“The Establishment of a Development Local State in South Africa: Between Rhetoric and Reality”

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Abstract

Following the successes of what have been labelled the developmental states of East Asia, a number of emerging economies have aspired to emulate the state-led model that has been seen as central to their rapid economic growth. However, recognising that the East Asian model was, in a number of significant ways, sui generis, states now attempting to follow a developmental path have tended to adopt hybrid models which incorporate a more citizen focused and democratic approach than the often autocratic and top down approach followed by the so-named Asian Tigers. South Africa is one such state which has declared its intent to construct a developmental state as a means to overcoming the legacy of Apartheid rule and to improving the welfare of the majority of its citizens. However, for a variety of historical reasons, unlike the top-down model characteristic of developmental states elsewhere, the South African variant was, in the first instance, focused on the construction of what has been termed developmental local government. This paper looks at the attempts to establish a system of developmental local government in the Cape Town metropolitan area and, in particular, the endeavour to advance citizen participation through a process of integrated development planning. Taking as a case study the sub-council area of Delft, which is inhabited by the poorest segments of the municipal population, the paper finds that little progress is being made in promoting citizen participation or in significantly improving their livelihoods. This is due to the fact the notion of a developmental state has been so poorly articulated in national policy and that this aggravated by weak inter-governmental coordination. In this context the idea of developmental local government has failed to progress beyond political rhetoric and it has contributed little to the construction of a broader national developmental state.

Introduction

The economic achievements of the newly industrialised countries of East Asia in the latter half of the 20th century sparked considerable theoretical debate on the role of the state and the appropriate trajectory of development policy which should be followed by emerging economies (Amsden, 1989; Wade, 1990; Beeson, 2009). In this context, the term ‘developmental state’ was used to describe the state-led model of economic growth adopted in the 1970s and 1980s by such
countries as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam amongst others (Amsden, 1989; Wade, 1990; Woo-Cummings, 1999). Although the idea of ‘developmentalism’ lost some of its lustre following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which prompted debate on the merits of state-led growth versus neo-liberal notions of a minimalist state (Burkett & Martin Hart-Landsberg, 2002; Onis, 1991), belief in the model has spread and it continues to hold appeal in many parts of the developing world and no less in post-Apartheid South Africa.

In various formulations, the idea of a developmental state has appeared in official discourse in South Africa since the advent of democratic government in 1994 albeit that its adoption as state policy has been slow, uneven and inconsistent with the original East Asian model (ANC, 2007b, Manuel, 2013; Evans, 2010, Fine, 2008). However, following the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008, which highlighted the weaknesses of laissez faire capitalism and emphasised the need for state regulation of the economy, there has been renewed interest in the idea of an interventionist developmental state and a growing conviction in many quarters (amongst academics, the media, policy formulators, social commentators and others) that it is the model most likely to succeed in overcoming South Africa’s multiple developmental challenges (Edigheji, 2010). However, what has been a feature of developmental state thinking in South Africa is that the concept has been so poorly articulated in policy that it has come to mean different things to different to state actors and to the public. This has been aggravated by the fact that the idea of a strongly interventionist developmental state has run counter to the idea of a diminished state enunciated in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic framework which was launched in 1996 and which embraced distinctly neo-liberal principles (Department of Finance, 1996). This implicit contradiction aside, the conceptualisation of the developmental state in South Africa (to the extent that there is agreement on its core tenets) differs from that of the East Asian model in a number of significant ways. Most notably, as shall be discussed, has been the emphasis placed on democratic developmental local government and on citizen participation in policy processes.

The Developmental State in Context

Chalmers Johnson (1982) is accredited with having coined the term ‘developmental state’ in the course of an investigation into Japan’s phenomenal post-war industrial expansion. Following Japan’s success, Beeson (2009:6) maintains that the developmental state model which ‘was emulated with varying degrees of faithfulness and efficacy elsewhere in the region, became synonymous with East Asia’s rapid economic expansion and emblematic of the region’s distinctive approach to economic management’. Developmental states in this context are typically characterised by a strong centralised administrative authority which plays a central role in determining macro-economic policy and planning and which has no hesitation in intervening in the market in order to guide the path of economic development (Evans, 1995; Bagchi, 2000). Although all states intervene in their economies to some extent, Johnson (1982) emphasised that it was the degree of state intervention that was determinant of their success. This interventionist
state role has been contrasted in the literature with the neo-liberal ‘free market’ approach which envisages an arms-length approach by the state and reliance on market forces to determine economic outcomes (Chang, 1999).

While there continues to be debate on the essence of developmental states in the 21st century (Routley, 2012), there is broad consensus on the core features of the East Asian model which the World Bank (1993) has referred to as the ‘Asian Miracle’. These features include a committed and determined political elite focused on achieving economic growth, a powerful, capable and insulated professional bureaucracy, successful policy interventions that promote growth, a strong symbiotic relationship between the state and private sector, relative autonomy of the bureaucracy and a weak and subordinated civil society (Meyns & Musamba, 2010; Evans, 1995; Wade, 1990; Johnson, 1982; Edigheji, 2010; Routley, 2012).

