Introduction

Prefix as policy: megaprojects as South Africa's big idea for human settlements

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Abstract

This article introduces a special issue that responds to a new housing policy direction announced for South Africa in 2014. According to this policy, the state would move away from smaller housing projects towards much larger projects of 15,000 units or more. Some versions of this policy, particularly those articulated by Gauteng Province, set out an intention to build new self-contained cities. Articles in this collection aim to unravel the nature and status of the policy; understand the way in which it was produced; examine which kinds of projects might be included in government's project lists and which excluded; explain why champions of this policy think it is a good idea and how they think it would work; review the concerns of critics; locate this policy in broader historical and geographical contexts; and reflect on alternative ways of thinking about urban change. This introductory article argues that while there have been many debates about the long-term implications of the shift from smaller to large settlement developments, the decision to adopt this approach is not only made with respect to long term considerations but also with respect to short term political imperatives. To the extent that some of these projects will exacerbate urban sprawl, as critics fear, the state might be described as a 'satisficing developer' which opts to pursue a less than optimal kind of development on the urban periphery because it nevertheless provides some gains.[1]

Introduction

> The minister said that, after reviewing housing delivery from 2005 to 2009 and 2009 to 2014, she has come to the conclusion that the department needs to change its approach. 'We need to move from small projects of 200 houses to mega projects of integrated housing mix to cater for different incomes and needs.' (Lindiwe Sisulu, minister of Human Settlements, quoted in Petterson 2014)

> We commit to deliver the 50 000 housing units during the current financial year and victory in the establishment of Mega Cities in this great province is most certainly within sight. Furthermore, as we move steadfastly into the year 2016 and beyond, the Department of Human Settlements will provide a clear indication to the people of Gauteng that indeed, 'A promise made, is a promise kept'. Remember to vote the ANC come the 03 August! (Paul Mashatile, member of the Gauteng Executive Committee for the Departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements, Mashatile 2016a)

When attempting to account for disappointing progress in post-apartheid South Africa, commentators sometimes argue that the country has excellent policy but poor implementation (cf Motala 2009). This argument is used by critics of government who say that it is beset by a 'lack of political will on the part of all spheres of government…, bureaucratic indifference or incompetence, corruption and mismanagement' (Andrews 2017). Politicians themselves might invoke a different version of this formulation rooted in policy making fatigue and a desire to cajole their departments to get on with the job at hand.

While enduring inequality and injustice in South Africa's cities deep into the democratic era are – without doubt – untenable, the intransigence of social problems cannot be attributed straightforwardly to the absence of commitment within government. Indeed politicians are all too aware of the commitments they have made and are motivated by a 'will to improve' (see Li 2007: 1). But, good outcomes do not necessarily follow from good intentions. Of cities in the United States, Jane Jacobs wryly observed that '[d]espite some corruption, and considerable greed…, the intentions going into the messes we make are, on the whole, exemplary' (1961: 8).

To make this point another way, social progress is not simply determined by whether or not there are well-intentioned leaders engineering transformations, since the best laid plans are re-written many times over by the dynamics of complex social, political and economic systems (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Ortner 2006). This is not to say that the steps taken by leaders today do not have important – and beneficial – consequences for the future. However, the relationship between intentions and outcomes is not straightforward. Even where urban implementation is successful on its own terms, it has produced urban spaces which sometimes exacerbate the difficulties faced by poor people. This is not merely the effect of weak implementation but sometimes a result of policy itself, for

example where target chasing causes the peripheral location of housing (Pillay et al 2006). Much has also been written about the ways in which authorities with strong visions for the future have gone to war with the poor when they don't fit the authorities' plans, not least when ordinary people create informal livelihoods and shelter for themselves (eg Huchzermeyer 2011).

The operative dynamic, then, might not be that the government lacks the will to fix problems, but precisely that government's drive to fix problems is, in the first instance, caused by a desire to demonstrate its will. By leaping into action to prove its commitment, government suspends the possibility that its plans may generate complications, and may not articulate very well with the lives of those who will use these spaces. It also does not give due consideration to other approaches to bringing about socially just outcomes.

