



# Bua Komanisi!

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## Let's not monumentalise the National Development Plan



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# Let's not monumentalise the National Development Plan

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# Preface

This document is intended to open up constructive discussion and debate on the National Development Plan (NDP) - in the first place within SACP ranks. However, we are also releasing this document publicly in the hope that it will contribute to placing the discussion on the NDP onto a more constructive base. It is our view that the manner in which the NDP is being presented, by avid supporters and by die-hard opponents alike, risks exactly the opposite of what the NDP was intended to achieve. In particular, we are deeply concerned that the NDP is being turned into a divisive political football. The core theses advanced in this discussion document are exactly those that the Party has consistently articulated over the past year in regard to the NDP – namely, that the NDP is not carved in stone and that we must not allow those outside of

the Alliance to expropriate the NDP's basic vision for their own divisive and ideological objectives. These core theses are elaborated further in the document. However, this discussion document also aims to go well beyond the prevailing trends of simply embracing or rejecting the NDP. We have taken the NDP seriously, and we have engaged in a close reading of its diverse proposals. It should be appreciated, however, that it is impossible in a relatively brief discussion document to do justice to all of its 484-pages. Moreover, while a textual analysis (and therefore an actual READING) of the NDP is important – in this intervention we also seek to consider a wider context, including the institutional set-up and processes involved in the compilation of the plan.

## Introduction

In approaching the NDP we should not begin, as some have done, with the intention of simply approving or rejecting it. Most of those who line up in this way have probably not read the 484-page NDP document. On the other hand, while a close reading of the NDP document is important, it will not be helpful to start with a pick-and-choose textual reading to smoke out evidence for the NDP being either “the very embodiment of the Freedom Charter” (according to at least one senior ANC leader); or to hoist little DA blue flags on a few colonial outposts along the coastline of the NDP and then proclaim sovereign ownership of the entire terrain; or (the flip-side of the same thing) to self-dispossess by simply pronouncing the NDP to be the DA in drag (as NUMSA has done). Rather, to begin with, let's situate the NDP within our current conjuncture, and within the context of the challenges and possibilities confronting any attempt at developing a 20-year national developmental plan.

Our current conjuncture is considerably different globally from that which prevailed in the mid-1990s, and one would expect a national development plan to grasp the new challenges and possibilities of this changed reality and to reflect upon the lessons of the past decade. For instance,

while in the mid-1990s a neo-liberal triumphalism was all-pervasive, now the neo-liberal hegemony, if not de-throned, is at least considerably challenged globally. The persisting global economic crisis afflicting the dominant centres of capital, and the example of countries that never buckled to the Washington Consensus (China being the most obvious) are key issues to be considered. Even in China, however, the leadership of the CPC is now arguing for “a new growth path” to meet both the global challenges (slackening demand for Chinese manufactured goods in the recession hit developed economies) and domestic challenges (mounting inequality, environmental degradation, problems of corruption, a potential property market bubble, and growing social protests).

Locally, we are approaching 20 years of democracy, during which important gains have been achieved, particularly (but not only) on the front of embedding a non-racial constitutional democracy. However, these very gains are now threatened by our inability to make significant inroads into transforming the socio-economic legacy of the past – with persisting crisis levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

There is now a broad national consensus to the effect that there has been progress in post-apartheid SA, but that there is a persisting and deep-seated triple crisis. This is a potentially important basis upon which to develop a relatively unifying 2030 national vision. And, indeed, the NDP captures this consensus fairly well. That, in itself, is to be welcomed (after all governments and ruling parties are often liable to be in denial about these crises, conversely opposition forces are liable to argue that nothing has changed).

However, where there is NOT broad agreement is around what is to be done. Schematically put:

- For the ANC, its alliance, and the ANC-led government, there is a broad consensus that we need now to move into a second more radical phase of the national democratic revolution. Key pillars of this second more radical phase include placing our economy on to a new labour-absorbing growth path through, amongst other things, a multi-year, state-led infrastructure programme, linked to re-industrialisation of our economy, including greater beneficiation of our natural resources. Critical to sustaining this second phase is the consolidation of a developmental state and the mobilisation of popular forces, particularly the working class and poor.
- For the DA, the big business lobby, and most of the commercial media, the emphasis is not on transforming our century-old growth path, so much as accelerating growth ("growing the cake"). There is scepticism about a state-led industrial programme, and generally the view is that the economy is best left to the "market". Some allowance

is made for state intervention in cases of "market failure" – but there is obliviousness to the fact that many "market successes" are social and environmental disasters. Where the DA is in government itself, the emphasis is placed on "efficiency" (which is not unimportant) but the emphasis is not on systemic transformation. As far as social mobilisation is concerned, the DA in particular is seeking to mobilise "outsiders" (conceptualised as business, the suburbs, "minorities", and the alienated unemployed) against the "insiders" – the "twin evils" of Big Government and Big Labour.

Where does the NDP stand in regard to these two fundamentally divergent positions? In the name of building a national consensus, a shared national "road-map", the NDP fudges them. This fudging occurs across at least four inter-connected dimensions:

- The manner in which our challenges are **diagnosed;**
- The National Planning Commission's assumptions about (and approach to) building the broadest possible **national consensus** around a 2030 vision – in other words the **processes** that were followed in drawing up the "plan";
- The Planning Commission's **institutionalisation and composition;** and
- Its **specific recommendations.**

Let's consider each of these in turn.

## Diagnosing our challenges

COSATU has argued that the NPC's "diagnostic analysis" was not a diagnosis so much as a description of our well-known symptoms. (NUMSA, by the way, garbles this by arguing that the NDP has only "diagnosed symptoms" – but diagnosing symptoms in order to discover root causes is exactly what we SHOULD do). COSATU might be considerably correct, but there are, nonetheless,

diagnostic ASSUMPTIONS (if not always a thorough diagnosis) in the NDP, and these are made explicit on occasion. On page 25 of the NDP, referring to the planning commission's earlier (June 2011) *Diagnostic Report*, we are told: "It identified a **failure to implement policies** and an **absence of broad partnerships** as the main reasons for slow progress..."