Notwithstanding the well-documented economic success of the so-called ‘Asian Tigers’, a number of authors have questioned the transferability of the East Asian developmental model asserting that many of the preconditions for its success were historically and geo-politically contextual (Onis, 1991), emerging as it did in the aftermath of the devastating destruction of the Second World War and the threat of communist expansion in the region during the Cold War era (Mathews, 2006; Pempel, 1999). Others have pointed to the significance of cultural norms and political culture (Compton, 2000; Pye, 1985; Kuotsai, 2002; Kihl, 2004), in shaping the broad national consensus necessary to sustain a state-determined economic development path over a period of time (Gemandze, 2006). However, the approach has also not been without its critics who have pointed to the fact that East Asian development states were highly authoritarian in nature, that they permitted little dissent, imposed restrictive labour legislation and, in their early years at least, generally thought little of exploiting the working class who received low wages and often laboured under very poor conditions (Burkett & Hart-Landsberg, 2003).

This has prompted some authors to assert that, while some elements of the Asian developmental state remain relevant for emerging economies elsewhere in the world, it is not possible, nor indeed desirable, to replicate the model as a whole. In that respect, a particular source of concern has been the hegemonic character of these states, manifest in their authoritarianism, managerialism and social exclusion which have been seen to conflict with contemporary concerns about democracy and citizen rights. In a context where economic development is increasingly linked with notions of basic rights and entitlements, there has also been an increasing emphasis on the need for developmental states to embrace democratic principles and practices (Leftwich, 2002; White, 2006), which include the promotion of citizen participation (Welch & Nuru; 2006) as well as notions of good governance (Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2007).

Edigheji (2005:22) defines a democratic developmental state as one which has the ‘institutional attributes of the classical developmental state, that is, being autonomous and coherent, but (which) also takes on board the attributes of procedural democracy. In addition, the democratic developmental state is one that forges broad-based alliances with society and ensures popular
participation in the governance and transformation processes’. To that extent, there is some consensus in the literature that a democratic developmental state should have a transformative agenda which extends beyond economic growth to a focus on broader social and political goals (Maphunye, 2009; Gumede, 2009). In support of this perspective White (2006:60) asserts that ‘the process of development involves more than just economic growth but includes life-and-death issues such as poverty, personal security, distributive equity, social justice and environmental sustainability’. It must also embody the principles of democracy, which Leftwich (2002) refers to as a developmental orientation and democratic political system. To that extent Edigheji (2005) maintains that a key determinant of a democratic development state is its competence in promoting development and growth and, at the same time, its capacity to engender consensus and popular participation. The ability to provide mechanisms for effective citizen participation, in particular, has been seen as a key characteristic of the democratic developmental state. The extent to which citizens accept the legitimacy of the state, moreover, is believed to be contingent on the effectiveness of these participatory processes as well on the extent to which the gains of economic growth are redistributed (Leftwich; 2002; Welch & Nuru; 2006).

A further component of a democratic developmental state is seen to be its capacity to decentralise administrative and political responsibilities to lower echelons of government. Although decentralisation had been ‘fashionable’ in development circles for some decades (Conyers, 1984), interest in the concept gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s (Turner, 1999). Programmes aimed at devolving power away from central government have since been extensively supported by international donor organisations, by United Nations structures and international funding organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF (Blair, 1998). In that context, state reforms that focus on decentralised governance have been seen as not only desirable but, according to Blondel (1990), inescapable. This is because the process is associated with good governance, greater efficiency and the deepening of democratisation through participatory processes which give voice to the poor at the local level (Klugman, 1994). In that regard however, it must also be noted, that a significant part of the writing on democratic developmental states is aspirational in nature rather than grounded in empirical evidence. Nonetheless, this element of the developmental state will be seen to be of importance in the analysis of the South African case to be discussed below.

**Aspirations towards a Democratic Developmental State in South Africa**

An interest in the establishment of a developmental state in South Africa was evident in the policy thinking of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) both in the lead-up to the first democratic elections in 1994 and on its assumption of office thereafter. Thus, the 1994 White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, although not explicitly referring to a developmental
state, nevertheless asserted the need for an interventionist state which would play a leading role in steering the economy and in reconstructing South African society:

*Reconstruction and development will be achieved through the leading and enabling role of the State, a thriving private sector and active involvement by all sectors of civil society. The role of the Government and the public sector within the broader economy has to be redefined so that reconstruction and development are facilitated. In a wide range of areas the GNU will take the lead in reforming and addressing structural conditions. In doing so its guidelines will remain the basic people-driven principles of the RDP (RSA, 1994, Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3).*

While interest in advancing a strongly interventionist developmental state waned following the adoption of the neo-liberal GEAR macro-economic framework in 1996, the idea never entirely lost currency and in the course of the past decade it has resurfaced both in ANC policy documents (ANC, 2005, 2007b) as well in official discourse (PSC, 2008; The Presidency, 2009, 2010; Poon, 2009). In that respect, the concept received new impetus following the global financial meltdown in 2008 and as it became increasingly apparent that GEAR had failed to deliver the economic growth it had promised. For the ruling ANC government a developmental state is now portrayed as the most viable vehicle to overcome the legacy of Apartheid, to address poverty, social inequality and unemployment, to improve service delivery and to promote people-centred development (Manuel, 2009; ANC, 2009; Edigheji, 2010). Significantly, official South African understanding of a developmental state (in as much as it has been formally articulated) is one that is both developmental and democratic (Olayode, 2005; Van Dijk & Croucamp, 2007). In that regard, the ANC’s 2007 ‘Draft Strategy and Tactics Document’ stresses that a South African developmental state should, besides the advancement of sustainable economic development, ‘mobilise the people as a whole, especially the poor, to act as their own liberators through participatory and representative democracy’ (ANC, 2007b: paragraph 59). More recently the National Development Plan (NDP), representing the government’s current long term strategy to address poverty, inequality, and economic transformation, is one of the few national policy documents which has been directly linked to the vision of developmental state. The NDP, released in 2012, refers to the role of “citizens being active in development” and a “a capable and developmental state able to intervene to correct our historical inequities” (National Planning Commission, 2011:1).

