

SOUTH AFRICA'S INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 11: POLICY MISMATCH OR SUCCESS?

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SUMMARY

This paper critically questions the extent to which the Integrated Urban Development Framework, 2016 (IUDF) provides for strategic goals and policy levers towards the pursuit of sustainable cities in South Africa as understood in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. Specific emphasis will be placed on the nine identified policy levers² in the IUDF and whether these correspond with what is identified in SDG 11 as essential for the pursuit and maintenance of sustainable cities. SDG 11 has been heralded as “path-breaking” as it represents the strongest recognition to date of the significant role of cities in promoting sustainability on local, national, and global scales. The goal forms part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ adopted in 2015. SDG 11 specifically seeks to ensure that cities and human settlements become inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The goal provides a broad framework for what the achievement sustainable cities entails and lists specific targets to be met by 2030 to ensure urban sustainability around the globe. The South African government recently developed its first policy underscoring the country's national urban agenda. Informed by SDG 11, the IUDF calls for the effective and improved management of urban spaces and recognises the need for South African cities to become “liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive”.

1 INTRODUCTION

The world's urban population is increasing rapidly. Currently, half of the world's total population lives in cities, and it is anticipated that this number

¹ This research was conducted with the financial support of the National Research Foundation of South Africa. The findings arising from the research and the opinions expressed in this paper remain those of the author, however.

² Informed by the strategic goals.

³ Hereinafter “2030 Agenda”.

will rise to 60% by 2030 and to 70% by 2050.⁴ While urbanisation in itself is not necessarily problematic, rapid and unplanned urbanisation exacerbates the challenges that cities face generally and in terms of sustainability specifically. Nevertheless, it is agreed that well managed and planned cities play a crucial role in the pursuit of sustainable development.⁵ Cities are engines of growth and economic development and are recognised as driving forces behind the change and policy development in response to challenges related to inequality, socio-economic advancement, and resource management, for instance.⁶

The significance of cities as potential drivers of the sustainable development agenda has received increased emphasis and recognition over the years.⁷ In 2015, however, the role of cities in the pursuit of local, national, and global sustainable development received its strongest recognition to date. In September 2015, the United Nations adopted its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes seventeen goals having to do with fostering global social, environmental, and economic sustainability.⁸ Of particular relevance to cities is the eleventh SDG, which seeks to ensure that cities and human settlements become inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.⁹ The goal provides a broad description of what sustainable cities entail and lists specific targets to be met by 2030 to ensure the sustainability of cities around the globe.

Since the formal adoption of the 2030 Agenda, several governments have confirmed their support of SDG 11 specifically by finalising and adopting proactive urban policies that aim to promote overall sustainability and cater to the unique challenges of their cities.¹⁰ In attempting to address its own urban challenges, the South African government recently developed its first policy underscoring the country's national urban agenda. Prior to 1994, the country's cities were shaped by planning practices and planning laws that were influenced by a government intent on implementing its apartheid policy. The implementation of the apartheid ideology in the context of planning,

⁴ UN Habitat *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development, Emerging Futures* (2016) 6.

⁵ UN Habitat *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development, Emerging Futures* (2016) 3.

⁶ *Mega Sustainable Cities for the Third Millennium: The Odyssey of Urban Excellence* (2010) 15–19.

⁷ See, *inter alia*, Williams "Sustainable Cities: Research and Practice Challenges" 2010 1 *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development* 128–132; Bouteligier *Cities, Networks and Global Environmental Governance: Spaces of Innovation, Places of Leadership* (2013) 1–240; Bayulken and Huisingh "A Literature Review of Historical Trends and Emerging Theoretical Approaches for Developing Sustainable Cities" 2015 109 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 11–24.

⁸ *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* A/RES/70/1 (2015). Hereinafter "2030 Agenda".

⁹ See the definition of a sustainable city in s 3 below.

