

Featured SET policy:

Section 10 of the NSTF series – Transforming human settlements (Chapter 8, NDP)

In a series of articles, the NSTF is unpacking the National Development Plan (NDP). The focus is on understanding it from a science, engineering, technology (SET) perspective. The NDP is seen as a blueprint/guiding document for South Africa. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030.

- The complete document – ‘[National Development Plan – vision for 2030](#)’
- The executive summary ‘[National Development Plan 2030, Our future – make it work, executive summary](#)’.

<p>NDP chapter: Overview</p> <p>This considers the context and background of the NDP. See 1 – Understanding the context of the National Development Plan (NDP). It also sets the stage for understanding what makes a developmental state. See 2 – The National Development Plan and the developmental state. There is also a summary of the plan and key targets and actions.</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 1: Key drivers of change</p> <p>The synopsis is called 3 – Science and technology as drivers of development</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 2: Demographic trends</p> <p>The synopsis is called 4 – Demographic trends PLUS the NDPs 5th anniversary</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 3: Economy and employment</p> <p>The synopsis is called 5 – National system of innovation and R&D critical for growing the economy</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 4: Economic infrastructure</p> <p>The synopsis is called 6 – Developing a strong network of economic infrastructure – transport, energy, water resources, and ICT</p>	<p>An economy that will create more jobs </p>
<p>NDP chapter 5: Transition to a low carbon economy</p>	<p>Transition to a low-carbon economy </p>
<p>NDP chapter 6: Inclusive rural economy</p>	<p>An inclusive and integrated rural economy </p>
<p>NDP chapter 7: Positioning South Africa in the world</p>	<p>Reversing the spatial effects of apartheid </p>
<p>NDP chapter 8: Transforming human settlements</p>	<p>Improving the quality of education, training and innovation </p>
<p>NDP chapter 9: Improving education, innovation and training</p>	<p>Quality healthcare for all </p>
<p>NDP chapter 10: Promoting health</p>	<p>Social protection </p>
<p>NDP chapter 11: Social protection</p>	<p>Building safer communities </p>
<p>NDP chapter 12: Building safer communities</p>	<p>Reforming the public service </p>
<p>NDP chapter 13: Building a capable state</p>	



Chapter 8, National Development Plan – Transforming human settlements

The NDP’s opening statement in this chapter says it all: “Where we live and work matters.”

Consider the consequences of the distance between work and where you live. Does where you live have adequate services? Does it allow you access to benefits and to participate in the economy?

The spatial segregation of apartheid left a legacy. Although deeply entrenched, South Africa’s settlement patterns need to be reshaped. The NDP proposes a strategy for more humane and environmentally sustainable living and working environments. The NDP notes: “The physical and social environment in which we are born and grow up is one of the most important determinants of every person’s wellbeing and life chances.” It’s about access to opportunities – including schools, social networks, and public services.

The vision for 2030 – on the way to 2050 – is clear about what it doesn’t want:

- No poverty traps in rural areas and urban townships
- No workers isolated on the periphery of cities
- No inner cities controlled by slumlords and crime
- No sterile suburbs with high walls and electric fences
- No households spending 30% or more of their time, energy, and income on daily commuting
- No decaying infrastructure with power blackouts
- No undrinkable water
- No potholes and blocked sewers
- No violent protests
- No gridlocked roads and unreliable public transport
- No new public housing in barren urban landscapes
- No new private investment creating exclusive enclaves for the rich
- No fearful immigrant communities living in confined spaces
- No rural communities dying as production collapses

Included in the above vision are: public spaces where different social groups mix; recycled waste creating renewable energy; people, especially the youth, actively involved in local decision making; and resilient planning systems.

The 5 main challenges are seen as:

- Dysfunctional settlement patterns
- Challenges facing towns and cities
- Uncertain prospects of rural areas
- Challenges of providing housing and basic services and reactivating communities
- Weak spatial planning and governance capabilities

Other concerns are environmental impact, urbanisation, and the growing youth population. There is a focus on ‘green’ infrastructure and sustainable energy, as well as being aware of growing populations creating stress on infrastructure. The NDP notes that many of the challenges are due to “insufficient institutional capacity and lack of strong instruments for implementation”.

“[I]nterconnected interventions are needed to tackle these issues”. These include economic solutions, institutional reforms, changes to land management systems, and infrastructure investment. The chapter looks at the geographic and development aspects of these policies.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to different areas. South Africa needs an integrated approach to rural and urban areas but also needs to understand that there are distinct challenges and potential with different areas. Land reform and redistribution discussions also need to pay attention to spatial location – successful agricultural production needs suitable land linked to markets and agro-processing chains.

Rural areas are important – other areas depend on rural goods and services such as food, water, minerals, energy, biodiversity, natural and cultural experiences, labour, and land. There needs to be security and services in rural areas. Differentiated interventions are needed for the different types of rural settlements. Appropriate infrastructure is important for unlocking developmental potential.

Active citizenry is needed for solutions. The NDP says it’s a daily challenge for South Africans – especially in poor and peri-urban communities – to have access to adequate housing (including renting options), reliable electricity, safe water supplies, accessible public transport, and hygienic and dignified sanitation facilities. While the underlying causes need to be addressed, there needs to be active citizenship and community involvement to find alternative solutions.

There is a need for a guiding national spatial framework. National, provincial and local government need to work together. Spatial planning is dispersed across different ministries, resulting in parallel and sometimes conflicting legislation. The way forward is better coordination, including defining powers and responsibilities. The framework will focus on coordinating and connecting. It will include stakeholders for a shared perspective. The framework and ongoing spatial management needs to be supported by an integrated system of national spatial data.

Transforming spatial arrangements and spatial governance is large and complex – and needs a long-term view. Planning needs to happen at an international, regional, country, and local level. Beyond the points mentioned previously, the following also needs to be considered:

- Impact on the poor and vulnerable
- Integrating transportation systems and land use
- Managing economic and demographic shifts
- Areas of national importance such as resource-critical regions
- Supporting the upgrade of informal settlements
- Supporting the transition to environmental sustainability
- Specific strategies for the developmental role of small towns in rural economies and for supporting agricultural development