Unlike the top-down and authoritarian East Asian model, government leaders envisage a South African developmental state to be infused with democratic content, where state/society synergies are created by a mobilised civil society working side by side with a committed and development-oriented government, in order to inform policy from below. In its emphasis on the need for a bottom-up approach to policy formulation the South African government model differs markedly from the conventional idea of a developmental state. Reflective of this approach, the first, and hitherto only, official policy document which proposes a developmental approach was the White
Paper on Developmental Local Government which launched by the Ministry of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development in 1998 (RSA, 1998b). According to the White Paper, the four characteristics of developmental local government are:

\[(E)xercising municipal powers and functions in a manner which maximises their impact on social development and economic growth; playing an integrating and coordinating role to ensure alignment between public (including all spheres of government) and private investment within the municipal area; democratising development; and building social capital through providing community leadership and vision, and seeking to empower marginalised and excluded groups within the community (RSA, 1998b:8).\]

Although this focus on the local state is reflective of a confused understanding of the nature of a developmental state, it was justified in terms of a conventional belief that municipalities, as the sphere of government closest to the people, are best positioned to be the key drivers in addressing persistent economic exclusion and uneven development (Pieterse, 2007). A central tenet of this bottom-up approach was the need for local authorities to institutionalise participatory processes at grassroots level and devise effective structures and processes to facilitate citizen participation in local affairs. In support of this objective, a comprehensive legislative framework was set in place directing municipalities to implement systems of participatory governance (Moodley, 2006). This includes the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998a) and the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) which set out the participatory processes that municipalities must follow in their engagement with local communities. Noticeably, as shall be discussed, little thought was given either as to how greater citizen participation might lead to economic growth or how different levels of government might combine to achieve this goal.

Amongst a number of measures introduced to promote citizen participation at the local level, the most important mechanism for the advancement of developmental local government is the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process (Achmat, 2002). In terms of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, an IDP must be drawn up following municipal elections and the assumption of office of a new local government council (RSA, 2000). In that regard it is intended as a tool through which all development initiatives will be planned at local level and the means through which the views of ordinary citizens can be heard and their needs prioritised (Harrison, 2002, 2006). The Act further obliges municipalities to establish appropriate structures to ensure that effective citizen participation takes place (FCR, 2002; Goldman, 2005). As part of this process, the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998a) makes provision for a ward committee system which is intended to serve as the interface between citizens and local authorities on a day-to-day basis (Smith, 2007). The IDP has thus been identified as the key instrument through which local government is intended to support the creation of a national developmental state. This integrated planning approach has not only been described as the ‘cornerstone of developmental government in South Africa’, but it is also viewed as the
mechanism through which to align and co-ordinate sectorial plans, strategic priorities and budgets and resources (GGLN, 2008:53).

From the above it is evident that, formalistically at least, there is in place both a legislative and policy framework necessary to support the establishment of development local government and that this could form part of a broader programme to establish a developmental state in South Africa. However, aside from the somewhat anomalous approach to establishing a developmental state from the bottom up, there is mounting evidence that the notion of developmental local government is failing both in its attempts to improve the welfare of the poor and in its efforts to promote effective citizen participation. A review of the literature reveals that local authorities are unable to actualise their developmental mandate and that a substantial proportion of South Africans are forced to live in poorly resourced settlements with limited opportunities for meaningful participation in development initiatives and with equally limited prospects of economic advancement (Chagunda, 2007; Fakir, 2007; Van Dijk & Croucamp, 2007; Tapscott, 2008; Thompson, Nleya & Africa, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Van Donk, 2012; Andani & Naidu, 2012). To that extent, mounting service delivery protests across the country are reflective of citizen frustration and anger both at unfilled expectations and the failure of formal institutionalised participatory structures (Atkinson, 2007; Kimenia, 2011, Plessing, 2011; Sowetan, 2012). These protests can be viewed as the final resort of citizens attempting to make their voices heard through non-institutionalised popular means.

In the context of the above, this paper sets out to examine the manner in which a system of developmental local government is being implemented in the City of Cape Town. Taking as a case study the township of Delft¹, the study focuses on three key aspects of the developmental approach, namely the extent to which there is a coherent national vision of a democratic developmental state and how it might be constructed, the extent to which a democratic approach is advanced through citizen participation, and the extent to which this model is leading to economic growth and improved local welfare. As a point of departure for this discussion it is necessary to provide a brief background to the case study area.