The collection of articles in this special issue tackle a significant policy shift in approaches to public housing provision. Far from confirming the existence of good policy and poor political commitment, this shift was entirely based on the forthright commitment of key political leaders and a policy that was little more than a prefix ('mega') when it was announced, followed up by a concept document by the time it was implemented a few months later. The shift in question was announced first in 2014 by the minister of Human Settlements who declared that, from then on, all housing projects would consist of a minimum of 15,000 units and be called 'mega projects' or 'catalytic projects' (Sisulu 2014). The minister said that 50 such projects would be identified and that construction would result in the delivery of 1.5 million houses by 2019, thereby making a substantial reduction in the 2.3 million unit backlog (Merten 2014).

Large housing projects were not without precedent. By the time of these announcements, lead projects of the 2004 Breaking New Ground policy (South Africa, Department of Housing 2004), such as Cosmo City in Johannesburg, N2 Gateway in Cape Town and Cornubia in eThekwini, were at advanced stages of development (Cirolia and Smit 2017, this issue, Haferberg 2013, Jordhus-Lier 2015, Millstein 2011, Newton 2009, Sutherland et al 2015). Yet these three projects were relatively unusual within the broader suite of housing projects, which tended to be much smaller in scale. The new direction announced in 2014 meant that Cosmo City, the N2 Gateway project and Cornubia would shift from being relatively unusual projects to being the norm.

The megaprojects approach trades on a series of assumptions about how good outcomes might be achieved through large scale urban initiatives. First, large projects are seen as an effective way of meeting demand for housing through economies of scale and through the sheer quantity of units constructed. Second, in the context of a flagging economy, promoters of this direction regard state-led city-building as a mechanism for catalysing the economy and development. As Sisulu notes,

> We call these 'catalytic projects', because they will trigger massive investments by the private sector and have huge economic spin-offs. Our assessment is that our own investment, which is estimated at R90-billion over five years, will trigger about R150-billion from the private sector. Hundreds of thousands of jobs will be sustained and thousands more created. (Sisulu 2016)

Third, and relatedly, new city building (in some iterations of the policy) can bring development to regions otherwise short of prospects. Fourth, large projects will rise above the morass of sometimes difficult relations between spheres and departments of government. Fifth, these new settlements would use good design to ensure that they were integrated, in contrast with existing fragmented cities.

Yet much is elided in these assumptions. First, the numbers of houses in each project might sound big, but these numbers are often revised down as the project progresses, and large projects take many years to plan (Sutherland et al 2015). Second, beyond the boon for construction firms, and construction jobs for the duration of the building, new settlements might not internalise economic activity in the long term (Turok 2015). Third, rather than uniting government, megaprojects might provide entirely new ways for different government spheres and departments to disagree with one another (see Gordhan 2015). Fourth, it may seem possible to capitalise on economies of scale, but where settlements are far away from existing urban settlements, bringing bulk infrastructure to them will be cripplingly expensive (Ballard and Rubin 2017, this issue). Fifth, the ambition to create 'well-designed' urban environments may in fact mean a continued effort to constrain informality (Charlton 2017, this issue). Sixth, as has been the case throughout the post-apartheid housing programme, houses that are completed and handed over may not function as assets equivalent to the cost of building them.

Therefore, critics fear that this policy direction will cause urban sprawl, financially unsustainable infrastructure costs, long-term transport

costs to bridge the gulf between people's dormitory and work spaces (notwithstanding commitments to the contrary), delayed projects, and, as a speaker at a workshop feared, white elephants (speaker at Workshop on Mega Human Settlements, September 3, 2015). Furthermore, observers have suggested that those in favour of the megaprojects approach invest too much expectation in the capacity of human settlements construction to resolve problems that originate beyond the sector, not least in the economy. One city official who was critical of the policy said that megaprojects appear to offer a 'big solution to a big problem' (Workshop, February 23, 2016, Wits University) but may in reality compound the problem.

Notwithstanding the insistent tone with which this direction was announced, the capacity of this policy to define all human settlements construction should not be assumed as a matter of fact. Many of the projects now presented as being part of the policy were conceived before it was announced. Furthermore, the excesses of some political pronouncements are moderated by officials who are attempting to operationalise them. In time, ministers of Human Settlements may well soften the megaprojects and catalytic projects rhetoric and allow for a hybrid arrangement of large and smaller projects. This may happen because the budgets necessary to build these enormous projects cannot be assembled, and because there will be political pressure from those places who are not designated hosts to a megaproject to have some kind of housing delivery.

