

Text Box:**Increased impact of government's investments and initiatives through spatial alignment:
A place based perspective on realities, challenges and opportunities**Introduction

Alignment of inter-governmental investment to ensure coherent spatial investment in municipal spaces has been a key focus of various role players and initiatives over the last number of years. Initiatives include i.e. the Conference on Spatial Transformation, the introduction of the Built Environment Performance Programme (BEPP) by NT through the Neighbourhood Development Program, as well as the focus on facilitating such alignment in through the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF). This will also be a focus of the upcoming Urbanisation Review and diagnostics to be conducted under auspices of the World Bank.

In order to support these initiatives and identify the challenges regarding the alignment of spatial policies, plans and initiatives impacting on cities in a more concrete and structured way, CoGTA and SACN commissioned a quick scan of "spatial alignment" between spheres and sectors within South Africa's bigger urban areas using a case study research approach. The study was conducted by the CSIR's Spatial Planning and Systems Team and entailed a desktop analyses and review of national, provincial and local spatial and integrated development plans, as well as spatial elements within other sector and financial planning instruments, focussed on the three case study municipalities:

- a metropolitan area, Ekurhuleni in Gauteng,
- a fast growing city/regional centre, Rustenburg in North West, and
- a fast growing small to medium sized town, Lephalale in Limpopo.

Exploring the plethora of plans, all with direct spatial development implications, across different spheres and functional sectors in search for evidence of spatial alignment was in itself a challenge, due to the sheer number of plans, the non-availability or inaccessibility of some plans, the fact that the plans vary in quality and in timeframes addressed, as well as the fact that the spatial explicitness in plans, programmes and investment projects vary tremendously in scale or detail, and often was not evident at all, especially so in national and regional/provincial plans.

Defining spatial alignment

Given that spatial alignment is an intention and an activity with institutional, functional, spatial and time dimensions, the study considered not only the alignment of spatial outcomes and spatial elements within spatial and the most significant sector plans of different spheres of government in the respective areas, it also considered alignment of spatial elements in visions, long term plans, medium term strategies, as well as in investment frameworks aimed to support project implementation and budgeting, often in defined geographical areas. Spatial alignment within the study was as such not regarded as project alignment, or alignment to achieve service delivery targets only, but also as alignment to lead to towards spatial transformation over the longer term (Pieterse et al. *forthcoming*).

Given the complexity of the South African intergovernmental system, as well as the urgency for service delivery, transformation and sustainability, a set of hypotheses were formulated to guide the exploration on spatial alignment from a “place based” perspective:

1. In a context where Government is committed to urgently address key development priorities, and where need often surpasses resource availability, spatial alignment is critical. At the very least spatial alignment would be aimed at prioritising and targeting the bulk of government’s investment, initiatives and projects, to address priority issues (as identified within integrated and democratic processes) within specific areas.
2. Merely having multiple projects within the same geographic area will however, in itself, not enable government to significantly impact development priorities and spatial transformation. Bringing about desired spatial and developmental outcomes, where the sum is bigger than the parts (projects), will require strategic selection, prioritisation and coordination of interventions in time and space, between different role players and institutions.
3. Spatial alignment is not only aimed at coordinated and targeted government investment, but also at inciting and guiding investment by the private sector and civil society.
4. Whilst bringing about desired spatial and development outcomes requires coordinated project implementation, it is equally important that project selection and phasing are supportive of spatial development strategies and visions developed with cognisance of the complex systems, problems, opportunities and spatial principles relevant to local and regional contexts
5. Given the South African planning system, constitutional and multi-sphere context, this kind of “thick” or “outcomes orientated” spatial alignment of government interventions would require:
 - a. integration between different functional sectors/line departments within specific localities, but also between sectors and institutions at regional and national scales (horizontal alignment).
 - b. strategic alignment across different spatial scales, and thus between integrated and strategic spatial plans of different spheres of government (vertical alignment)
 - c. active guidance for spatial alignment and outcomes of different role players within specific places through municipal IDPs and SDFs.
6. Interventions aimed at addressing future sustainability, as well as structural socio-economic and spatial legacies will require coordinated and targeted long term programmatic approaches within specific places

Key Findings

In relation to the above, evidence from case studies suggested that there has been some success in coordinating the spatial extent of investment and budget spending through various initiatives over time within broadly defined ‘areas of priority focus for government’. However, case study analyses illustrated that **‘spatial alignment’ between the three spheres of government seems to be more in the form of an increased number of projects implemented in the same space, with little evidence of how this is necessarily utilising the expected incremental benefits of spatially targeted investment or critical linkages**. Whilst plans often make reference to areas targeted for specific purposes such as an ‘international port’, in Ekurhuleni, or the mining areas in crisis in Rustenburg area, or energy hubs in Lephalale, there seems to be little evidence of pro-active coordination between different spheres of government on these priority investment areas.