**Overview of the Case Study Area**
The locality of Delft is located in the City of Cape Town, the oldest and largest urban area in South Africa and currently one of the fastest growing metropolitan complexes in the country. It

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¹ Data gathering for this research extended over a three year period from January 2011 until October 2013 and included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative research included observation in the case study area, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with officials from the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Provincial Government, Sub-council councillors, ward committee other residents of the area. The quantitative data generated was derived from a stratified random sample of 470 households in Delft using a survey instrument which included both closed and open-ended questions.
is the seat of national parliament and the legislative capital of South Africa. Cape Town, together with the larger Western Cape province, is markedly dissimilar from other South African cities, both politically and socially, and has been described as one of the most unequal and ‘divided’ areas in the country (Cooke, 1991; Pieterse, 2002). This is reflected in Cape Town’s residential settlement patterns, with low-density housing in well-resourced neighbourhoods predominately inhabited by whites, contrasted with high-density residential areas for blacks, coloureds and Asians in poorly resourced neighbourhoods and informal settlement areas.

For governance purposes, the city is divided into 111 electoral wards and one member of the council is elected from each ward. An additional 110 councillors are selected from proportional party lists, which together make up the total complement of 221 councillors (City of Cape Town, 2012c). The Executive Mayor is elected head of local government for a period of five years and in turn appoints an 11-member Mayoral Committee which functions as a local cabinet. Other duties of the City council include the formation of the 24 metropolitan sub-councils (City of Cape Town, 2012c). Among its most important tasks as a developmental local government, the city council is, as indicated, responsible for developing and implementing an IDP, which is the practical mechanism through which it must deliver the developmental mandate conferred on it by national government. Other duties include the development of infrastructure, the provision of services, and the stimulation of local economic development.

Delft, which is located in Sub-council 5, is a high-density urban community located approximately 25 kilometres from Cape Town’s Central Business District on what is known as Cape Flats, an impoverished region which has its origins in the segregationist policies of the Apartheid era. As a result of this discriminatory legislation and policy, African, Indian and mixed-raced Coloured people from diverse backgrounds and traditions were uprooted and forcibly resettled in segregated racially based residential areas on the Cape Flats in a process which radically altered the social and physical fabric of Cape Town (Cooke, 1991; Western, 1981). Low levels of physical and social well-being characterise most communities on the Cape Flats and residents face widespread poverty, unemployment, the lack of education opportunities, health problems, high infant mortality, poor nutrition, drug addiction, crime, limited facilities and limited service provision (Penderis, 2003). Despite 20 years of democratic governance, many of these socio-economic conditions continue to prevail in Delft today.

Coherency of the Developmental State Vision

One of the key characteristics of the Asian developmental state was that it was driven by a strong central, generally autocratic, state with a coherent vision of the economic growth path to be followed and the ability to mobilise the necessary institutional resources to achieve its goals. Whilst recognizing the need to follow a trajectory that differs from the traditional East Asian model, one of the challenges facing the South African government in its quest to build a
developmental state that is democratic and inclusive has been the fact that its implementation has, hitherto, be pursued at the local level. Constitutionally South Africa is a unitary state with a three tiered hierarchy of national, provincial and local governments. However, since the advent of the democratic constitution in 1996, the government has struggled to ensure effective inter-governmental relations. A lack of inter and intra-governmental coordination has adversely affected policy coherence and the implementation of national strategies at the local level. This problem is particular apparent in efforts to build a developmental state.

Research conducted for this paper revealed that provincial and local government officials in the Western Cape, for the most part, had a very limited understanding of the concept of a developmental state. It follows that if a basic understanding of national government’s vision of a developmental state is either lacking or limited at provincial and local government level, the strategies to implement such visions will accordingly be inadequate due to divergent views and the absence of a common purpose. The lack of a ‘common developmental grammar’, which according to Johnson (1999) is a prerequisite of a successful developmental state, will undoubtedly detract from efforts to implement such a state at the local level. In that respect, not only is the term ‘developmental state’ not included in the City of Cape Town’s IDP, but the majority of officials interviewed have either ‘not heard of the term’ or stated that it is not used in their departments or in official documentation. This was reflected by the comments of a senior official who stated rather self-consciously that ‘I must be honest, but I have not heard of a developmental state in the work I do in this department or at any meetings with other departments. Even when I attend mayoral meetings this term is not used’ (Male Official, Cape Town: 20/05/2013). Likewise, in the Provincial IDP Assessment Annual Report of 2012/2013, prepared by the Western Cape Government’s Department of Local Government (WCGDLG, 2013), no mention is made of a developmental state. On the other hand, as has been seen, at national level the term is used far more frequently and can be discerned in a range of documents and most notably in the recently launched National Development Plan (The Presidency, 2009).

While the overall vision of a developmental state in South Africa remains a strategic focus of national government it has, as indicated, been pursued at local government level through the mechanism of Integrated Development Planning. It is evident that, formalistically at least, the IDP is supposed to be fully aligned with the NPD and other national and provincial planning strategies. The Director of the City’s IDP Office explained that ‘planning the IDP is a total iterative process and it is carefully aligned to the NDP. Although some documents take a longer term view, all development in a municipal area must be aligned. Sometimes the long view is different to problems that we face today’ (Van der Merwe, 02/05/2013). However, an examination of the way in which the City’s IDP objectives are aligned with those of the NDP, reveal that the process of planning is far from integrated and interpretation of the objectives and targets needed to support the latter is at the sole discretion of the City (in other words, they are
not co-determined with provincial and national government). The City, in practice, determines which aspects of the NDP it wishes to pursue in its IDP and in which way.

