

## Urban Strategies Alignment Study Seminar

Kleinkaap, Centurion, 21 August, 2013

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### SESSION NOTES

#### Key points

Following a very productive engagement amongst participants about the merits and potential gaps in the study, the following key points could be distilled:

1. **Context** plays an essential role in the development of any strategy and particularly in the development of a long range vision and plan. This includes the politics, tensions and debates within the state at the time. It is thus important to understand the institutional architecture that a plan has to navigate its way through and the contextual factors that impact on this. Also, strategies are developed over time (informed by these contexts and politics) and thus should be considered as layered over time and informed by time.
2. The **purpose of plans** will define what is stated and therefore plans will by their nature be different. Given the purpose, it is not possible for all long term plans to be all inclusive and even outcomes may be broader whereas a shorter implementation plan (IDP or sectoral plan) is more likely to be specific and detailed.
3. **A tighter definition of alignment** is required. Understanding alignment as more than just compliance but rather as a sequencing process is useful. While alignment is important, it is about ensuring integration (potentially informed by set of guidelines) but with a level of flexibility and adaptability. Also, in the process of encouraging alignment, this should not become a conversation about regulation as it is likely to stifle the flexibility needed for a plan of this nature and given the environment that it aims to address. Because plans are written for different purposes, at different times and driven by different momentum and impetus, we should be weary of calling for alignment.
4. The study provides important insights into **what is necessary for the development of a long range plan** in terms of the required visioning but also in terms of the technical skills and capacity to understand the requirements of such a plan.
5. A conversation may be needed about **what can be planned over the long term**. Developing a long range plan itself requires a considerable amount of time, sequencing of the different kinds of interventions that are needed and a number of iterations that develop out of sufficient engagement with the public and various key stakeholders. There should also be reflection on how long term plans translate into shorter time plans rather than only

looking at the long term outputs. The potential success of a plan is closely related to the issue of ownership and the process that the plan had undergone.

6. It is important for those responsible for planning in the different spheres to **reflect on the independent nature of planning**, very often for the same area and to ensure that planning processes are more closely connected and influence each other. Furthermore, the plans of different sectors should be reflected on especially how they impact on each other in a spatial context.
7. **The role of the various spheres of government** is important to reflect on. In order for plans to be most effective and aligned, there needs to be more efficient intergovernmental collaboration and coordination. Local government is very important and considered the face of delivery and thus has a vital role to play in terms of informing national and provincial planning processes. These processes should be negotiated and arrived at within relevant IGR forums as a plan means very little if it is not understood, owned and implemented by all the relevant spheres of government. The question that remains is who takes responsibility for ensuring that this engagement happens; national, local, provincial?
8. **Gaps in study**
  - Institutional context was not sufficiently considered.
  - Study was not able to look in more detail at the range of other plans and processes that influence the development of long term plans.
  - It was not possible to verify the methodologies used or go into more details interviewing those responsible for developing the plan. However, this does not change the finding of the study that plans should have clearer methodologies.
  - The role of politics was not extensively explored and there may be more reflection needed on this issue which is a critical one in South Africa and it may be a useful exercise to politically tighten the notion of alignment.

## Group discussion

### *Guiding Questions:*

1. Role of long range plans
  - a. Why do we do long range plans at the 3 spheres?
  - b. What is it that they are expected to achieve and how do you improve their ability to achieve it – vertically, horizontally?
  - c. How can plans be more effective?
2. Conceptualisation of alignment
  - a. What is a meaningful conceptualisation of alignment in this context?
  - b. How can it be achieved?
3. Guidance for long range planning
  - a. What forms of guidance would be appropriate in the planning system of government (APPs, MTEF, IDP, CDS, PGDS, NDP). Consider M&E

### *Outcomes from group discussion*

- *Role of long range plans:* *The role of longer range plans is similar across the three spheres of government though they have different emphasis.*
  - Long range plans allow us to plan and work beyond the administration and the individual or the leadership at the time. It allows for a move away from driving a

specific agenda or programme that is developed around an individual or political term.

- It is important to understand the big and simple message to which a system can align.
- Another role of a long term plan is about efficiency eg. Having clearer visions especially at the national level and even at the provincial and local levels. Visionary statements precede the long term plan as its role is about setting the agenda and priorities and this is then followed by a range of negotiations around what this means and how it can be operationalized and put into practice.
- Conceptualisation of alignment: 2 variations of alignment (legislative and process). More concerned with the latter as this is where the implementation issues arise.
  - Principles around alignment/rules of engagement (suggestion for this to be included in a guide. The first steps of this process could be the documentation of the SACN CDS process in Msunduzi and the experience and lessons learnt)
    - Shared visions
    - Cognisance of the legislation that defines IGR engagement.
    - Monitoring and Evaluation should be a critical component.
    - Should not raise conflict, stifle or constrain in terms of implementation
  - Where does alignment happen? What are the platforms around which we align? Where can useful alignment happen? What already exists for this?
    - Make use of the broad IGR forums that are defined by the IGR Framework and consider the role of CoGTA in encouraging the use of these. This should not change the ongoing and/or existing alignment between the various spheres in terms of their long range planning – initiatives to engage and collaborate should not be discouraged.
- Guidance for long range planning: *Guidance should not be in the form of legislation or regulation. Instead it is about providing appropriate advice and best/good practice examples and experiences.*
  - Governance: Importance of leadership, public participation guidance to achieve both horizontal and vertical alignment. Important issue is how we internalize and translate long range planning into medium term plans and allocate resources. This should be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation frameworks and indicators to measure alignment and performance.
  - Intergovernmental forums are important for ensuring continuity and ongoing alignment.
  - Need to have a way of interpreting the central message that is coming from clusters as there is currently a sector plan vs cluster plan challenge.
  - Taking a differentiated approach is important.
    - Guidance should be provided across all the spheres but should be specific to the needs and context of metros, secondary cities and municipalities.
    - This should also include differentiated guidance (taking into consideration the nature of the city, of municipalities etc).
    - Each sphere could have one set of generic guidelines which can then be further broken down according to their context as discussed above.

## Proposals for the way forward

### National government

- Lobby CoGTA for more emphasis on collaboration and coordination to ensure alignment
- DHS should make a more concerted effort to start communicating its policies and engaging with long term plans (particularly in light of its Green Paper process).

### Other

- Proposed pilot – documenting the Msunduzi case study and reflecting on issue of alignment (SACN – Michael Kihato)
  - Consider case study research that looks at a number of plans and engages in details with the process and content.
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