To the extent that enough is now in motion to manifest in large-scale projects, we can be open-ended in our speculation about the future that will result. Some of the projects being talked about now with great certainty will be built and some will not. Those that are built will evolve substantially from original plans. Some construction firms and other economic interests will benefit handsomely, others might be undone by their participation and still others will not be given the chance to participate. Many construction workers will get jobs, and these jobs will also come to an end. Some projects will be more financially or environmentally sustainable than others. Many beneficiaries will receive houses, but the 'backlog' will not be reduced by the number of houses produced as a result of economic, demographic and migration factors. Some local jobs will be available to residents of these places, although many workers will need to commute to jobs elsewhere. Some settlements will be located more

advantageously for their residents than others, and distance from downtown areas does not determine this in a linear fashion. Many people will live meaningful, rich and varied lives even though they seem poorly located to academics and those other expert observers who are invariably located in metropoles.[2] As one stakeholder put it, 'not everybody wants to be in Killarney or Houghton' [centrally located higher income suburbs in Johannesburg], and it is necessary to accommodate them where they live (interview, stakeholder, December 15, 2015). Finally, people who make lives in these places will do so on their own terms, sometimes to the frustration of authorities who will bemoan backyard shacks and spaza shops.

This unfolding story presents us with an enormous research agenda. There are some lines of enquiry which we have not fully interrogated here. We do not know, for example, how much major urban projects in China, India and other contexts might have influenced South African officials and politicians looking for solutions to their urban difficulties (see Peck and Theodore 2015 on 'fast policy'). Furthermore, we do not know the ways in which economic interests might be driving the turn to megaprojects in South Africa. These centralised big budget projects represent enormous opportunities for the private sector and other vested interests to make money directly off these budgets and also indirectly through speculation. Certainly anyone who stands to benefit financially has a conflict of interests in determining whether or not the policy is a good one in more general terms, or whether or not particular projects should be built in particular ways.

We cannot do justice to these important areas in this special issue. Rather this collection of papers was born from the concern (and a degree of confusion) of a group of academics, researchers and other stakeholders in 2015 following the release of policy documentation from Gauteng Province.[3] Given this origin, the interests of this collection are to unravel the nature and status of the policy, to understand the way in which it was produced, to examine which kinds of projects might be included in government's project lists and which excluded, to explain why champions of this policy think it is a good idea and how they think it would work, to review the concerns of critics, to locate this policy in broader historical and geographical contexts and to reflect on alternative ways of thinking about urban change.

The short-term expediency of long-term policy

While the consequences of the policy could play out over decades, the calculus behind decisions to launch dozens of major housing projects across the country are located in a very particular political conjuncture. When the minister announced this new direction, the African National Congress-led government was preparing to defend its record as ruling party in the fifth round of municipal elections since the institution of democracy in 2016. The ANC's relative success in early local government elections was built on the need to bring urgent change to iniquitous urban conditions bequeathed by the past. A generation later, it seemed, government had thrown everything it could at the social problems embedded in South Africa's cities. For all the remarkable infrastructure and housing delivery by local government, there remains a 'crisis of social reproduction' (Bezuidenhout and Fakier 2006: 462) rooted in the inability of the economy to provide the kinds of employment that would improve in the welfare of the poor majority (also Barchiesi 2011). The resulting disaffection was captured for a time by Jacob Zuma himself when he was elected president in 2009 on a wave of popular support (Hunter 2011). However, the ANC's claims to hegemony have been tested by local 'service delivery' protests, intra-party tensions, fading support from alliance partners and the popularity of opposition parties which threaten to make significant inroads into the ANC's primary constituencies (Hart 2013).

Within this moment, housing is a highly politicised element of the relationship between the ANC and the electorate. For all the criticisms one might level at the housing programme, it has been a relatively successful site of 'delivery', more so than in other areas such as employment. In announcing 50 large housing projects, Sisulu was mindful that the patience of those on housing waiting lists had been exhausted and that trust in the process was low (Sisulu 2014). She stated that '[w]e can't go into 30 years of freedom with a huge backlog' (Merten 2014). In the event, the 2014 announcements of plans for 50 major housing projects were not enough to prevent stunning electoral losses for the ANC in the 2016 local elections, including defeat in three metropolitan municipalities.