The analyses of integrated and strategic development plans, spatial plans, line department/sector plans, and the various implementation and budgeting frameworks within the Rustenburg, Lephalale and Ekurhuleni areas, actually highlighted **tensions in spatial outcomes of project driven investment aimed at addressing service delivery-crises and priorities, and that of investment aimed at addressing city-wide challenges**, supporting economic development and contributing towards sustainable urban form.

Spatial outcomes and principles are often mentioned in the respective planning policy and legislation instruments, however, the implications and application thereof seems to be open for interpretation. It was also evident that **many longer term visions, and even spatial outcomes and spatial development principles** in the respective areas are quite **generic and provide little guidance in terms of place specific strategies, programmes, projects and investment**. In the same vein **the lack of spatial trend analyses, future projections, or exploring of spatial implications of future development scenarios** is a stark reality in the range of spatial and sector plans and instruments that were analysed.

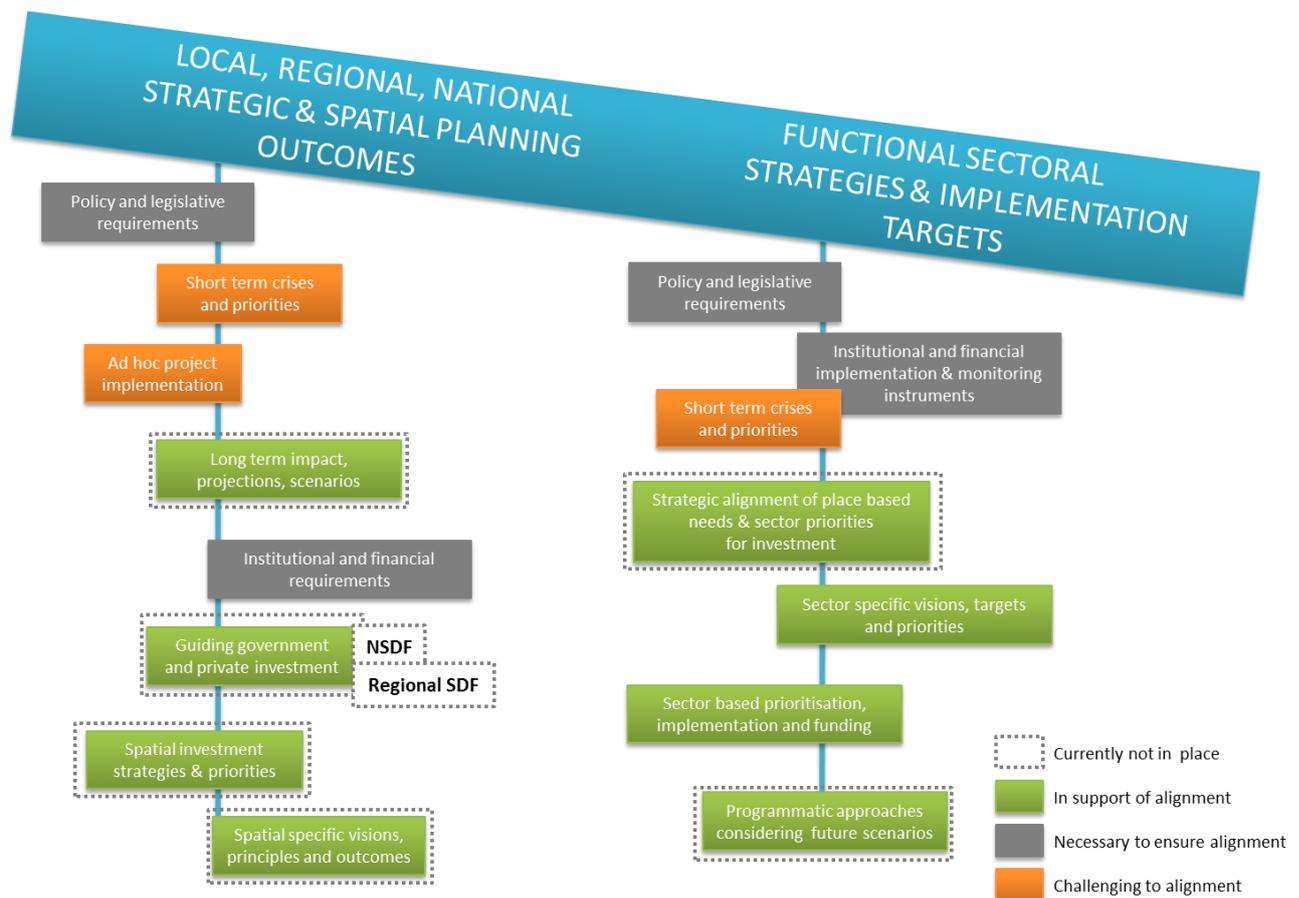
Evidence of vertical alignment was mostly found within the domain of specific functional sectors, i.e. human settlements, where development priorities and targets are supported with strong institutional and financial instruments to enable implementation and addressing of key sector based priorities at local level. Findings suggest that **spatial priorities are driven by well-defined sector targets and catalytic projects** each with their own spatial investment logic, rather than by an integrated spatial strategy and programme where spatial investment synergies, location choices, and phased programmatic investment, can act as development drivers. Case study analyses highlighted quite effective top down vertical alignment between national, provincial and local sector/line department plans and strategies. This is not surprising given that numerous sector initiatives and targets (i.e. for human settlements, infrastructure investment, etc.) are effectuated through supporting investment frameworks, as well as funding and monitoring mechanisms.