Table 1: Alignment of the NDP and IDP

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<tr>
<th>NDP Objective</th>
<th>IDP Objective</th>
<th>IDP deliverable</th>
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<tr>
<td>A state that is capable of playing a developmental and transformative role</td>
<td>Objective 3.1 Providing access to social service for those who need it</td>
<td>Programme 3.1 (a) Number of targeted and development programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>A state that is capable of playing a developmental and transformative role</td>
<td>Objective 3.2 Ensure increased access to innovative human settlements for those who need it</td>
<td>Programme 3.2 (a) Use property and land to leverage social issues Provide beneficiaries with secure freehold title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between national, provincial and local government are improved through a more proactive approach to managing the intergovernmental system</td>
<td>Objective 3.2 Ensure increased access to innovative human settlements for those who need it</td>
<td>Programme 3.2(c) Partner with Province in education and school sites through a review process which has been initiated between the City and the Provincial Department of Education in which all vacant educational assets are being assessed in terms of whether they should be released to other forms of development.</td>
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From the above it is evident that the NDP objective of creating a state that is capable of playing a developmental and transformative role, is aligned to IDP Objective 3.1 entitled providing access to social services for those who need it, together with IDP Objective 3.2 entitled to ensure increased access to innovative human settlements for those who need it. In both cases, additional documentation revealed that planning targets were decidedly inadequate in terms of the needs of the vast number of disadvantaged communities living within the city boundaries.

The NDP objective of improving of intergovernmental relations is presented as corresponding well with Objective 3.2 of the IDP, which refers to the need to increase access to human settlements. Somewhat incongruously, the IDP deliverable in this instance is stated as the need to liaise with the Provincial Education Department to review educational and school sites that could be used for other forms of development. Although this deliverable could potentially increase access to human settlement opportunities, there is no guarantee that it would increase the housing stock per se and increase access to accommodation by the poor. Although housing has been identified, by officials, councillors and residents alike, as one of the most critical issues facing the municipality, the growing backlog in housing provision suggests that relatively little headway is being made in addressing the problem. However, despite the fact that the delivery of
housing is a concurrent responsibility of all three spheres of government there is little indication in the City’s IDP of how inter-governmental coordination might be improved and better alignment of policy and planning objectives achieved. In that respect, the planning alignment which is evident in the IDP appears to be little more than an exercise in legislative compliance with little consideration given to the dynamics of how this might come about in practice.

Interviews with officials from different tiers of government revealed that there is very limited collaboration between them and that there are only nominal efforts to align national programmes with development priorities identified by residents at the local level. One sub-councillor in Delft commented as follows:

*In terms of the Development State vision, there is a disconnect between National, Provincial and Local Government. They start with a blank canvas, but the disconnect is between the needs of the people and higher body decisions. What the people’s real needs are is not understood and the diversity in wards is not understood. Emotional forces and the political landscape play a major role. If one goes into the community we can see what the real needs of people are. We cannot predetermine this. We must really listen to the people, not the other way around. We are not doing this at grassroots level. If we do not deal with this, things will just get worse. We talk about freedom, but look at our informal settlements – still the same people are living there (Van Wyk, 24/09/2013).*

Another councillor agreed that the national sphere’s notion of a development state was not based on current development needs and asserted that government is out of touch with the reality of circumstances faced in local communities. She commented that ‘there is lack of alignment somewhere between the greater needs of national government and the immediate needs of communities. Our people want satisfaction of their immediate needs, such as jobs, housing and safety which are serious problems in most communities and require immediate attention’ (Gympies, 23/05/2013).

The idea that national development priorities failed to reflect the needs of the poor at the local level was a recurring theme in this research. Interviews with municipal officials and ward councillors in Delft revealed that one of the structural barriers to establishment of a transformative developmental state was the overlapping of functions of the different spheres and the lack of opportunities for synergised planning of local government with national and provincial structures (Male Official, Cape Town: 13/06/2012; Male Ward Councillor, Delft: 06/09/2012; Female Ward Councillor, Delft: 06/09/2012; Male Official, Cape Town: 02/05/2013). Regarding the overlapping of functions, numerous members of Subcouncil 5

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2 During interviews, respondents frequently requested that their anonymity be protected, either due to the sensitivity of the topic or due to their position being threatened if it was known that they had made a particular statement. Thus, in accordance with these requests, certain statements are recorded by only providing the gender, place and date of the interview and indicating whether the respondent is an official, councillor or ward committee member.
reported duplication of efforts between the Western Cape Provincial Government and local government in the field of housing and lack of information regarding the different projects and resident waiting lists, whilst duplication of functions between national and local government in the field of health were reported as being extremely problematic in terms of the wastage of scarce resources and lack of knowledge of councillors as to the services being provided by the national health department. Councillors reported that the lack of consultation and knowledge of services offered by national and provincial government impacted on their responsibilities to residents within the sub-council area.