¹⁰ See eg, the sustainable city initiatives and policy documents of various city governments over the globe that belong to Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), see ICLEI "Selected Examples of Ambitious Activities of ICLEI Members related to all SDGs" 2015 http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ICLEI_WS/Documents/advocacy/Sustainable_Development_Summit_2015/Annex-IV_GetInspired_by_ICLEI_Members_UrbanSDG_17SDGs.pdf (accessed 2017-08-17).

resulted in the country's towns and cities being characterised by low-density, segregation, and stark racial and class separations.¹¹ The Integrated Urban Development Framework of 2016¹² is specifically developed to redress the spatial injustices associated with the country's apartheid and planning legacy and particularly emphasises the need for sustainable urban development. It is informed by SDG 11 and introduces four overall strategic goals with nine policy levers, which set the key priority objectives for South Africa's urban agenda. This paper critically questions the extent to which the IUDF provides for strategic goals and policy levers towards the pursuit of sustainable cities in South Africa as envisioned by SDG 11. Specific emphasis will be placed on the nine identified policy levers¹³ in the IUDF and on asking if these correspond with what is identified in SDG 11 as essential for the pursuit and maintenance of sustainable cities.

2 THE INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

Prior to the 1990s, South Africa's cities were shaped by planning practices that were strongly influenced by modernist planning principles characterised by single-use zoning and low-density suburban development.¹⁴ Planning laws were framed in accordance with the policy of apartheid, with the result that the design of towns and cities was based on racial discrimination and inequality.¹⁵ The outcome was low-density and fragmented cities requiring large-scale commuting on the part of black and coloured residents from impoverished and poorly serviced township areas to the sections of the city or town¹⁶ where the main areas of economic opportunity and higher order social facilities were located.¹⁷

It is generally agreed that the apartheid planning system deliberately stifled the development of the majority of the country's population.¹⁸ Notably, towns and cities throughout South Africa today are still confronted with the remnants of the country's apartheid past.¹⁹ Many of the planning laws and policies in operation during the time of apartheid did not provide the legal mechanisms necessary to avoid and address the country's spatial governance problems such as informal settlement regulation and inner-city

¹¹ Harrison, Todes, and Watson *Planning and Transformation: Learning from the Post-Apartheid Experience* (2008) 9.

¹² Hereinafter "the IUDF".

¹³ Informed by the strategic goals.

¹⁴ Parnell and Mabin "Rethinking Urban South Africa" 1995 21(1) *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39–61.

¹⁵ Mabin and Smit "Reconstructing South Africa's cities? The making of Urban Planning 1900–2000" 1997 12 *Planning Perspectives* 204.

¹⁶ The white neighbourhoods.

¹⁷ Harrison, Todes and Watson *Planning and Transformation: Learning from the Post-Apartheid Experience* 12.

¹⁸ See Patel "Understanding Environmental Change in South African Cities: A Landscape Approach" 2005 57 *Transformation* 23.

¹⁹ Berrisford "Unravelling Apartheid Spatial Planning Legislation in South Africa" 2011 22 *Urban Forum* 249.

township renewal, for example.²⁰ South African cities are therefore still characterised by social, economic and spatial segregation, inadequate access to basic services, irresponsible resource use, and growing poverty and social exclusion.²¹

In the light of the apartheid planning practices that promoted separate and fragmented development in urban areas, the post-1994 government attempted to develop a new planning system. Within two years of the 1994 elections,²² the newly elected government promulgated the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Constitution remains the highest law of the land and sets the tone for the country's overall legislative reform, including the reform of all planning legislation and policy. The Constitution allocates to national, provincial and local government specific functional areas of legislative and executive competence²³ and includes a Bill of Rights in Chapter 2 affording everyone in the country rights in terms of equality, dignity, culture and religion, the environment, property, housing, information and administrative action. The new planning law and policy system had to be prepared in line with the Constitution.²⁴

The South African government has since the inception of the Constitution developed several laws and policy programmes aimed at remedying South Africa's apartheid spatial planning legacy.²⁵ While a discussion of the precise detail of the laws and policy programmes is beyond the scope of this paper, it has been argued that they have failed to achieve measurable progress and have not impinged on social exclusion and poor racial and cultural integration, so that the South African city remains an unjust and inequitable living environment.²⁶ Accordingly, the national government of South Africa in 2015 enacted the country's first piece of legislation that provides a single and integrated planning system for the entire country.²⁷ The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act²⁸ specifically acknowledges the rights contained in the Bill of Rights and indicates that the right to housing²⁹ includes equitable spatial patterns and sustainable human settlements. SPLUMA also lays down development principles to be embodied in planning, such as spatial justice, spatial sustainability and spatial resilience.³⁰ The principles apply uniformly to spatial planning, land-use

²⁰ Van Wyk *Planning Law* (2012) 6.