## ***“Failure to implement policies”***

Implementation weaknesses may very well be a reason for the slowness in transforming SA. We all know of many examples in which sluggish implementation has been a major problem. But an over-emphasis on implementation starts to shut down the possibility of thinking critically about the policies themselves. Was the closing of teacher and nursing training colleges in the 1990s under the aegis of “right-sizing” the public sector a correct policy? And were these actions not partly responsible for the major challenges in the education and health sectors that the NDP is now seeking, correctly, to redress? Was the fragmentation of many national line departments, in accordance with neo-liberal “new public management” policy, not a factor in weakening the state’s implementation capacity, and the reason for the NDP now having to emphasise, again quite correctly, the need for building a “capable developmental state”? Were misguided policies aimed at privatising Metrorail or Eskom not responsible for the disastrous tardiness in recapitalising these entities? And what about housing policy? Three million low-cost houses were built, but mainly in the same distant peri-urban locations thus perpetuating apartheid spatial realities – a fact the NDP quite correctly alludes to (it calls for a “revised approach to human settlement” p.272) but without particularly engaging strongly with the mistaken policy and the paradigm that informed it. This list could be extended.

## **Broad partnerships? Lessons in building a broad-based hegemony**

If we are now seeking to embark on a radical second phase of the NDR, what was the first phase? It was essentially the negotiated settlement, paving the way for democratic elections that established not just SA’s first non-racial parliament, but also an elected Constituent Assembly that entrenched a radical constitution and the foundations of a democratic dispensation. Is there anything we can learn now from how the liberation movement successfully drove this earlier process by building broad “partnerships”? I think there are important lessons.

Cde OR Tambo was probably the key strategist. In the late 1980s he appreciated that for a variety

In short, the “lack of implementation” diagnosis shuts down the necessity of a rigorous, evidence-based assessment of our own post-1994 policies. Moreover, it fails to acknowledge that difficulties in implementation are often a sure sign of a poor policy (the reason why privatisation of Metrorail or Eskom never took off was not just because of opposition, but also very substantially because there was no private sector appetite for these socially critical but unprofitable utilities to begin with).

In the important chapter 13 (“Building a capable and developmental state”), the NDP correctly notes that *“There have been many individual initiatives [at civil service reform] but there is a tendency to jump from one quick fix or policy fad to the next”* (p.408) without effectively evaluating the successes or failures of successive policies. This is an absolutely pertinent observation. But in gliding over an evaluation of post-1994 policies and plans is the NDP not vulnerable to the same error, proposing this or that new policy fix without evaluating existing or previous policies?

Similarly, the diagnosis that, apart from “failure to implement policies”, the other major supposed reason for slow transformation was the “absence of broad partnerships” – fails to wonder whether it was, perhaps, anti-worker, anti-poor policies – or the authoritarian imposition of a policy (supposedly “written in stone”) like GEAR without effective consultation - that frustrated the forging of broad partnerships in the first place.

of positive and negative reasons a negotiations process was imminent in SA. He appreciated that it was imperative for the ANC to be the masters as much as possible of the process, rather than victims of it. In the first place, drawing lessons from the Zimbabwean Lancaster House settlement, he insisted that the substantive negotiations must happen on home soil, among our people, and not in a distant foreign capital. He then proceeded to use the metaphor of an “inverted pyramid” - as he called it. At the pointed base of the inverted pyramid should be the core of the ANC’s strategic approach to a negotiated settlement – namely one-person one-vote elections, with effective

preconditions for fair and free elections in place. Those elections should establish not just a new democratic parliament, but also a constituent assembly that would draw up a new constitution. This was the basic package at the strategic heart of the ANC's approach to negotiations, the pointed apex at the base from which to build upwards and outwards an inverted pyramid of broad support and hegemonic influence.

Having united ourselves as ANC, cde Tambo argued, we needed to win over generally the mass democratic movement at home to this strategic perspective. With the general backing of our mass forces at home, we then needed to win over the front-line states, the OAU, and the UN General Assembly. Remarkably, within a matter of months, under the brilliant leadership of cde Tambo, these objectives were broadly achieved, with the Harare Declaration being a critical moment in building African continental strategic consensus.

This was an outstanding example of how to build strategic hegemony - which then consolidated itself through the early 1990s:

- By uniting as much as possible the people's camp on a principled programme;
- By winning over the unreliable and wavering (winning over most of the Bantustan parties in the negotiations process, for instance);
- By transforming former enemy forces into considerably neutralised opponents on a constitutional democratic terrain of our own determining (the NP withered away in a matter of years after 1994, while white liberal anti-majoritarians, the fore-runners of today's DA, were forced out of their "qualified franchise for propertied blacks only" position on to the terrain of majority rule); and
- By isolating and then dealing decisively with a fragmented, anti-constitutional residue (the AWBs, the Derby-Lewis, the Boeremags, Inkatha warlords, etc).

This is what Mao described as uniting the people's camp, neutralising your opponents, and isolating your enemies.

There are at least two important points for the present to note about this approach to building strategic hegemony.

Note that at the apex of the inverted pyramid was a set of core ANC strategic principles. But the apex was not maximalist, it was not the entire 1969 Morogoro ANC strategy and tactics, or the Freedom Charter. Neither the front-line states nor the OAU were asked to adopt the Freedom Charter, clause by clause. For cde Tambo's ANC it was not a question of abandoning the Freedom Charter, but through negotiations, elections and a new democratic constitution to establish a major breakthrough on the long road to fully achieving our Charterist vision.

In contrast to this strategic approach to negotiations, by way of building an ever wider strategic hegemony, the PAC, for instance, was completely flat-footed. For example, early in 1990, Benny Alexander (aka Khoisan X), PAC secretary general, adopted a totally rejectionist position: *"there is no way negotiation can be regarded as a panacea for all our social malaise. Therefore it is bound to fail."* (*Indicator SA*, vol.7,no.3) Here politics becomes maximalist rhetoric, the pursuit of a "panacea", a forever-all-or-nothing sloganeering – a good excuse for doing nothing, and a sure guarantee of forever-never achieving anything.