Lack of coordination and co-operation is furthermore, by all accounts, a serious problem at the intra-sphere level in the City. Lack of communication between the City of Cape Town’s line departments and the sub-council regarding service provision became a standard issue on the monthly sub-council agenda with councillors accusing line department officials of repeatedly failing to communicate progress and to provide documentation relating to the status of development plans to the sub-council so that they can provide feedback to ward committees and residents in the sub-council area (Sub-council Meeting, Delft: 19/06/2013). Other problems highlighted at sub-council meetings were the lack of understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of line departments. Councillors felt that poor intra-departmental coordination at the municipal level impacted on their ability to perform their duties within the sub-council and they believed that this lead to justifiable dissatisfaction and complaints on the part of the residents in areas which were affected by the lack of maintenance.

**Citizen Participation in Developmental Local Government**

The Integrated Development Plan, as indicated, is intended as the instrument through which the City is expected to fulfil its developmental state mandate and to that extent it represents an overarching development strategy for the metropolitan area. The City Manager, Achmat Ebrahim, explains that the IDP “represents an integrated approach to all the activities of local government in consultation with residents and stakeholders; its focus is on development in the broader sense (economy, infrastructure and people), and it is a structured plan that informs budget priorities, decision making and the allocation of resources” (IDP, 2012:7). A range of official documents and media reports assert that, in compliance with statutory requirements, there is a comprehensive system of public participation in place to support the formulation and implementation of the City’s IDP (City of Cape Town, 2012a, 2012b; IDP, 2011, 2012). In the Mayor’s Foreword to the current IDP, Alderman Patricia de Lille pronounces that ‘we are proud that this IDP has reached over one million people in an extensive public participation process. This is proof that the IDP is a plan that belongs to all the people of Cape Town; a plan in which they all have a say’ (IDP, 2012:6). Key to the success of this process is the extent to which citizens are engaged in the identification of their most pressing needs and the extent to which they are able to make meaningful input into the formulation of an IDP.
In order to assess the extent to which communities were engaged in the most recent integrated planning process, the residents of Delft were asked to comment on their knowledge of the IDP and the extent to which they had provided input into the formulation of the current plan. The vast majority of Delft respondents (98.9%) indicated that they had never heard of the City’s IDP whilst 99.5% reported that they had never been asked to give input to the preparation of an Integrated Development Plan. These figures not only correspond with patterns for the municipality as a whole, but they reveal that despite the City’s highly publicized participation strategy, the overwhelming majority of residents of Delft, and other historically disadvantaged areas, are effectively excluded from a processes which is intended to be the centre piece of participatory local governance.

Interviews with City officials, sub-council chairpersons and sub-council managers within the metropolitan area revealed that although public participation in the design of the IDP is prescribed by statute, this is not the case in practice and in reality the process is very much a top-down exercise where ordinary citizens have very little input. The data recorded above suggest that, despite the City’s attempts to engage with the public in the drawing up of an IDP, the systems and practices adopted are ineffective and generally benefit only those who are relatively well educated and who can provide a motivated, well-structured development proposal for their particular ward. Thus, although integrated development planning was introduced in South Africa as a method of fostering public participation (Harrison, 2006; Theron, 2005) and as a means to address the needs of all South Africans (Oranje et al, 2000), in the context of Delft this objective is clearly not being achieved.

In addition to eliciting public participation in the municipal planning processes, the City has established several structures to promote citizen participation in local decision making. These mechanisms include the aforementioned sub-councils and ward committees which present the institutionalised ‘participatory spaces’ mandated by legislation to facilitate the engagement of community members and community-based organisations in the formulation of the IDP and in other decision making processes. In the section which follows both the establishment and responsibilities of sub-councils and ward committees in the case study area will be discussed based on information provided by City officials and respondents in the case study area of Delft.

Sub-councils are tasked with overseeing all development within their respective sub-council areas and with carrying out functions designated by the City Council. These include responsibility for monitoring service delivery, supervising the spending of ward allocations.

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4 Local government councillors in South Africa are elected in a 50:50 split between proportional and ward constituency based-systems. Sub-councils are thus comprised of between ten and twelve councillors representing the wards within their jurisdiction together with additional councillors appointed through the proportional representation system.
encouraging residents to participate in decisions relating to the IDP and budget, and making recommendations to council with regard to the development needs and priorities of their areas (City of Cape Town, 2011).

While the public is invited to sub-council meetings, they are not permitted to participate in deliberations. If residents wish to bring a particular matter to the attention of sub-council, they first need to inform their sector organisation by forwarding a written statement explaining the problem. This is then tabled at the sector meeting and conveyed to the ward committee through the sector representative in his or her role as ward committee member. The ward councillor then decides how to proceed with the matter either by raising it at sub-council or attending to it through consultation with one of the relevant city council departments. Ward committees serve as the frontline structure through which the City gives effect to the idea of participatory governance and fulfils its obligations in terms of the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998b). The City has elected to use a system of sector representatives, rather than a geographically based system of representation. Ward committees are chaired by ward councillors elected by the residents during local government elections. Once elected, ward councillors are mandated to represent their constituency at sub-council meetings.