²¹ Abrahams and Berrisford *Addressing the Crisis of Planning Law Reform in South Africa* (2012) 9–10.

²² The elections resulted in the demise of apartheid and the establishment of a new government vision aimed at creating an equal and non-discriminatory South African society.

²³ Also in terms of planning. See Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution.

²⁴ Van Wyk and Oranje "The Post-1994 South African Spatial Planning System and Bill of Rights: A Meaningful and Mutually Beneficial Fit?" 2014 *Planning Theory* 5–6.

²⁵ See eg, the Development Facilitation Act 67 of 1995 and the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, 1994.

²⁶ South African Cities Network *The State of South African Cities* (2016) 29–32.

²⁷ Padarath *SPLUMA as a Tool for Spatial Transformation* (2015) 18.

²⁸ 16 of 2013. Hereinafter "SPLUMA".

²⁹ As provided for in the Constitution.

³⁰ S 7 of SPLUMA.

management and land development and must guide the development of any further planning laws and policies developed in terms of the Act.

It is noteworthy, however, that SPLUMA does not have a specifically urban focus. The Act envisions that its principles and provisions should guide planning and land-use management in the shaping of human settlements uniformly in urban and rural areas alike.³¹ The lack of an explicit focus on the urban context, together with the continued aim of government to develop a policy that redresses the country's apartheid planning history and secures a sustainable future for the country's cities led to the development of the IUDF. The IUDF was approved by Cabinet on 26 April 2016 and seeks to guide the development of inclusive, resilient and liveable urban settlements. The IUDF sets the policy framework for transforming and restructuring South Africa's urban spaces and replaces all previous sector-based plans for urban development, such as the Department of Housing, 1997 Urban Development Framework. All existing and future policies and legislative frameworks that may have an impact on urban space in South Africa must consider and be in line with the objectives and principles outlined in the IUDF.³² The IUDF is specifically informed by SDG 11 and emphasises the need for sustainable development in the country's towns and cities. It introduces four overall strategic goals with nine policy levers that set key policy priorities for South Africa's urban agenda. The remainder of this paper is dedicated (a) to considering the requirements for the pursuit of city sustainability as envisioned by SDG 11, and (b) to evaluating in brief whether the nine identified policy levers³³ in the IUDF correspond with what is identified in SDG 11 as essential for the pursuit and maintenance of sustainable cities.

3 ENVISIONING SUSTAINABLE CITIES IN TERMS OF SDG 11

SDG 11 has been heralded as "path-breaking, both within the UN system for acknowledging the development role of subnational governments, and paradigmatically for global urban policy as it concedes that, in an urbanising world, cities can be pathways to sustainable development".³⁴ SDG 11 is truly transformational in nature as it is the only goal that is location specific and that can be pursued on a manageable scale.³⁵ The goal sets out to make cities inclusive,³⁶ safe,³⁷ resilient,³⁸ and sustainable.³⁹ The "sustainable city"

³¹ Padarath *SPLUMA as a Tool for Spatial Transformation* 18.

³² Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs *Towards an Integrated Urban Development Framework* (2014) 20–25.

³³ Informed by the strategic goals.

³⁴ Parnell "Defining a Global Urban Development Agenda" 2016 78 *World Development* 529.

³⁵ See ICLEI "Briefing Sheet Urban Issues No 02" 2015 http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/PUBLICATION-S/Briefing_Sheets/SDGs/02_-_ICLEI-Bonn_Briefing_Sheet_-_SDGsand_Cities_2015_web.pdf (accessed 2017-04-22).

