrastructure that has been developed, poor accountability, transparency, and openness, poor monitoring of development programmes, development interventions that do not target the most pressing needs of communities, and a general perception that local government is ineffective. The current "infrastructure" for public participation, in its current format, is unable to deliver the kind of public participation envisioned by the 2017 Report of the High-Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation (HLPKL), which is central to the challenge of public participation in local government.

In this paper, “infrastructure” refers to the fundamental components that must exist to support public involvement, such as the legislative framework, the resources (both human and non-human), the organised and non-organised civic groups, etc. It lists some of the components of the current framework for citizen engagement in local government, examines issues within each component, and offers some initial suggestions for how these issues might be resolved. The paper also provides an overview of the challenge as seen from a comprehensive angle. The objective is to add to the existing discussion on citizen involvement in municipal governance.

Local Economic Development (LED)

Meyer (2014) claims that the use of LED is now a common practice to combat poverty and provide employment in both urban and rural areas. The local government level has the most capacity to help growth, with an emphasis on luring investments, generating
jobs, and increasing demand. Since 1994, South Africa’s local governments have played a larger role in providing LED in addition to basic social services and public goods. According to Ngumbela (2020), South Africa’s local governments currently face enormous challenges. These include:

1. high levels of poverty and unemployment
2. poor or non-existent services
3. stagnant local economies
4. lack of necessary skills to drive local economic development
5. lack of administrative capacity
6. ineffective implementation.

Poor analysis of local economies, unsustainable community programmes, a lack of capacity, and a lack of money are the main obstacles to achieving results in "pro-poor" implementation (Nel & Rogerson, 2005). As part of an integrated LED policy strategy, both the "pro-poor" and "pro-growth" principles must be considered. However, municipalities are failing to fully implement the LED strategies. According to Reich, (1991) adequate economic policies might solve all economic issues by promoting local economic growth to improve capital flows for both people and money - not the party politicking currently strangling our municipal strategic units. He further states that generating new jobs and enhancing human potential are difficult challenges that need skilled technocrats who can go beyond party political sentiments. Local institutions and national policy makers can work to develop new jobs that are suitable for the local workforce, as well as the location, by matching local human and natural resources to both global and regional markets (Blakely and Bradshaw, 2002).

At present, it is clear that the LED programme, from a policy to implementation point of view at local government level, is evident as things stand is poor due to poor policy implementatation strategies failing. The policy doesn't always result in implementation, skill levels need to be raised, there are staffing and funding shortages, insufficient community involvement in the planning and execution of LED projects, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation (Nel & Rogerson, 2005). South African municipalities lack proper economic plans to address the problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (SACN, 2004). Most local authorities still do not prioritise LED, and the national government only provides modest assistance. According to Meyer (2014) and Ngumbela, LED initiatives are lacking in monitoring and evaluation as well as in detail for interventions (2022). Particularly, small rural communities struggle to deploy LED. There is a lack of desire to form partnerships with the private sector and a lack of clarity around the role and functions of LED (Khanya-Aicdd, 2006). The scarcity of LED units among the 55 municipalities analysed and constrained funding, or lack thereof, for LED, demonstrate how poorly integrated LED is at municipal level.

LED seeks to improve quality of life in local communities through fostering local employment, ensuring economic stability and diversity, leveraging comparative advantages, helping the underprivileged, and more. However, for LED to succeed, local dedication, relevant skills and capability are necessary.

District Development Model (DDM)

The District Development Model (DDM) was introduced by President Cyril Ramaphosa’s during his 2019 budget speech. The President cited the "habit of working in silos" as a concern in the spheres of government, especially municipalities (Presidency Budget Speech, 2019), which resulted in "a lack of coherence in planning and implementation and has made monitoring and oversight of government's programme difficult." As a result, services are not delivered as effectively as they may be and there is less of an impact on the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and employment. The President also demanded that "a new integrated district-based approach to solving our service delivery difficulties and localised procurement and job creation, that promotes and supports local enterprises, and that incorporates communities" be implemented. However, the President failed to fully address the skills gaps that exist on the smaller and rural municipalities, who are financially hamstrung, as argued by Ngumbela (2022). By localising procurement and employment creation that "promotes and supports local enterprises, and that incorporates communities, the frustrating service delivery difficulties can be turned into local level development opportunities. Additionally, this calls for national and provincial departments to submit implementation budgets and plans that consider regional, continental, national, and local goals and objectives, while also addressing local issues and potential for growth. The President is aware that this strategy will necessitate "providing implementation plans in line with objectives highlighted in the State of the Nation address by National ministries that have district-level delivery capacity jointly with the provinces."