Within the desperate political moment ahead of the 2016 local government elections, the megaprojects idea appears not so much as a fully formed policy but as an inflation of the original promise to build houses for all. Turok (2015) bemoans the striking 'lack of a policy

framework, prior planning and technical preparation'. Margot Rubin and I (2017) show in more detail elsewhere in this issue how a broad-brush document was drawn together in the months following the minister's announcement (South Africa. Department of Human Settlements 2014) but that comprehensive policy development work was essentially superseded by a drive to identify catalytic projects. The Gauteng provincial government also drew up its own policy which never progressed beyond a speculative discussion document (Gauteng, Department of Human Settlements 2015), but which has shaped the activities of Gauteng's Department of Human Settlements ever since. Even where detail was provided in these documents, it seems somewhat arbitrary. For example, no rationale was offered for why 15,000 units was a particularly important threshold. According to one stakeholder, the number 15,000 served a largely rhetorical function to signify that these were 'significant' developments (interview, stakeholder, November 15, 2015). The 15,000 unit threshold has been downplayed over time (Housing Development Association 2015, Buthelezi 2017).

Furthermore, it was not entirely clear, even to stakeholders familiar with the sector, what the exact implications of being designated as a catalytic project would be. One stakeholder noted that some provinces started putting new projects on hold because they thought they would get more money for catalytic projects, which was not necessarily going to be the case (interview, stakeholder, November 16, 2015). Another said that there would be ring-fenced funding (interview, stakeholder, February 3, 2016). Two years after the launch of the policy, a metropolitan municipal official responsible for constructing megaprojects said in an interview that she could not say whether there was a clear policy as she had not seen one (interview, stakeholder, September 17, 2016). Furthermore, the policy shift is noticeably absent from other key documents. Draft Human Settlements legislation, which was presented for stakeholder comment a year and a half after the minister's announcement of a new policy, made no mention of the new policy direction (South Africa, Department of Human Settlements 2015).

The somewhat loose codification of this policy is exemplified by the fact that it is referred to under a variety of different rubrics, creating a considerable amount of confusion both within and beyond government. The policy direction was first mentioned by Human Settlements minister Lindiwe Sisulu in a speech to parliament in July 2014 in which she used

the term 'mega projects' several times and 'catalytic projects' once (Sisulu 2014). Within months the term being used in most documentation with the National Department of Human Settlements was 'catalytic projects', although the term 'mega projects' would still be used frequently, particularly in speeches. Presumably in response to a widespread confusion about whether these two terms referred to the same policy, politicians began using the terms together, as in 'catalytic projects (mega projects)' (Sisulu 2016), or even 'megacatalytic' projects (Greve 2015).

Early mentions of this new direction by the pemier of Gauteng included a reference to 'catalytic mega housing projects' and 'mega housing projects' (South Af rica 2014). By 2015 he and the MEC for Human Settlements were referring to 'mega human settlements' (Mamabolo 2015, Mashego 2015), 'mega settlements', 'new cities' (Makhura 2015), and 'post-apartheid cities' (Mamabolo 2015). The Gauteng Department of Human Settlements' policy suggested that 'mega projects' and 'new cities' were one and the same, although the document also referred to 'mega cities' (Greve 2015) (a misnomer to be sure, since the term internationally refers to cities of more than ten million people). Paul Mashatile, the MEC for Human Settlements in Gauteng from 2016, introduced the term 'Big Cities', to refer to the intended developments (Mashatile 2016b).

The proliferation of names for large scale urban developments is indicative of the political function of new policy announcements. One informant observed 'administrations especially in post-apartheid South Africa are under pressure to come up with something new' (interview, stakeholder, March 10, 2016). Since elections are normally held every five years, elected representatives have a very short space of time to confront the challenges of their sector. Where tweaks, reforms and incremental improvements might seem unconvincing to a frustrated electorate, bold policies help to give an identity to particular elected representatives and their administration and to build the impression that they are taking decisive action (Loftman and Nevin 1995: 303). As a result of its frequent use in marketing to create hype, invoke a sense of abundance, and denote something truly impressive, the prefix 'mega' might in fact need little elaboration for a popular audience.

Gauteng Province was particularly keen to play up the newness of its megaprojects policy. The Gauteng MEC, in his foreword to a policy document released in 2015, reiterated the need for a 'radical

transformation', a 'deliberate paradigm shift' and a 'new trajectory' (Gauteng, Department of Human Settlements 2015: 5). The document later refers to a 'game changer paradigm' (2015: 30) and an insistence that 'the Department does not make a linear shift in trajectory, but a decisive upward movement' (2015: 36). A press release before the launch promised a 'new era' and an 'unprecedented radical transformation of human settlements and spatial planning in Gauteng' (South Africa 2015). Once again, the target for such messages is not those who will be taking up occupation of new homes in a decade or two when they are built, but today's electorate.