³⁶ Inclusion pertains to ensuring that all residents of the city, including the most marginalised, have a representative voice in governance, and fair and equitable access to urban opportunities, infrastructure and resources that cultivate social integration and enable residents to enjoy and fully partake in urban life. See UN *Policy Paper 1: Right to the City*

is depicted in SDG 11 in terms of a set of targets that cities around the globe should collectively aspire to meet. The first seven targets are framed as outcomes and require cities to accomplish the following by 2030:

- 11.1) ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing, basic services (water and sanitation) and the upgrading of slums;
- 11.2) provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable road transport systems for all by expanding public transport and improving road safety and paying special attention to the needs of the vulnerable (i.e. women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities);
- 11.3) enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and the capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management;
- 11.4) strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the city's cultural and natural heritage;
- 11.5) with a specific focus on the poor and vulnerable, reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected by economic and other disasters, including water-related disasters;
- 11.6) with specific emphasis on air quality and municipal and general waste management, reduce the per capita impact of cities on the environment; and

and *Cities for All* (2015) 1–10; UN Habitat *Habitat III Issue Paper 1: Inclusive Cities* (2015) 1–10.

³⁷ Safety in the urban environment pertains to residents living free from the threat or fear of violence and crime. Depending on the definition applied, urban safety also entails protecting residents from the risk and occurrence of human-induced or natural disasters and climate change. See UN Habitat *Habitat III Issue Paper 3: Safer Cities* (2015) 1–10.

³⁸ Urban resilience generally refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow, no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. See Patel and Nosal *Defining the Resilient City* (2016) 6; UN *Policy Paper 8: Urban Ecology and Resilience* (2016) 1–10.

³⁹ Precise conceptualisations of the “sustainable city” are rare and contested. Most scholars construct their own notions of what the concept means, and of what responses the concept entails. Engineers, eg, prioritise efficiency and aim to quantify and map the availability of resources. Social scientists regard a city as sustainable when a pre-determined social ideal and a minimum level of quality of life is reached within a specific spatial setting. Environmentalists depict sustainable cities from a conservation perspective and define urban sustainability in terms of the impact of urban growth and consumption on the earth's carrying capacity; government authorities however, place emphasis on the quality of governance and regulatory instruments guiding the relationships and actions of different actors within the urban context. See Williams 2010 1 *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development* 129–130; Girardet “The Metabolism of Cities” in Wheeler and Beatley (eds) *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader* (2015) 197–244; Bramley and Power “Urban Form and Social Sustainability: The Role of Density and Housing Type” 2009 36 *Environment and Planning* 30–48; Bithas and Christofakis “Environmentally Sustainable Cities: Critical Review and Operational Conditions” 2006 14 *Sustainable Development* 177–189. The purpose of this paper is not to extend the debate surrounding the sustainable city concept. Instead, it envisions the sustainable city as it is depicted in terms of the SDG 11 targets.

- 11.7) provide access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The remaining targets are framed in terms of procedure and require cities to:

- 11.a) support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening development planning;
- 11.b) by 2020, adopt and implement disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and
- 11.c) support least developed countries through financial and technical assistance in constructing sustainable and resilient buildings utilising local materials.

SDG 11 is accompanied by a set of indicators⁴⁰ that provide details regarding the nature of each target for SDG 11. It is generally understood that the indicators for SDG 11, in essence, require city authorities *inter alia* to decrease the proportion of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing; to increase the proportion of the population that has convenient access to public transport; to ensure that urbanisation rates and land-use are managed sustainably and efficiently; and where development is planned to ensure that the planning processes are participatory.⁴¹ The indicators also require city authorities to protect, conserve and safeguard local cultural and natural heritage; to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters with regard to fatalities and economic loss; to minimise the per capita environmental impact of the city;⁴² to provide access to safe, inclusive and accessible green public spaces; to establish social, environmental and economic links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas; to ensure the alignment of local disaster risk reduction strategies with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; and to provide support⁴³ to cities in least developed countries in constructing sustainable and resilient buildings.⁴⁴

The indicators are accompanied by metadata that provides statistics and/or benchmarks for the targets, such as the percentage of slums that should be upgraded;⁴⁵ the proportion of the population that has a public transit stop within 0.5km;⁴⁶ and the number of persons affected by disasters per every 100 000 people.⁴⁷ The metadata is aimed at providing a means to measure progress on the fulfilment of the SDG 11 targets. The metadata is

⁴⁰ See UN Official *Revised list of Global Sustainable Development Goal indicators* (2017) 14–16.