According to the model's goals, DDM is used as an operational model for enhancing cooperative governance with the aim of creating a competent, morally upright progressive State. It embodies a strategy that combines the efforts of the three branches of government and state agencies in a way that is impact-oriented, with improved performance and accountability for consistent service delivery and development outcomes. The municipal district and metropolitan areas are the impact areas of cooperative planning, budgeting and execution under this system of government operation.
The National Development Plan (NDP, 2012), the IUDF, as well as other government policies, laws, and earlier similar programmes, served as the foundation for the DDM, which aims to maximise coordination and collaboration across the three realms of government. The Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) of municipalities will also be synchronised with the DDM through a collaborative process to create a single plan for all district and metropolitan municipalities. Several district and metropolitan municipalities have trailed the DDM. However, the South African government’s decision to adopt the model was a deliberate one, because it appears to be a workable Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) mechanism that will allow all three branches of government to collaborate with communities and stakeholders to plan, budget, and implement projects in concert. The model is firmly based on examination of historical and present projects to enhance cooperative governance and local government for development, wherein local communities, people, and social actors work together to design and own developmental change. The efficient operation of local government is crucial in this regard, but it is insufficient on its own without more cohesion in the governance structure and the coordination and operation of the entire government. The model aims to improve institutional and state authority and functions, including the capacity for cooperation, for increased cohesiveness and beneficial effects on development.

Accountability of Elected Representatives

There are myriad studies that have focused specifically on the ward committee as a means of involving the people (McComas, 2001; Collingwood and Reedy, 2012; Mkwanazi, 2013; Ngamlana, 2016; Freedom House SA, 2017; and Ngamlana and Coopoo, 2018). We shall not discuss this in detail in this paper. The electoral process is the pertinent topic, since it is becoming increasingly clear that those in positions of authority do not always represent the interests of the general populace. In local governance, a system that combines direct elections with proportional representation is in existence. Citizens vote for the political party of their choosing, and political representatives are chosen from a party list that they did not necessarily contribute to, or construct. This presents some obvious problems with the proportional representation system. Citizens have little or no power to remove these people from office once they are in it.

Ward councillors are chosen using a particular procedure. They are chosen directly by the ward communities based on their professed capacity to represent the ward's interests. According to election regulations, these people are permitted to join political parties for more assistance and endorsement (financial and otherwise). However, many of these representatives favour running as independent candidates. Some, though, claim that the political party affiliation of ward councillors is necessary for influencing important decisions within municipal councils, because most debates and discussions take place within political party caucuses (Mkwanazi, 2013; Ngamlana, 2016, Ngamlana and Coopoo, 2018, and Freedom House SA, 2017). Parties adopt positions in caucus on subjects, and in council, they adhere to those positions as a block from each party. As a result, independent councillors are at a disadvantage, since they are unable to have an impact on discussions before decisions are made, which is when it matters most. Ward councillors owe their allegiance to the political parties of their choice, rather than the localities that chose them for office. Additionally, the current legislative structure forbids communities from recalling their chosen ward representatives. A Provincial Executive member must make this choice. Ward council members have little motivation to answer to the ward communities because they are not subject to recall and have no political aspirations. While most political leaders join politics as well-intentioned, public-spirited people, they lose sight of the common good and concentrate on career advancement in the process of seeking to get on the list and rising through the ranks of the party. Politicians must appease higher ranks and other political party factional interests in whose control their political destiny rests to advance in the political parties. Eglin and Ngamlana argue that social scientists have demonstrated that, when a person starts a profession, they are, consciously or unconsciously, under pressure to adhere to the standards of that industry. Politicians are no different; even the most tenacious and well-intentioned ones will eventually learn to “not rock the boat” and to follow “the way things are done around here” after gaining office (Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014). This has truly been the case in the nation over the past few years, as we have witnessed widespread corruption and the plundering of state resources in what is now known as “state capture.”