Megaprojects also lend themselves to immediate political work in that each project can be 'launched' and grab headlines by virtue of its scale. The computer-generated images which usually accompany such announcements offer a seductive contrast with less glamorous actually-existing cities (Watson 2014) (see Figure 1). Megaprojects offer a great deal of symbolic value (van der Westhuizen 2007), even when they are still hypothetical. Not only can politicians boost their image in general by launching megaprojects, but they can also manage very immediate political pressures. For instance, the timing of the announcement of what would become Cornubia development in Durban (Verwey 2005) seemed – to many housing activists at the time – to be an attempt to demobilise growing support for the social movement Abahlali base Mjondolo.

Figure 1: An artist's impression of Vaal River city (le Cordeur 2015)

Returning to the present round of megaprojects announcements, officials indicated that before the 2016 local government elections there was enormous pressure within the Gauteng provincial government to finalise some intended projects so that politicians could launch them before the elections. Although it performed poorly at the 2016 local government elections, politicians from the ANC remain interested in launching megaprojects, particularly in the context of political pressures ahead of the ANC's December 2017 national elective conference (Greenblo 2017), and beyond that, the 2019 general elections. At the 2017 National Housing Summit in Kempton Park, Paul Mashatile used his plenary speech to announce that the Gauteng provincial government would be launching 15 of its 31 megaprojects over a period of seven months – one every two weeks (Mashatile 2017). It is entirely possible that the political leaders who launch these projects will no longer be occupying their portfolios by the time these projects are substantially under way and the projects' contradictions become manifest.

The tension between long- and short-term goals results in compromises (Pieterse 2017). According to literature on *satisficing developers*, some private developers pursue low density exurb sprawl even though it is sub-optimal, because they are able to meet a minimum threshold of profitability (Mohamed 2009). Satisficing means that rather than holding out for the best possible option across all criteria, decision makers settle for an available path that delivers some gains even though it might offer major efficiency challenges in the long run. While this literature is intended to explain the decision making of private developers it might nevertheless be helpful for understanding the behaviour of government itself insofar as government acts as a developer. Government is a satisficing developer when it embarks on projects which will deliver some gains even though they cannot fully serve the broader ideals of development put forward in framework policies. Long term negative externalities are wished away and left for the next generation to manage while megaprojects are launched by this generation because they seem expedient for now.

This special issue
If the megaprojects approach to human settlements was forged within the context of a political party trying to hold onto power, and particular factions of that political party trying to define its future, how might we interpret the broader implications of the policy? This special issue

consists of five further articles on the policy itself, on the idea of new town building, and on the role of megaprojects thinking in urban transformation (compared to other kinds of measures such as institutional reforms). Several articles also consider cases of large scale projects of the N2 Gateway project, Lufhereng, Corridors of Freedom, and Modderfontein.

Ballard and Rubin (2017, this issue) offer a detailed account of the megaprojects direction as a policy. Literature largely recognises that policies are not derived from rationalist technical analyses but are rather contradictory amalgams of ideas and interests. The article traces how the megaprojects policy idea unfolded in South Africa at a national level, and how it was taken up in Gauteng Province which articulated its own version of the policy. The authors suggest five logics feeding into the policy idea: that scaling up had been emerging as a practice and an idea since the 1990s, that the government was feeling extreme political pressure as a result of the enduring housing backlog, that some advocates of the policy were entertaining ideas of new town utopianism, that some authorities wished to redistribute growth to areas in decline, and that the Department of Human Settlements sought to resolve what it views as governance difficulties in the sector. Finally, the article considers some of the reactions to the policy direction, notably concerns that it could exacerbate urban sprawl.