⁴¹ UN Official *Revised list of Global Sustainable Development Goal indicators* 14–15.

⁴² With a focus on air quality and sustainable waste management.

⁴³ Financial or technical.

⁴⁴ UN Official *Revised list of Global Sustainable Development Goal indicators* 15–16.

⁴⁵ In terms of target 11.1.

⁴⁶ In terms of target 11.2.

⁴⁷ In terms of target 11.5.

still a work in progress and should be finalised towards the end of 2017. No metadata exists for some of the SDGs. As a result, much debate surrounds the setting of finalised and approved targets to inform the pursuit of sustainable cities, especially with regard to what may be achievable for cities in developing countries. The purpose of this paper is not to extend this debate but rather to question the extent to which the IUDF provides for strategic goals and policy levers in South Africa as envisioned by SDG 11. It is, therefore, necessary to determine from the wording of SDG 11 and its targets what is broadly required of city governments in pursuit of sustainability in this model. For this purpose, it may be said that SDG 11 requires city authorities to take action towards:

- a) ensuring increased and equitable access to adequate housing and basic services;
- b) ensuring increased and equitable access to public transport;
- c) managing urbanisation and land-use sustainably and promoting participatory planning approaches;
- d) protecting and conserving local natural and cultural heritage;
- e) fostering resilience to disasters (both financially and in terms of human vulnerability);
- f) reducing the environmental impact of the city (specifically in terms of municipal solid waste management);
- g) increasing access to safe public open (and green) spaces;
- h) strengthening and aligning urban planning with national and regional frameworks;
- i) establishing social, environmental and economic links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas;
- j) ensuring the alignment of local disaster risk reduction strategies with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; and
- k) providing support (albeit financial or technical support) to cities in the least developed countries in building sustainable and resilient buildings.

The normative vision portrayed in the SDG 11 targets requires a dramatic transformation of all aspects of city services, ranging from housing and transport provision to disaster risk reduction strategies.⁴⁸ In addition, access to public transport, adequate housing and basic services, and sustainable solid waste management must become the norm in both rich and poor urban contexts.⁴⁹ The successful pursuit of the sustainable city in terms of SDG 11 requires, *inter alia*, strong political leadership, established and effective governance structures and processes, sound financial management, and a

⁴⁸ Pieterse, Parnell, and Croese *The 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Urbanisation and the Research-Policy Interface Issues for the G20* (2017) 10.

⁴⁹ Pieterse, Parnell, and Croese *The 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Urbanisation and the Research-Policy Interface Issues for the G20* 11.

strong legal and policy framework.⁵⁰ The following section examines the IUDF, as South Africa's most recent urban policy, in order to determine the extent to which it provides strategic goals and policy levers towards the pursuit of sustainable cities in South Africa, as understood in SDG 11.

4 SOUTH AFRICA'S INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND THE PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AS ENVISIONED BY SDG 11

The world is becoming increasingly urban. South Africa is no exception, with 53% of the country's population currently living in cities.⁵¹ This figure is expected to increase to 73% by 2030, reaching nearly 80% by 2050.⁵² The IUDF is a strategic response to South Africa's increasing urbanisation trends and is aimed at creating a shared understanding of government and society on the measures necessary to manage urbanisation in order to ensure resilient, inclusive, liveable and sustainable cities for the entire country.⁵³ The overall goal of the IUDF is to ensure the spatial transformation of the country's cities by redressing the country's apartheid and planning legacy of racial segregation, poverty, and exclusion from social and economic opportunities.⁵⁴ For this purpose, the IUDF introduces four overall strategic goals, namely: spatial integration;⁵⁵ inclusion and access;⁵⁶ growth;⁵⁷ and governance.⁵⁸ The IUDF further specifies nine policy levers. The policy levers are informed by the strategic goals and denote key policy priorities for achieving the envisioned spatial transformation of South Africa's cities. The table below includes selected policy priorities⁵⁹ and indicates, in brief, the corresponding SDG 11 targets.⁶⁰

⁵⁰ UN Habitat *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development, Emerging Futures* 99–120.