Discussions with councillors and attendance at ward committee meetings in the case study area reveal the procedure of communicating the needs of residents to council. This takes the form of a three tiered process, commencing at level one where residents communicate their concerns to ward committee members who represent their immediate community. At level two, members of the ward committee highlight the concerns and development priorities of their respective sectors at the ward committee meetings which are held every second month. The ward councillor, who is the ward committee chairperson, is then responsible for tabling these matters at the sub-council meeting at level three. Following a decision at sub-council, either the ward councillor or sub-council chairperson must forward the matter to council. Once a council decision has been made, the response is then relayed back to sub-council through the sub-council chairperson and is then communicated back to the ward committee through the ward councillor who serves on the sub-council. Ward committee members representing their sectors are informed of the decision at the ward meetings and then must relay decisions back to their organisations.

The weak functioning and effectiveness of the ward committee system was a recurring theme in discussions with officials and politicians on Delft and concerns raised included flawed selection procedures, the poor representation of community groups, the limited power of ward committees

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5 All organisations within the wards are divided into ten sectors. These sectors include civic-based organisations, faith-based organisations, safety and security organisations, environmental groups, early education, youth organisations, arts and culture, sport, the business community, and designated vulnerable groups that are active in the ward are elected as members of the ward committee. The chairpersons or representatives of the ten sector organisations are elected democratically and serve as members of the ward committee.
to influence decision making, and the lack of capacity of committee members to serve as the interface between sub-council and the community. It also became evident that this system leads to the capture of participatory processes by small local elites. Thus, according to one councillor:

In my ward, all the same people are members of the different sector organisations. All they do is change their names around and then they serve together on the ward committee. I have been working in this ward for 40 years – I know these people and we must take them to task. They are also the ones who are always protesting in the ward (Female Councillor, Bonteheuwel: 19/06/2013).

In the context of these concerns, some councillors viewed the ward committee system to be a superfluous and ineffective structure as expressed in the following comment:

It is my belief that there is not really a role for the ward committee. I know as ward councillor what the problems are in the ward. Perhaps when there is a diverse ward, then there is a role for a ward committee but, where you have a single community there is not really a role for a ward committee if the ward councillor is doing a proper job (Female Councillor, Delft: 20/09/2012).

Ward committee members were also frustrated about their role on the ward committee and lack of meaningful opportunity to highlight the needs of residents in their ward to subcouncil and to impact on decision-making. They also expressed the need for a much closer working relationship with their ward councillors. Calling for more frequent engagement with councillors than the bi-monthly ward committee meeting, one member stated:

I am finding my role as ward committee member quite challenging. I respect my councillor but I need more interaction with her – not only once every two months at the ward committee meeting. This is not just for myself, but for all our ward committee members. The morale is down because there is no interaction and we want to be more involved. It is important for us to work with the ward councillor and that she can reflect on our views and see that we want to work (Male Ward Committee Member, Delft: 17/07/2013).

A dynamic that was clearly evident during ward meetings and interviews with both councillors and committee members is the unequal power relations that exist between the sub-council and ward committees. As one councillor’s conceded:

The ward committee does not have much power – and its impact is very dependent on the ward councillor who might not represent all in the ward. Although there are some ward councillors who work very hard and really try to make a difference, others do just the absolute minimum (Female Councillor, Bonteheuwel: 20/09/2012).
This statement aside, on many occasions it was observed that some councillors exhibited a domineering attitude towards ward committee members. This was evident in the manner in which they assumed a dominant role in the selection of development initiatives and in general decision making in their wards. Some councillors would, in an authoritarian manner, frequently overrule suggestions made by committee members. This is reflective of the limited confidence which some councillors hold in the ability of ward committee members to play a meaningful role. This was evident in the disparaging remarks made about ward committee members at some sub-council meetings and the paternalistic manner in which they were sometimes addressed by councillors. Generally speaking, the evidence generated suggests that the current participatory approach used by most councillors in the case study area neither encourages participatory governance, nor is it representative of what Cornwall (2002, 2004) refers to as an ‘invited’ space for corroborative decision making between the state and civil society. This is partly attributed to a lack of understanding of the concept of participation, but it can also be ascribed to the inability and/or lack of capacity to use participatory methods to engage and deliberate with the community.

The participatory mechanisms designed to elicit community input, namely sub-councils and ward committees, are clearly inadequate structures for the promotion of citizen participation in Delft. As ward committees comprises representatives from sector organisations, it is only through membership of these organisations that ordinary citizens can become ward representatives. Furthermore, as the ward committee is the only formalised structure through which local residents can participate in and influence decision-making processes, the finding suggests that the development needs of most people are not being heard. The findings also suggest that the system of sector representation operating in the City of Cape Town (which differs from the system of geographic representation in place in many other local government areas across the country), is responsible for excluding a large number of residents who are not members of community organisations. In that respect, following Gaventa’s (2004) continuum of the way in which participatory spaces are established and in whose interests, the formally invited participatory spaces in Delft may be considered effectively ‘closed’ to those residents who are not affiliated to an organisation. It is thus unsurprising that the vision of a developmental state that is intended to deepen democracy and decrease inequality, poverty and unemployment is not being reflected in any significant way in the case study area.