There are family resemblances between this rejectionist, all-or-nothing position and contemporary rejectionist stands (notably by NUMSA) on the NDP, and we will touch on these in a moment. (However, to be fair, we need also to acknowledge that the current NDP and the ANC's earlier negotiations package are very different animals.)

Cde Tambo's negotiations strategy was a proactive response to the possibilities (but also threats) inherent in a new, emerging global balance of forces. With the Cold War coming to an end, anti-communist regional gendarmes (like apartheid SA) were no longer a strategic priority for imperialism. With the collapse of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, think-tanks in Washington began to herald a new global "third wave of democratisation". The royal road to democratisation was held to be through "elite pacts" – in which the "moderate" leadership from the two main antagonistic forces

were insulated from the “hawks” and from their respective mass bases, finding each other in a “centrist”, low intensity democracy agreement.

By decisively intervening on to the terrain of a negotiated transition to democracy, but with a clear ANC-led strategy that involved building massive hegemonic support, cde Tambo was avoiding the twin dangers of being utterly side-lined (like the PAC), or being sucked into an imperialist dominated elite-pacting exercise. This latter approach was being heavily advocated by our local liberals – Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, Alistair Sparks, and a younger Helen Zille, among them.

The negotiated transition, the 1994 democratic elections, and the 1996 Constitution marked a decisive series of related breakthroughs for the progressive camp in SA. At the time, the dominant imperialist discourse of a “third wave of democracy” was a challenge but also an opportunity to drive our own democratic agenda.

We are now in a different global conjuncture. Can we confidently say that the NDP has successfully

exploited the possibilities of the new situation (the partial dethroning of neo-liberalism and the related deep economic crisis in the heartlands of developed capitalism – coupled with our own domestic triple crisis)? Unlike cde Tambo’s skilful building of an inverted pyramid by starting from within and building upwards and outwards, the National Planning Commission, has tended to move in the opposite direction. Instead of building towards broad consensus by starting from a clear ideological and principled base, it has started with a fabricated, bland consensus that obscures radically different agendas and then sought to impose detailed recommendations from it. This has resulted, as it could only have resulted, in an extremely mixed and contradictory bag of tricks. Which is not to say that the outcome (the 484-page NDP) is all bad, or that it must simply be tossed away, but it does mean that the SACP, COSATU and the ANC are presented with a complicated challenge – What are we to make of the NDP? How do we ensure that we don’t play directly into hostile agendas and further divide ourselves?

## The National Planning Commission’s institutionalisation

All of the above problems are also directly related to the institutional establishment and character of the National Planning Commission (NPC). These challenges were touched upon, interestingly, by cde Trevor Manuel, Minister in the Presidency for the Planning Commission. Speaking to the journalist Ryland Fisher, cde Trevor noted that:

*“The commission [National Planning Commission] itself is an interesting construct. I’ll be bold enough to say that my initial thought was to have the commission structured more along the lines of the Indian Planning Commission which has about half a dozen ministers on it. It is chaired by the prime minister and often the president or the deputy president could chair it and I would do the spade work inside. I lost that battle, and it was not about wanting to be a prime minister. It was about wanting to follow a construct whose relationship to implementation would be understood.”* (“Maverick interview: Trevor Manuel” - Daily Maverick, 4 March 2013).

There are two critical and related points being made somewhat covertly here:

1. The South African planning commission is NOT a state planning commission of the kind that exists in many countries; and
2. This creates challenges for implementation – what is the connection between the state apparatus and its many existing plans and planning procedures, and a “plan” that has not emerged organically out of what are (or at least should be) the extensive planning capacities and/or responsibilities within the state (ranging from local IDPs, through provincial PGDS’s, to the New Growth Path, not to mention a host of sector specific plans, annual departmental Strategic Plans, etc.)?

Unlike the Indian Planning Commission (or for that matter pretty much all other planning units or their equivalents around the world), the South African planning commission does not have a strong organic link into government and its diverse

planning apparatuses and processes. Instead, we have a planning commission made up of part-time commissioners - academics, researchers, business-people and NGO personalities, chaired by a single senior minister and serviced by a secretariat (basically a core of former Treasury officials). This is not to impugn the calibre of the commissioners (or the minister), many of whom are experts in their respective fields. But the nature of the commission has inevitably impacted on the very uneven character of the NDP itself.

At the ANC's 2009 national policy conference (preceding the 2009 elections) there was debate around the best institutional option for developing a national planning capacity (which had been resolved upon at the 2007 Polokwane conference). Eventually something approximating to the current part-time, semi-external National Planning Commission was accepted. The reasons advanced for this choice were basically threefold:

- A semi-external NPC of outside experts, it was argued, would transcend the silo-tendencies within competing national line departments and ministries;
- The "plan" should be a society-wide plan and not just a government plan; and
- Related to the above, by drawing on academic experts and even non-ANC personalities, the resulting plan would hopefully be able to enjoy support from the widest range of South Africans – a "shared South African road-map".

All of these concerns are not without merit – but was it remotely realistic to expect a part-time, semi-external national planning commission, composed of 26 commissioners with disparate skills and ideological inclinations, to develop in 18 months a 484-page, relatively detailed 20-year "plan" that would also enjoy universal support from the "entire nation" and be purpose-fit for implementation?

Given its part-time character the NPC ran into a series of process challenges. It unwisely set itself a symbolic date (11/11/2011) for the "delivery" of the "product". Its work consisted of a series of sprawling two-day thematic consultative conferences involving anything up to two hundred invited

participants at a time, some research, and a quasi-democratic public consultation process using social media and other supposedly interactive means to canvas "public opinion" – a kind of "Tips for Trevor" exercise. With around 6-months to go before the launch date, the NPC realised it was nowhere near producing a coherent document and a number of consultants external to the relatively external NPC itself were hurriedly pulled in to draft chapters, under the supervision of the small NPC secretariat.