⁵¹ South African Cities Network *State of South African Cities* 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See the IUDF 11.

⁵⁴ See the IUDF 12.

⁵⁵ To forge new spatial forms in settlement, transport, social and economic areas.

⁵⁶ To ensure that people have access to social and economic services, opportunities and choices.

⁵⁷ To harness urban dynamism for inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development.

⁵⁸ To enhance the capacity of the state and its citizens to work together to achieve spatial and social integration. See the IUDF 39.

⁵⁹ Contained in each policy lever.

⁶⁰ For detailed information on the policy levers and policy priorities, refer to the full text of the IUDF.

Table 1. IUDF POLICY LEVERS *VIS-À-VIS* SDG TARGETS.

IUDF policy lever	Highlighted policy priority(ies)	Corresponding SDG 11 target(s)
1) Integrated urban planning and management	Long-term planning for housing with access to services. Prioritisation of public transport options. Disaster risk-informed planning.	11.1 11.2 11.5
2) Integrated transport and mobility	Strengthened and integrated public transport modes. Pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly cities.	11.2
3) Integrated sustainable human settlements	Upgrade informal settlements. Transform public spaces.	11.1 11.7
4) Integrated urban infrastructure	Infrastructure as a bridge between rural and urban areas.	11.a
5) Efficient land governance and management	Strengthen land-use planning and management	11.3
6) Inclusive economic development	Initiate differentiated economic development strategies for cities and towns	11.a
7) Empowered active communities	Strengthen participatory planning and governance	11.3
8) Effective urban governance	Improve city leadership and administrative capabilities	No direct correspondence with targets in SDG 11
9) Sustainable finances	Improve capital budgeting and expenditure	No direct correspondence with targets in SDG 11

The first policy lever is broadly framed. It stresses the importance of urban planning and management in ensuring more compact, socially inclusive, and better-integrated cities. The multi-functional policy lever includes policy priorities that in part address three targets in SDG 11, as it emphasises that long-term spatial plans must identify suitable areas for housing and services,⁶¹ that land-use plans should be aligned with transport planning,⁶² and that land-use plans should allocate land appropriately to limit exposure to natural hazards.⁶³ Policy lever two indicates that all public transport modes⁶⁴ must be included into city transport plans.⁶⁵ The policy lever directly addresses target 11.2 relating to sustainable public transport, as it requires planning practices to emphasise non-motorised transport options.⁶⁶ The third policy lever directly relates to target 11.1 pertaining to adequate and safe housing with access to basic services. It requires slum upgrading and renewal programmes to focus on providing affordable and safe housing options with full access to water, sanitation and waste management services.⁶⁷ The policy lever, albeit in brief, also extends to target 11.7 as it stipulates that increased attention must be given to creating quality public spaces such as parks, that are enjoyed equally by everyone.⁶⁸ Policy lever four more generally describes and lays down policy priorities for the infrastructure required to fulfil the IUDF's vision for South African cities. The policy lever does relate to target 11.a, however, as it recognises infrastructures as being critical in strengthening urban-rural linkages.⁶⁹ It stipulates as one of the policy priorities the need for infrastructure planning to enhance socio-economic development in rural areas by providing the transport and communication infrastructure that will provide rural inhabitants with access to urban markets, health and education facilities, and employment opportunities, for example.⁷⁰

The fifth policy lever regards sustainable urbanisation practices and land-use management as central to ensuring compact urban form and sustainable land-use. While the policy lever is broadly framed, focuses on the spatial transformation of South Africa's cities, and addresses land tenure security, it does, in brief, indicate that planning legislation and policies should include mechanisms that promote civil engagement in the planning processes.⁷¹ The policy lever thereby briefly corresponds with target 11.3. Policy lever six, in turn, addresses South Africa's unemployment crisis and recognises the need to leverage the diversity of urban economies in fostering overall inclusive economic development.⁷² In addition to identifying

⁶¹ 11.1.