The main argument presented by those who advocate getting rid of institutionalised systems for public participation is this one (Munshi, 2016; Ngamlana and Coopoo, 2018): they contend that, as was the case with the ward committees, political elites can manipulate institutionalised areas to further their own specific goals. They make the case that organic forms of participation are preferable since they are harder to manipulate. This essay contends that to strengthen effective local governance, both institutionalised and organic places are required.

Infrastructure Challenges

South Africa, according to the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA, 2021) is seen as an advanced network of national economic infrastructure. However, the challenge, over the years, has been to maintain and continue to grow its infrastructure development, such as electricity, water, transport, health, housing and more, which would help support South Africa’s economic development.

The lack of infrastructure delivery affects south Africans on a day-to-day basis and further impacts the regional and national economy. For South Africa to combat this sorry situation, it is critical that infrastructure be rolled out in communities to ensure that government is seen connecting households - and people have access to better opportunities for education, healthcare and employment, as promised during the electioneering campaigns. Investment in infrastructure is a key component of the transition to a more resilient and
sustainable world and contributes significantly to economic growth. The partnership between public and private sectors, as well as the communities they serve, must reconsider how infrastructure is delivered to achieve these results.

According to Shivambu (2022), there is an absence of comprehensive plans to rethink South Africa's municipalities outside of apartheid’s spatial planning which is a contributing factor to the issue of bad infrastructure. According to the DBSA (2022), inadequate planning is to blame for the poor delivery of economic and social infrastructure. For instance, several low-impact projects have been implemented, but not produced meaningful improvements, resulting in continued service delivery problems. Because of this, the Bank believes its involvement is key from commencement of planning phases, allocating money to high priority projects. In addition, infrastructure planning identifies crucial projects and establishes a pipeline for project financing in advance. This makes it easier to build affordable socio-economic infrastructure, which increases municipal revenue.

The DBSA states that it can further enhance the financial viability of municipal beneficiaries once progress is made. Even the infrastructure fund that President Ramaphosa announced in 2018, to address the need for blended finance for effective execution of socio-economic infrastructure programmes, is just a drop in the ocean, and appears unable to address ongoing infrastructural challenges at local government level. The DBSA (2021) stated that the infrastructure fund’s objectives were to transform public infrastructure through custom-blended financing solutions by obtaining and combining capital from the private sector, financing institutional investors, development finance solutions and multilateral development banks. The fund seems to have done little to assist during COVID-19, however, when the disaster particularly highlighted the need for improved water and sanitation infrastructure.

Additionally, there are cases where initiatives are conducted but eventually fail because of a lack of infrastructure or inadequate planning. Shivambu (2022) avers that municipalities in South Africa need the infrastructure and a workable strategy to connect societal needs with decentralised economic growth and to create sustainable towns. He also emphasises that de-industrialisation in South Africa has rendered many cities and towns incapable of supporting a viable, independent economy separate from the financial sector, which is primarily concentrated in the three provinces of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape. Even mining-related towns lack sustainable economic operations. This is so because the transportation, logistics, and infrastructure systems are built to move natural resources and raw materials to the ocean without any localised beneficiation. Contrary to popular belief, industrialisation can create economically sustainable towns, cities, and municipalities, while de-industrialisation appears to destroy jobs and the economy. The only way to create thriving towns, cities, and municipalities based on economic localisation and redistributive policies is through infrastructure development in local government, coupled with strong industrial policy. Localised economic growth and municipal plans - not top-down national policies - must be the drivers of the shape and nature of infrastructure development in local government, combined with sound industrial policy.