On the eve of the 11/11/11 launch the Cabinet was presented with a massive 430-page printed document, entitled "National Development Plan- Vision for 2030". Confusingly, sometime later, without a clear explanation, a longer 484-page document was published entitled "National Development Plan 2030 – Our future – make it work". Although the two texts are largely similar, there are differences. The differences include the respective Forewords signed by cde Trevor Manuel as Chairperson of the NPC. In the first Foreword cde Trevor writes:

*"The National Planning Commission is not a government department. It consists of 26 people appointed by the President to **advise** on issues impacting on long-term development. This gives the commission the license to be honest, bold, cut through the silos of government and take on board the views of all South Africans. **It also requires us to be humble, never pretending that we have a monopoly on wisdom.** This is a **proposed** development plan, **subject to public comment and criticism.**"*

This paragraph, underlining the ADVISORY nature of the NPC, the need for HUMILITY on its completeness, and its provisional status open to comment and criticism, has disappeared from the Foreword in the undated, second (and now seemingly official) version of the Plan.

How many South Africans, how many experts, how many leading politicians and political commentators (avid supporters and non-supporters alike) have actually read either the 430 or the 484 page document? Were there not better ways of addressing the three-fold challenges of overcoming government silos and building broad support noted above?

For instance, while the externalisation of the NDP process sought to overcome the tendencies toward silo-mentality within government, was it not based on the myth of the “neutrality of experts”? Do we not have better models, both internationally and locally, for ensuring more effective planning, strategic discipline and coordinated discipline across the state which can then be carried over into broader society? The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (although with a more limited scope – i.e. infrastructure planning and coordination) offers an interesting alternative model (to be elaborated upon briefly below).

But before doing that we should note a recent development (in late April) which once more highlighted the problematic nature of the relationship between the NPC and government. The NPC (it is not clear if it was a plenary sitting of the commission or something less) commissioned a study on SA’s nuclear energy plans as outlined in government’s IRP 2010 (Integrated Resource Plan). Without reverting back to the Department of Energy, or the appropriate ministerial cluster, still less cabinet – the NPC then splashed (across the front page of the *Business Day*) the results of this commissioned report which was essentially dismissive of the nuclear energy proposals in the IRP government plan. This completely blind-sided the DG for Energy the following day in a Portfolio Committee meeting in which her presentation noted the “general support in the NDP for government’s nuclear energy proposals”. In the following days the opposition parties were quick to jump onto this – “Your own National Planning Commission has rejected your approach”.

The NPC’s revised views on nuclear energy requirements and date-lines might well be more accurate than those of government’s IRP 2010 – but we cannot have a free-floating NPC, with an apparent presidential endorsement and using the budget of the presidency, playing a lone-ranger game. While we need to encourage public engagement, including critical engagement with our plans and policies, we cannot have a free-floating Presidential National Planning Commission effectively if unintentionally playing a factionalist game.

**The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC)**, for instance, is an interesting alternative example – although it is focused on infrastructure planning, and not planning in general, it offers a more organic model. Currently the PICC is chaired by the President (to ensure strategic cohesion and a presidential over-ride in cases of inter-departmental or inter-sphere rivalries) and its members include a number of relevant cabinet ministers, all nine premiers (and therefore cutting across narrow party political agendas), and SALGA. It is currently coordinating, under the framework of 18 strategic integrated projects, more than 600 major planned projects – many already underway, while others are in the feasibility stage. The PICC is not seeking to abrogate the planning processes underway in different spheres of government, or in different line departments, but its objective is to ensure the strategic integration of key infrastructure projects, to weed out vanity projects, and to establish a long-range national infrastructure pipe-line. A planned infrastructure pipe-line is critical – so that we do not have the kind of roller-coaster of multiple mega projects crammed into a short time-space (as with 2010 World Cup) only to be followed by a construction slump. This leaves us vulnerable to price manipulation and collusion. A longer-range, planned pipe-line for major projects also helps the planning process for skills availability and training, and for ensuring the availability of key material inputs (cement, wood, bitumen, steel, etc).

The PICC (like the NPC) is also premised on the understanding that while the construction-build programme has to be government driven, it requires the broadest mobilisation of South Africans and potential foreign investors. But this mobilisational buy-in is not based on the objective of getting the “entire nation” and potential foreign investors to sign off on a 484-page “vision/plan”, or on every one of the 600-plus infrastructure projects. Above all, it doesn’t start with seeking broad, feel-good, buy-in, but rather by unapologetically driving (as the democratically elected government) an infrastructure programme by using the full weight of the state apparatus. It is on this firm basis, with a relatively unified progressive strategic agenda that engagement (and it is overwhelmingly positive engagement) takes place with the private sector, for instance.

Unfortunately, the NDP precedes in the opposite direction – starting with a fudged “win-win”

ideological “consensus” that in fact conceals two contrasting paradigms.

## Two contrasting paradigms

What are these two contradictory “paradigms” at play within the NDP? In many ways this takes us back to an old debate within the Alliance that occurred between 1993 and 1996 in the context of the ANC’s first major electoral platform – the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP – 1994). The debate concerned the relationship between economic growth and transformational development.

The RDP was essentially premised upon a paradigm that, given the immediate impending post-apartheid challenges, a progressive economic growth path would have to be based on a developmental/transformational agenda. In other words, simply unleashing a return to growth would continue to lock SA into the prevailing century-old problematic growth trajectory that would reproduce (and possibly aggravate) the systemic legacy challenges of racialised inequality, poverty, chronic unemployment, unsustainable environmental degradation, and patterns of extreme spatial development and under-development. This broad RDP paradigm styled itself as **growth THROUGH development**. (It was sometimes, mistakenly, reduced to a more narrowly Keynesian “growth through redistribution” perspective, which – as we will see – opened it up to a neo-liberal counter-offensive).