However, **little evidence of alignment was found in terms of strategic spatial direction, regional level spatial co-ordination between national and provincial departments and government agencies**, and spatial specific phased or integrated investment strategies aimed at addressing national or regional priorities. A major **need exists for spatial strategies and plans, and alignment between strategic spatial plans of different spheres of government**. The need for joint regional and national level discourses and clarity regarding the critical regional resource and investment constraints and opportunities impacting local development planning and future development in cities and regions is evident - especially related to the resource economies of the Rustenburg and Lephalale areas, and increased demands on water and energy resources in these fast growing areas. The current lack of spatial guidance and spatial strategy could potentially be addressed with completion of the National Spatial Development Framework.

Plans and instruments reviewed reflect **no regional level “place based” interpretations of long term visions and projected growth scenarios**; the evaluation of the potential impact of interventions by different functional sectors or neighbouring municipalities to achieve co-ordinated and incremental impact; or any reference to medium and longer term inter-governmental or public-private sector service level agreements to achieve outcomes within specific areas.

Evidence from the three case studies suggest that even though project implementation by national and provincial spheres requires projects to be prioritised within municipal IDPs, SDFs and investment frameworks, **SDFs seem to remain focused on managing expected private sector driven land use change with little evidence of co-ordinating intergovernmental investment**, spatial prioritisation, integrated spatial development strategies or being able to influence spatial investment logic of different sector strategies/line departments. However:

- On the one hand, the three case study areas are localities where mining companies, the business sector and other government agencies could be expected to play a significant role in the area, there are no indications in any of the plans of private sector, other government agencies or civil society investment. Most of the **plans and instruments analysed have a strong focus on service delivery but limited evidence of galvanising explicit place based civil society and private sector collaboration**. The IUDF is one of the few national instruments that specifically address various levers to also address, among others, the impact on the property market and provide investment confidence. Whilst many economic instruments and incentives are also aimed at stimulating development, they seem to be implemented as standalone programs.
- On the other hand, there is thus very little evidence of local/municipal wide direction and contextual guidance of spatial priorities of national and provincial functional sectors or even municipal line departments. Given the vast number of (integrated) sector plans, investment frameworks and subsequent number of projects impacting localities, **collaboration in the development of integrated development strategies and alignment of projects to achieve spatial outcomes at municipal (or at least city and district level) is clearly evident**.



Whilst many national scale plans and policies address and highlight critical issues, potential energy and water crises, vulnerability of places, etc. there is an **absence of integrated national spatial development analyses, modelling of potential growth implications, and strategic guidance for the future development of highly diverse regions**. The **implications of slow progress with the National Spatial Development Framework, diverse levels and quality of spatial explicitness of key national instruments, and lack of spatial explicit interpretation of the national vision and drive for spatial outcomes are evident** from the study.

Conclusion

Even though the study did not include institutional and systems analyses, it is evident that the collaborative development of spatial explicit strategies might be challenging within an environment dominated by sector targets and implementation and would require strong local, regional and national leadership. It is however also evident that if regional and national strategic and spatial planning is merely regarded as a mechanism to stitch together local plans/strategies, or local SDFs and IDPs merely regarded as mechanisms to stitch together functional sector plans/strategies, such plans and strategies will add no value to the current situation and challenges, nor to high impact service delivery, transformation and long term sustainability. Recurring costs in parallel planning processes and in the re-designing and strengthening of the current plethora of planning instruments and mechanisms, as well as valiant efforts at aligning a myriad of projects on paper and in budgets will merely remain the norm.