Some iterations of the turn to large scale human settlements projects manifests as a desire to create new towns. In their contribution, Harrison and Todes (2017, this issue) examine this political impulse in a broader historical and geographical context. The Gauteng region is littered with earlier experiments to create industrial decentralisation areas, a legacy which should inform any present-day ambitions to build new cities. Lessons can also be drawn from beyond South Africa. Those who built new towns in Europe after the Second World War, and in Asia more recently, were driven by largely similar imperatives as those who advocate new towns in South Africa today – a desire to accommodate expanding populations in congenial new environments rather than in existing dysfunctional cities. Many promise to balance housing and jobs, and to meet the needs of the population and the economy internally. However Harrison and Todes show that these intentions are extremely difficult to achieve in the long term, and indeed misleading insofar as the success of new towns might well be based on their connectivity to other places. New

towns may be unable to attract economic activities sufficient to employ the labour of these new towns, with the result that workers need to commute to other urban areas to work. Some new towns were successful for a time as a result of one major industry, but were left vulnerable by their lack of diversification when their major industry went into decline. Where successful economic diversification occurred, this tended to be during periods of robust economic expansion. The history of new town development is a sobering lesson in the difficulties of building self-sustaining new towns from scratch.

Cirolia and Smit (2017, this issue) draw a distinction between two broad mechanisms for urban spatial transformation available to governments. The first is an institutional approach which argues that urban transformation is enabled by setting up the correct institutional parameters which support urban actors. Specifically, these institutional mechanisms include strengthened local government, good governance to ensure that decision making does not favour vested interests, and strategic planning rather than detailed master planning. The second approach is large and expensive state led projects which make decisive and direct urban interventions. These projects require partnerships between different authorities and, often, the relaxation of regulations. They often promise more than what they can deliver, and play down likely costs. Cirolia and Smit argue that in South Africa, the first approach was followed through a strengthened local government system, mechanisms such as Integrated Development Planning, a system of institutionalised strategic local government plans. It has also been a paradigm shaped by the National Treasury. However, alongside this institutionalist approach, megaprojects have been an important current with certain infrastructural investments, and within the housing sector itself. The authors argue that this disjuncture inhibits urban transformation in South Africa.

In her contribution, Charlton (2017, this issue) considers the case of Lufhereng, a major development for between 65,000 and 100,000 residents under way west of Soweto. It accommodates a blend of fully subsidised housing, mortgage linked housing, partially subsidised housing, and necessary infrastructure and social facilities in more imaginatively designed buildings and public space than earlier RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) settlements. The settlement was conceived in the 1990s as a natural extension to Soweto and was begun in 2008, well in advance of the 2014-5 megaprojects policy announcements. Since 2015,

Lufhereng has been assimilated into broader plans for megaprojects. This assimilation requires managing some contradictions including the fact that the new policy aims to create autonomous urban settlements while Lufhereng was imagined as an extension of existing urban areas.

Charlton proposes two frameworks for thinking about these new developments. Firstly, the resulting urban space is not just created by a top-down process but is co-produced by users of these spaces who might build backyard shacks or spaza shops. Lufhereng's designers have attempted to contain or eliminate informality, thereby threatening to stifle the kinds of activity which could sustain lives in peripheral locations. Charlton asks whether new megaprojects will be able to adapt flexibly to livelihoods and forms of accommodation created by users of these spaces. Secondly, through the frame of incubator urbanism, Charlton challenges us to consider how much weight we give to the objective of urban compaction relative to other kinds of gains that can be made on the periphery. Welfare gains, she suggests, are not attached in some absolute sense to location; even poorly located and inflexibly designed spaces can lead to gains which are highly valued by users of the space in the form of better services and recognition by the state.

The final paper (Ballard et al 2017, this issue) considers two specific large-scale projects in Johannesburg. The first is the Corridors of Freedom initiative of the former ANC-led city council based on densifying and integrating along central transit corridors. The second is Modderfontein, a development proposed by Chinese developers on a site in the north east of the city. These projects contrast with one another in the visions they present: the Corridors of Freedom project eschews greenfield development in favour of densification in core areas, while Modderfontein, is typical of large private sector developments on previously undeveloped land targeting middle class residents. The article notes the way in which the new megaprojects policy has reacted to these existing projects, in that, paradoxically, the Gauteng provincial government has adopted Modderfontein as a megaproject but did not recognise the Corridors of Freedom project as a megaproject.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the reviewers for their guidance on this introduction, and Margot Rubin who collaborated with me on data collection.
2. Thanks to Sarah Charlton for this important insight.

3. The first meeting was organised in 2015 by the National Research Foundation Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand, Philip Harrison and his team. This was followed by a series of workshops between academics and government officials. Most of the papers in this issue were originally presented in special sessions at the Southern African Cities Studies Conference in March 2016 at the Durban University of Technology. They represent a smaller slice of a broader community of interest.

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