The RDP document neatly captured its core approach to growth and development in the following way:

*“Growth...is commonly seen as the priority that must precede development. Development is portrayed as a marginal effort of redistribution to areas of urban and rural poverty. In this view, development is a deduction from growth. **The RDP breaks decisively with this approach. If growth is defined as an increase in output, then it is of course a basic goal. However, where that growth occurs, how sustainable it is, how it is distributed, the degree to which it contributes to long-term productive capacity, and human resource development, and what***

***impact it has on the environment, are the crucial questions when considering reconstruction and development. The RDP integrates growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution into a unified programme.”*** (p.6)

Unfortunately, in the debates that happened in the mid-1990s an alternative paradigm (supported by a massive corporate and media campaign) gained ascendancy within the ANC and ANC-led government. It paid lip-service to the RDP, but shifted the RDP’s core objectives into “redistributive”, top-down, delivery targets – for instance 3-million low cost houses. Having gutted the core foundation principle of the RDP, this alternative paradigm then boldly stated – “We agree with your ‘delivery’ targets, but how can you ‘redistribute’ without first growing the cake?” From there it was a quick step to moving from “growth through transformational development” to – **FIRST growth (any kind of growth)...and THEN ‘development’**.

The victory of the GEAR-policy package (largely borrowed from the apartheid regime’s earlier Normative Economic Model) marked the hegemony of an essentially neo-liberal vision. It is a paradigm which succeeded for a time in promoting economic growth, but failed to transform (and in many cases exacerbated) the systemic legacy of the past (jobless growth, poverty, inequality, etc.)

In essence, the unevenness at play within the NDP relates to a fudging of these two very different “visions” or paradigms. Although much of what is recommended in the NDP does mark a shift away from the 1996 neo-liberal package, because the shift is never acknowledged and digested in a clear-cut way, there is constant back-sliding into the old paradigm.

For instance, on p.416 of the NDP we are told:

*“Only by reducing poverty and inequality through broadening opportunity can the country achieve real unity. The country has much more to gain if a win-lose debate shifts to a win-win debate, focusing*

***simultaneously on growing the cake and redistributing it.”***

As NUMSA has correctly argued, there is no difference between this statement of principle (with the possible exception of the word “simultaneously”) and the DA’s view “*if we are to open up opportunities for all and create a prosperous, inclusive society, the pie needs to get bigger so there is more to share.*”

What’s wrong with these seemingly self-evident truths? The assumption is that there is nothing systemically problematic about the semi-colonial growth path into which we remain locked. Simply grow more, let the richer become richer, and there will be more goodies to charitably redistribute (or trickle-down). But the problem is that the growth path is actively reproducing the crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality, spatial distortions and irreversible environmental damage.

The big question is, of course, has this retrograde paradigm entirely overtaken an alternative progressive paradigm within the NDP? The answer, we believe, is NO. There are many important and positive recommendations and perspectives developed within the NDP (some of which we will flag later). However, the influence of the ghost of the old neo-liberal model is most obvious (as we might expect) in Chapter 3 “Economy and employment”. This chapter is the main target of COSATU’s draft critique of the NDP – a critique which is fundamentally well-founded.

In summary, COSATU notes that:

- On jobs, the NDP envisages creating mostly low-quality, precarious jobs outside the core productive sectors – relying mainly on SMMEs and service sector jobs. COSATU further notes that SMMEs (in contrast to large enterprises) have actually shown net job losses over the past period in SA. This, according to COSATU, makes the NDP’s expectation of 9,9 million new jobs highly unrealistic.
- On worker rights – and related to the above – the NDP will erode worker rights through its emphasis on job creation in low-skill, low-paid work in the SMME and service sectors,

and through proposed legislative measures to make dismissals easier.

- At the heart of these problems is the fact that the NDP is extremely weak on the critical dimension of placing the economy onto a new growth path – namely through re-industrialisation. The NDP envisages a shrinkage of the manufacturing sector from 12% of GDP in 2010 to 9,6% in 2030. Of the 11 million new jobs envisaged in the NDP, nearly two-thirds will come from services, domestic work and the informal sector.

These criticisms are entirely apposite. As the SACPC, and in line with government’s IPAP programme, we should nuance COSATU’s concerns around SMMEs and the service sector by adding that the quality and sustainability of job-creation in these sectors is critically dependent on whether they are actively linked into a growing industrial sector (as in China, for instance). On the other hand, where the SMME and service sectors are largely dependent on footloose financial capital (as in Cyprus), or marginalised into township informality – they will tend to be vulnerable and low-paid. The majority of jobs in SA over the coming decades may well come from the SMME and service sector – but, if they are to involve decent work and be sustainable, then they need to be symbiotically linked into industrialisation, including agro-industry.

Apart from the weaknesses in the NDP’s job creation approach, COSATU’s draft analysis of the NDP further (and correctly) points out that in regard to the other two big challenges of our society (inequality and poverty), the NDP is exceedingly unambitious.

- Although the NDP pays lip service to addressing inequality, its GINI co-efficient target for 2030 is unacceptably modest. It aims to reduce the GINI co-efficient from its 2009 figure of 0,70 to 0,60 by 2030. That would leave SA still as one of the most unequal societies in the world! (In fact, illustrating just how unambitious this NDP target is - by 2010/11, in less than two years, we had already got half-way to the NDP’s 20-year, long-term GINI target! By 2010/11 the Gini coefficient was at 0,65.)

- The plan uses a very low poverty measure of R418 per person (in 2009 prices). It argues that in 2009 39% of South Africans fell below this level and that by 2030 nobody will be below that level. Based on the NDP poverty level, the household monthly subsistence

level would be around R2000-R2900 (in 2009 prices). However, the household subsistence and supplemented living levels are actually higher – the minimum income for a family of five to afford basic necessities was around R3 500 per month in 2009.

## So how should we position ourselves on the NDP given all of these weaknesses?

### **Total rejection?**

On the 20th March the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (NUMSA) issued an extensive statement on the National Development Plan (NDP). Addressed to “the entire South African working class and its allies”, the statement was published on-line and also over two days in three full-page adverts in the Business Day. The NUMSA statement calls upon the South African working class and its allies *“to join us in rejecting the plan – the NDP... because it is not rooted in any efforts to root out the historic cause of our development [presumably “our under-development”?]...colonialism of a special type.”* The ideological premise upon which NUMSA bases its rejection of the NDP is that *“the struggle to end national, gender and class oppression and exploitation is the essence of our National Democratic Revolution”*. While as communists we will agree with these ultimate objectives, ending class exploitation (that is, the abolition of capitalism) is not “an essence” of the NDR, nor is it an objective of the Freedom Charter.