To achieve infrastructure development in local government that is linked to a defined industrial policy, South Africa urgently needs effective and decisive initiatives. Primarily, every municipality needs to create an efficient, workable plan that aims to move away from apartheid-era spatial planning and put residents closer to jobs, schools, and other opportunities. Decisive solutions that will give people access to jobs, adequate housing with clean toilets, and a secure food supply are at the heart of the reinvented cities. Second, all municipalities in South Africa must do away with contracts for the construction and upkeep of infrastructure. Municipalities must instead employ experienced, skilled, and qualified engineers and artisans to train novice engineers. This way, effective resource management will enable small, medium, and large local government infrastructure projects to produce long-term employment. Thirdly, a precise and useful land-use plan must serve as the foundation for infrastructure development in local government. Municipalities are unable to afford to spend their limited funding on purchasing stolen land to construct infrastructure, particularly housing, sanitation, and water infrastructure. Fourthly, any local government infrastructure improvement must promote industrialisation. Infrastructure for water, sewage and roads must be constructed by municipalities so that businesses can develop factories, produce commodities and offer jobs. Finally, local procurement of all infrastructure consumables, such as pipes, chemicals, steel and other materials required for water, power, and sanitation infrastructure must be prioritised in infrastructure development at local government level.

If Shivambu's claims are anything to go by, then towns must make sure they have the administrative capabilities necessary to get the right goods from local suppliers, which will in turn generate demand for jobs and allow for the payment of competitive wages to employees.

Shivambu’s arguments are commendable and contain much merit. However, poor infrastructure can also be attributed to weak management and poor project management by both officials and councillors who are mandated with oversight in their areas of operation.

**Conclusion**

This paper concludes that Integrated Development Planning (IDP), a fundamental instrument for municipal planning, does not fully contribute to efforts to address sub-par management and governance at the local level. It is anecdotally clear that this multi-faceted fact is to blame for IDP's failure to deal with unprecedented and increasingly bad service delivery. The policies outlined in this paper, or any policy implementation for that matter, must always be put into practice, which requires a significant amount of steadfastness.
and positive input from all stakeholders. To fully execute policies, we must get all stakeholders involved, roll up our sleeves, and behave as citizens, not just consumers of municipal services in a vacuum.

Council members and administrators within local government, who obviously seem to be a missing link due to poor cadre deployment and as revealed by the AGSA report over the years, with municipalities failing to get clean audits, are also required to make specific commitments and efforts as outlined in the White Paper on local government. Through the application of policy in South Africa, one of the many government remedies for sub-par service delivery has been made clear. Numerous policy guidelines have consistently stated that because governance is a complex issue, solutions must instead be based on inclusive sets of carefully coordinated actions that may successfully address it. This denotes a trend toward an all-inclusive, comprehensive approach to good governance. Therefore, this paper recommends that for people to be able to influence and decide what constitutes their own type of local government, a strong and meaningful engagement by all affected citizens and stakeholders is required.

As South Africa we don’t need anything new because the structures, policies and people are already in place. What is missing is the will to put our money, resources, people and ideals where our mouths are. Let us be guided by these simple, powerful sentiments of build together a better south Africa from the ground up, not the top-down approach. Put people first as Batho Pele Principles demands of us as a nation not for personal gain but for the downtrodden and poverty ravaged communities. We are a nation of warriors and winners – let us remember this, always.

**Recommendations**

There is a great need to improve public participation to gain relevant citizen buy-ins and effective responses to service delivery challenges to avoid community-municipality stand-offs. Municipalities should be encouraged to create contextually- and content-relevant programmes for community outreaches, where engagement and solutions prevail, rather than enmity and protests. A diverse, non-partisan workforce is key, and feeds into the White Paper’s stance on bias and favouritism. It is also clear that effective service delivery is undermined by a late response to challenges, primarily owing to lack of capacity, and poor inter-governmental relations. More detailed research on innovative and modernised municipalities is needed to further develop effective structures suitable for a democratic body committed not only to delivering on its mandate, but to embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and other 21st-century necessities. This study strongly suggests that municipalities should be allowed to have the type of developmental impacts for which they are accountable they seem to lack the requisite resources or financial power for carrying out crucial tasks. In addition, the legal and policy foundations for local administration frequently prevent municipalities from innovating in order to fulfill their purpose. This is especially clear in roles that have to do with the built environment and several other crucial roles.

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**References**


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