**Developmental Local Government and the Means to Improved Welfare**

A key element of all developmental states has been their ability to promote sustained economic growth and, thereby, to improving the living standards of their citizens. Advocates for a democratic developmental state also aspire to this goal, albeit through more inclusive and democratic processes than those adopted in East Asia. The South African notion of
developmental local government, as intimated, is also intended to improve the socio-economic standing of communities through improved service delivery and the reduction of poverty. It is here, however, that the greatest shortcomings of the South Africa model become most apparent. Whilst the local state is charged with responsibility for the delivery of basic services (such water, electricity, sanitation, and, to a limited extent, housing) it has minimal capacity to influence the path of economic development either within its own boundaries or nationally. Although municipalities are expected to stimulate Local Economic Development (LED), this is largely an enabling function related to zoning and the creation of an environment attractive to potential investors. Major infrastructural developments, fiscal policy, and the regulation of terms of trade remain the responsibility of the central state. However limited a municipality’s capacity to stimulate economic growth might be, at the sub-council level such as pertains in Delft, its influence is largely meaningless. Although they are supposed to motivate for the needs of their communities in the City Council, the actual discretionary funding available to local councillors amounts to no more than $US 70 000 annually and this is typically assigned to minor public works. What this means in practice is that the elaborate system of citizen participation which has been established at the local level holds little prospect for addressing the most pressing problems facing the poor, namely unemployment and poverty.

Despite economic development being a core strategic focus area of the IDP, the City’s strategy is evidently failing as poverty and unemployment continue to rise in the disadvantaged areas of the Cape Flats and Delft. City officials agree that economic development is slow in disadvantaged areas and efforts to address transformation have been generally limited in its impact. Reasons put forward include an under-resourced department, lack of co-ordination and support between the three spheres of government, insufficient funding and pressure on services as a result of continuous rural-urban migration into the city. Moreover, lack of capacity and poor intra-departmental alignment of roles, responsibilities and functions are further cited as constraining factors to economic development. When questioned on their quality of life in Delft, more than half of the respondents reported that their living conditions were undesirable, citing lack of employment opportunities, limited access to public transport and high levels of drugs abuse as detrimental contributing factors. Conditions are far worse in the informal and temporary relocation sites where lack of sanitation, no access to household water within the household structures and the dumping of domestic waste in the open spaces between houses impact on the living conditions and health of residents. Education levels are low, alcoholism is widespread and the area suffers from some of the highest levels of crime and gang activity reported on the Cape Flats. Thus, in terms of the examination of Delft as a case study to assess the effectiveness of efforts to establish a developmental local government, and as part of the broader mission to construct a democratic development state, the picture of Delft which emerges is one of a dislocated and poor community living in a built environment which is far from optimal. It is thus unsurprising that, from the perspective of poor citizens, survey data reveals that the City is failing in its attempts to establish a developmental local government in terms of promoting
citizen participation, providing services of an acceptable standard, and building a more equitable society.

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine South Africa’s experiment in building a democratic developmental state and the role which was assigned to developmental local government in this process. Although the ruling party and government in South Africa have, for much of the past two decades, stated their intention to establish a developmental state in an array of official statements and policy documents (Presidency of South Africa, 2009, 2010; ANC, 2005; ANC, 2007a, ANC, 2007b; ANC, 2009), the approach to this project, as discussed, has been inconsistent although it has gained momentum and the idea of a developmental state now forms part of the way in which the state portrays itself. However, since it first entered official discourse the concept of a developmental state has never been clearly articulated in policy or in legislation and it is consequently understood in different ways in the public domain. Furthermore, in portraying itself as a developmental state South Africa differs from other states which have assumed this mantle only after they achieved a significant degree of economic success. In that respect a number of scholars have pointed out that the litmus test for a state aspiring to known for its developmental attributes is not the intensity of its rhetoric, but rather its visible development outcomes.

Whilst the government has been eager to build a developmental state which embraces a democratic ethos, this has been at odds with the idea of a strong central government which is able to steer a consistent economic development path with or without the direct participation of the masses. This weakness is most clearly illustrated in efforts to establish a system of developmental local government which is premised on extensive citizen participation in strategic planning processes and in policy formulation. The case study of Delft in Cape Town served to highlight a number of the shortcomings evident in the South African developmental state model. The first relates to the fact government has yet to formulate a clear vision of a democratic developmental state which is clearly understood and embraced by all three levels of government. This is aggravated by endemic weakness in the prevailing system of inter-governmental relations which has meant that national developmental state goals are not transmitted consistently to the local level or are not transmitted at all. This was evident in the limited extent to which the objectives of the National Development Plan were incorporated into the City of Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan. It was further evident in the fact that local councillors and municipal officials in Delft had never heard of the concept.

A further shortcoming related to the fact that public participation was seen to be a corner stone of developmental local government and yet the evidence from Delft revealed that the mechanisms in place to advance citizen engagement (ward committees and sub-councils) are both cumbersome and ineffective in eliciting the input of local residents. For most residents
participation in these structures was both disempowering and unproductive. More pointedly, their participation did little or nothing to improve their own welfare.

From this it may be inferred that whilst the idea of a democratic developmental state is conceivable the tensions between the need for a central state to steer a concerted course of economic action and to elicit citizen participation in this process cannot be under-estimated. Without the resolution of these tensions, the mere labelling of a state as ‘developmental and democratic’, as has been the case in South Africa, is unlikely to progress socio-economic development beyond political rhetoric.
References


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