From this maximalist position, however, NUMSA then declares that *“anything short of this is a continuation of the same centuries old system of national, gender and class oppression and exploitation by other means!”* We are back with all-or-nothing – anything short of the abolition of

capitalism is to be rejected.

In arguing for a blanket rejection of the NDP, the NUMSA intervention seeks to equate DA policy positions, the 1996 GEAR macro-economic policy, and the NDP. It then contrasts this allegedly monolithic policy package (DA=GEAR=NDP) with COSATU resolutions. There are many problems with this approach – its all-or-nothing rhetoric, its readiness to accept the DA’s own claim that the plan has adopted “the DA’s vocabulary throughout” as proof, and the fact that NUMSA doesn’t look at other key policies and their relationship to the NDP (or COSATU policies). For instance, what about government’s New Growth Path, its Industrial Policy Action Plan, or the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission’s 18 Strategic Integrated Projects? What about the ANC’s policy resolutions from its 53<sup>rd</sup> National Conference on economic transformation? What about the recent Youth Employment Accord? We are not suggesting that NUMSA should swallow whole, without critical reservation, any of these latter policies, resolutions or accords - but isn’t the art of politics about neutralising one’s opponents and maximising the progressive camp on the basis of a principled programme? NUMSA’s blanket rejection of the NDP and the manner of its rejection risk achieving exactly the opposite outcome.

### **NDP = DA?**

Ironically, both NUMSA and the DA (but for different reasons, of course) claim that the NDP is essentially DA policy. We shouldn’t be surprised that the DA would make such a claim. It is part and parcel of its whole re-branding exercise in which it is also seeking to appropriate the ANC-led alliance’s liberation legacy, positioning itself as

the “authentic” heir and custodian of this tradition, in contrast to the current Alliance leadership which has supposedly betrayed this legacy. This DA fairy-tale can only be sustained, of course, through a very selective remembering and distortion of the recent past. But what about the attempt to claim ownership of the NDP?

We can understand why the DA would want to position itself in this way. But why would NUMSA want to do exactly the same thing? A simple NDP = DA equation grossly exaggerates the consistency and coherence of the NDP (a key thesis of this intervention)...but it also exaggerates the internal coherence and unity of the DA and its policies. To take a current example – as we all know, one of the key snippets from within the NDP that the DA has held up in triumph is the recommendation of a youth wage subsidy. With the recent signing of the national Youth Employment Accord, the DA has come out angrily rejecting the Accord for failing to endorse a youth wage subsidy. Yet one of the signatories to the Accord was the DA Youth! Instead of unifying the DA and dividing the progressive camp, shouldn't NUMSA spend more time probing into these kinds of class contradictions inside of the DA?

But what are we to make of the DA's own copy-right claims on the NDP? Some important policy positions in the DA's own policy package have been selectively borrowed and re-cycled from our own progressive policies – an indication of the ANC and its alliance's broad democratic hegemony within society. Other DA copy-right claims on the NDP are grounded in problematic tendencies within the NDP itself (some of which NUMSA has correctly highlighted). But vast stretches of the NDP (which the DA always fails to quote) are located in a fundamentally different perspective.

To take two examples – **state-owned enterprises** (SOEs) and **human settlements and integrated urban development**.

On **State Owned Enterprises** this is what the DA's "Plan for Growth and Jobs" has to say:

*"The most significant weakness of the [SOE] state capitalist model...is that it fundamentally undermines liberty. By turning companies into organs of government, the model simultaneously concentrates power and corrupts it. Whereas in a liberal economy, privately-owned entities act as a check and balance on the power of the state, state capitalism instead channels all power to the centre."*

Without going into a long critique here – note how, in this DA fable, "privately-owned" entities are presented

as if they were all family-owned corner shops and not also massive transnational oligopolies that not only "check and balance" but also literally usurp the powers of democratically elected governments, where "liberty" (for the rich and powerful) dethrones democracy. Note also how the assumption is that centralised state power is inherently corrupt, while monopoly capital is angelic.

Contrast this DA statement of principle with what the NDP has to say on State Owned Enterprises:

*"SOE's are central to advancing national objectives through providing economic and social infrastructure...To live up to these expectations, SOEs will require clear public-interest mandates, which are consistently enforced."* (NDP, p.438)

The NDP then goes on to make a number of extremely useful recommendations on how to strengthen the SOE sector in SA. Here we are worlds apart from DA policy.

The gulf between the NDP and DA is even wider when it comes to **human settlements and integrated urban development**. As far as we can tell, in its national policy positions the DA has nothing to say about overcoming the terrible racialised legacy of our urban and rural settlement patterns and the continued reproduction of poverty and inequality as a result of the spatial and racialised displacement of the working class and poor. On the DA web-site under "Our policies" this is what we are told about "Housing":

*"Providing adequate shelter is first and foremost an individual responsibility..."* (In effect, it is saying that fundamentally individuals have to sink or swim on the terrain of a terribly skewed housing market - so much for basic human solidarity).

Under "Public Transport" there are complaints about congestion and promises to improve public transport – but not a word is said about the core challenge for public transport in SA – namely the majority of public transport users in SA are located at great distance from places of work and amenities, but also they are overwhelmingly poor. Safe, reliable and affordable public transport cannot be achieved without a premium being placed on mixed-income, mixed-use urban development that challenges the freeway, 4X4, shopping mall, suburban priorities

of the DA's core electoral constituency. By contrast chapter 8 of the NDP deals eloquently and effectively with these challenges.

## **Blanket acceptance?**

We must be careful of not countering NUMSA, for instance, with an equally blanket rejection of the relevant points that their critique of the NDP raises. It is important to take policy documents seriously and in its relatively detailed engagement with the NDP, NUMSA has sought to do just that (at least in regard to the economic chapters in the NDP). This is in welcome contrast to the anti-intellectual tendencies that often proliferate within our country, leading to the taking up of policy positions based on personalised, factional or narrow electoral calculations that have absolutely nothing to do with genuine policy debate and differences. There are zealous defenders of the NDP, for instance, amongst many in the political commentariat and also in the DA - whose only familiarity with the plan appears to be a few selected phrases and perhaps a half-dozen, motherhood and apple-pie, power-point slides, at best. In many other cases, "support for the NDP" is a barely disguised attempt to play one ANC minister against another.

The NUMSA statement can, in part, be read as a response to the kind of position adopted by some leading ANC comrades who have accused NUMSA of "sticking out like a sore thumb, against the grain of the ENTIRE nation." While it is correct to challenge NUMSA's blanket rejection of the NDP, it doesn't help to wildly over-state claims (as some ANC leaders have) on the NDP's behalf - that it has been, to quote these sources, "embraced by the ENTIRETY of society", or that it has "crystallised ALL ANC policy directives..." (Even the word "directives" has an unfortunate authoritarian ring to it).

Nor is it helpful when comrades accuse NUMSA of a "poor attempt to create further uncertainty in the local and international investor markets". Unfortunately in our current reality "investor market sentiment" can't be entirely ignored. (Of course, we are not dealing with a single "market sentiment" - the interests of the dominant global financial sector, for instance, are not the same as those of the local manufacturing sector.) Either way, we should never

But if we should reject blanket rejectionism of the NDP, or a simplistic equation (NDP=DA), should we then instead go for blanket acceptance?

allow ourselves to use "market sentiment(s)" as a stick to bully one another into line, or to suppress comradely debate. Even more problematic is the fact that the appeal to "investor markets" lays us open to the allegation that this is what the NDP is REALLY about - pleasing investors.

Both the blanket rejecters and the blanket supporters tend to place the NDP onto a plinth. The NDP is turned into something carved in stone, either to be admired in awe "by the entirety of society", or pulled down like Saddam Hussein's gigantic likeness in central Baghdad.

## **What did the ANC's 53<sup>rd</sup> Mangaung National Conference have to say about the NDP?**

Contrary to the monumentalising tendencies to be found amongst both zealous supporters and equally zealous opponents of the NDP, the ANC's 53<sup>rd</sup> Mangaung National Conference resolutions actually present quite diverse perspectives on the NDP - ranging from full support and a call for its implementation; through resolutions that see it as a broad vision, or useful basis for a still far from complete planning process; to concerns that that the NDP and government plans are not sufficiently and mutually aligned; to critiques of serious gaps in the NDP; down to a polite but radical rejection of at least one sectoral chapter.

For the disbelieving here is a quick inventory of virtually all references to the NDP in the ANC Conference resolutions:

### **More or less unqualified support...**

*"We must work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the 2030 National Development Plan as a long term vision..."*  
**(Resolution on Social Development)**

*"The National Development Plan...enjoys overwhelming support among the various sectors and communities in our country... The National*

Development Plan **broadly resonates and is compatible** with the Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025. The Health related identified challenges as well as the recommended objectives, targets and actions correlate with those identified by the ANC and Government in amongst others the ten point plan and the NSDA. Therefore resolves that: Conference supports the implementation of the NDP and endorses its objectives and goals. Conference enjoins government departments to note any gaps that might have been identified by the NDP for purposes of policy and planning..." (**Resolution on Health and Education**)

Although this last resolution is listed under "unqualified support", the high-lighted "broadly resonates and is compatible with" clause suggests a degree of tension between the NDP's basic education recommendations and government policy.

**To a more nuanced... it's a useful basis, a broad vision within which ongoing planning and consultation must still occur**

"We embraced Vision 2030 and the National Development Plan as a platform for united action by all South Africans...Having considered the National Development Plan [we] agreed that it forms an important **basis for the development of a long term plan** to build a national democratic society that is non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, united and prosperous and seeks to advance the National Democratic Revolution (NDR)." (**Conference Declaration**)

"The ANC must take the lead in mobilising and uniting all South Africans around a common vision of economic transformation that puts South Africa first. The National Development Plan is **a living and dynamic document** and articulates **a vision** which is **broadly in line** with our objective to create a national democratic society, and should be used as a common basis for this mobilisation. The ANC will **continue to engage with the plan**, conscious of the need to unite South Africans in action around a common vision and programme of change." (**Resolution on Economic Transformation**)

The formulations in this paragraph from the Economic Transformation Resolution emerged out of considerable debate. To be particularly noted are:

- The repeated use of the word "vision" to describe the NDP – it is viewed essentially as a broad vision rather than a plan of action;
- It is seen as "a living and dynamic document" – it is NOT written in stone. It is, precisely, not a monument;
- It is said to be "broadly in line with our objective to create a national democratic society". "Broadly" is not quite the same thing as asserting that it has "crystallised ALL ANC policy directives..."; and
- The resolution commits the ANC to "continue to engage with the plan" – that is, it resolves on a process of debate and dialogue with the recommendations in the NDP.

Perhaps even more importantly, the ANC's economic transformation resolution goes on to affirm its continued support for government's key economic plans:

"Within the NDP vision, critical instruments and policy initiatives will continue to drive government's medium-term policy agenda. These include: The **national infrastructure plan**, which is an opportunity to change the structure of the economy, apartheid spatial distortions, support beneficiation and industrialisation and contribute to facilitating intra-African trade. As a flag-ship programme of the state, all departments and spheres of government must join in taking forward this programme. **The New Growth Path** is the economic strategy designed to shift the trajectory of economic development, including through identified drivers of job creation. **The industrial policy action plan**, which guides the reindustrialisation of the South African economy."

**To the somewhat more critical.... there isn't sufficient mutual alignment between different plans**

"There should be greater integration of planning across the spheres and public entities, with alignment

between the NDP, PGDS (Provincial Growth and Development Strategies) and IDPs... Given the importance of the NDP and NGP, LED (Local Economic Development) should be strengthened." **(Legislatures and governance resolution)**

(Note in this resolution it is not a question of everything else having to be aligned with the NDP – but rather mutual alignment)

### **Through to...a more or less polite rejection of at least one chapter**

*"the NDP was adopted without the benefit of drawing from a White Paper on International Relations, which led to a limited perspective on international relations. The ANC, therefore, resolves that:*

*a. NDP's content on international relations [be] strengthened. b. The ANC's foreign policy objectives,*

*particularly on the renewal of Africa, should be reflected in the NDP...c. More emphasis be placed*

## **So what's good about the NDP?**

So far we have largely critiqued the NDP for its diagnostic weaknesses, the institutionalisation and manner of working of the NPC, and the fudging of key ideological debates (at a time when, nationally and internationally, the conjuncture is much more favourable for - but also more desperately demanding of - advancing a bolder, progressive agenda).

But is there anything positive about or within the NDP? Space does not permit an elaborate engagement with core positive features that can and must be built upon. Schematically, the following are some critical areas:

### **Long-range planning to achieve strategic discipline across the state and state entities**

In the first place, we need to acknowledge that the setting up of an NPC was a partial victory for the SACP (and progressive forces). Developing a long-range planning capacity within the state was something that the SACP had argued for consistently over many years, and the 2007 ANC Polokwane resolution was very much motivated by the SACP.

*on the need to change the political economy of Africa that still reflects the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonisation, particularly with respect to mineral and natural resources of Africa." **(Resolution on International Relations)***

Clearly, and contrary to an impression created by the media (and fallen into by some leading ANC comrades), the ANC's Mangaung Conference did not produce a unanimous and resounding endorsement of the NDP in all its detail. While one or two commissions might have called on government to march forward to the drum-beat of the NDP's implementation ambitions, other commissions and the Declaration of Conference itself were more nuanced, at the very least.

These differences in emphasis from the ANC Conference do not so much reflect divisions within the ANC (these exist no doubt) but rather the different merits and demerits of different sectoral chapters and different proposals within an often internally contradictory NDP itself.

Perhaps that was part of the problem – it was assumed in some quarters that because it was the Party advocating a state planning commission that we had in mind old-style, Soviet-era Gosplans "central planning" (still invoked by NUMSA, by the way). Perhaps this is why a non-state planning commission was opted for? Let's recall that Gosplans essentially sought to entirely replace the market-mechanism – including labour-market wage bargaining. The endeavour was to reduce virtually everything to a bureaucratically determined 5-year plan – from the bureaucratic setting of wage rates (which of course then rendered the trade union movement relatively toothless) to the numbers of shoes to be produced (including colours, sizes and styles). We can debate the merits and (many) demerits of this approach to planning in a situation in which the CAPITALIST market had at least been abolished. Clearly this kind of planning is neither desirable nor remotely feasible in our South African reality (although the rolling back of CAPITALIST markets and of CAPITALIST market power IS). The SACP has not been advocating for this kind of bureaucratized, top-down, micro-managed planning for SA.

Whatever the many shortcomings – the NPC and its NDP have at least put onto the map the imperative of NATIONAL LONG-RANGE PLANNING. We have learned lessons from this experience and need to build upon them (as we will suggest below).

### ***The centrality of a capable, developmental state***

The NDP generally takes forward the consolidation of an emerging Alliance consensus dating back to the early 2000s that has progressively rolled back the privatisation agenda embedded within GEAR. The NDP clearly (if not always with complete consistency) underlines the leading role of the state in driving transformation. The NDP, quite correctly, also advances a democratic (and not authoritarian) version of the developmental state we are seeking to build.

Chapter 13 on “Building a capable and developmental state” contains many important and progressive proposals – particularly on transforming the public service to be “immersed in the developmental agenda” while being protected from narrow, factionalist political interference. It also makes important proposals on professionalising the public service and on the governance structures of SOEs.

There are many other fundamentally positive areas of the NDP – all of which require further engagement and elaboration. Some of these fundamentally positive features include:

- Its support of the NHI (although what kind of NHI it is supporting requires further interrogation)
- The argument for the demilitarisation of the police
- Its support for the infrastructure build programme of the PICC (although its emphasis is somewhat more towards lowering the cost to doing business and somewhat less on transformative infrastructural interventions)
- The excellent chapter 8 on transforming human settlements – which is considerably in advance of current collective government thinking and ANC resolutions; and
- The important chapter 14 on “Promoting Accountability and Fighting Corruption” – which is much more detailed and decisive than, for instance, the rather weak ANC Mangaung Conference resolution on fighting corruption.

None of the above positives should simply be rubber-stamped for approval without much more detailed constructive but critical engagement. There are numerous other areas of the NDP that are also a useful basis for ongoing engagement.

## **Basic proposals for a way forward**

- The NDP is rapidly becoming a political football being used opportunistically by some elements within COSATU and by the DA and other opposition parties. Some in COSATU are seeking to use their total rejection of the NDP as a diversionary tactic in their internal federation battles, and in an attempt to drive wedges within COSATU and between COSATU and its Alliance partners and government. The DA, on the other hand, ironically is also trying to drive a wedge between COSATU and the ANC-led government, and between “NDP-supporting” government ministers and the left in government. ***The SACP in this conjuncture has a critical role to play by refusing to monumentalise the NDP – by refusing***

### ***either to demonise or canonise it.***

- Instead, we must present the NDP as a broad vision open to necessary criticism and engagement. It is NOT really a PLAN, still less a fit-for-implementation plan. On the economic front (and in line with the ANC’s economic transformation resolution from the Mangaung conference) we must insist that the plans for implementation are critically (but not exclusively) the NGP, IPAP2, and the PICC’s infrastructure build programme. None of these plans/programmes are, of course, above criticism, and all require continuous re-iteration in the light of ongoing practice.

- We cannot be satisfied with a simple textual engagement with the NDP and a textual comparison with other policies and programmes – ***we must also aggressively foreground the institutional lessons to be learned from the NPC experience.*** The NPC should now be dissolved (having produced a 2030 vision) – ***and with the***

***incoming 2014 administration a new, more organic State Planning capacity should be established.*** Lessons can be learnt in this regard from international experience, and also from the still emergent structure, composition and work of, for instance, the PICC.



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