⁶² 11.2.

⁶³ 11.5. See the IUDF 43–50.

⁶⁴ Such as rail, buses, minibus taxis and non-motorised transport options.

⁶⁵ See the IUDF 56.

⁶⁶ Such as cycling. See the IUDF 57.

⁶⁷ See the IUDF 64–66.

⁶⁸ See the IUDF 66.

⁶⁹ See the IUDF 73.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See the IUDF 78.

⁷² See the IUDF 83.

several policy priorities for economic development, the policy lever correlates to target 11.a as it recognises the importance of strengthening rural-to-urban economic linkages in boosting and enhancing economic growth in cities and in rural areas.⁷³

The seventh policy lever emphasises the importance of participatory planning and establishes a stand-alone policy lever for public participation. Participatory human settlement planning is an integral feature of target 11.3. Policy lever seven requires the development of new planning and governance mechanisms and the revision of existing mechanisms to ensure that all persons⁷⁴ could equally participate in the planning, design and management of their neighbourhoods.⁷⁵ Policy lever eight recognises the crucial role of effective urban governance in ensuring overall sustainability within cities. The policy lever underscores the need to ensure that all urban policies in South Africa are aligned and coherent, and that city leadership and administrative capabilities must be improved at political and administrative level.⁷⁶ While the policy lever does not directly pertain to any specific target of SDG 11, the central message of this policy lever⁷⁷ is arguably equally applicable to achieving the targets set by SDG 11.⁷⁸

The ninth and final policy lever, Sustainable Finances, emphasises that, in addition to good urban governance, overall city sustainability is directly dependent on sound, innovative, and sustainable financial management.⁷⁹ The policy lever identifies the need for improved capital budgeting and expenditure and debt reduction as policy priorities for sustainable financial management.⁸⁰ Policy lever nine does not directly pertain to any specific target of SDG 11 but rather underscores⁸¹ the dependence of successfully achieving city sustainability⁸² on the availability of financial resources coupled with good revenue management and expenditure control.

4.1 South Africa's IUDF *vis-à-vis* SDG 11: Policy mismatch or success?

As mentioned earlier, South Africa's IUDF includes nine policy levers that aim to facilitate the development of sustainable cities that are more socially, economically and environmentally integrated than those that exist in the country at present. Of the nine policy levers, seven aim to promote the sustainable city as envisioned in the SDG 11 targets. It has been shown that

⁷³ See the IUDF 89.

⁷⁴ Including vulnerable groups such as the illiterate, the blind, and the hearing impaired.

⁷⁵ See the IUDF 92–95.

⁷⁶ See the IUDF 99–104.

⁷⁷ That the successful achievement of city sustainability is dependent on effective urban governance.

⁷⁸ UN Habitat *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development, Emerging Futures* 101–119.

⁷⁹ See the IUDF 106.

⁸⁰ See the IUDF 108–110.

⁸¹ Albeit indirectly.

⁸² And the targets in SDG 11.

SDG 11 includes ten targets that stipulate what is required of cities in the pursuit of urban sustainability.⁸³ Four specific SDG 11 targets⁸⁴ have received stronger emphasis in the IUDF, given that at least seven policy levers⁸⁵ address matters related to these targets. Moreover, the importance and relevance of two other SDG 11 targets are also acknowledged, albeit to a more limited extent. In this regard, at least one policy lever addresses matters related to target 11.5⁸⁶ and target 11.7.⁸⁷ Policy lever one and policy lever three may also be considered as interdisciplinary in nature as each of these policy levers addresses more than one of the SDG 11 targets.

It further appears that the IUDF fails to directly address the SDG 11 targets relating to the protection of cultural and natural heritage;⁸⁸ the reduction of the per capita impacts of cities on the environment;⁸⁹ the adoption of disaster management strategies in line with the Sendai Framework;⁹⁰ and providing financial and technical support and assistance to least developed countries for constructing sustainable and resilient buildings.⁹¹ The IUDF instead focuses on addressing urban sustainability issues that are not necessarily directly reflected in the SDG 11 targets. These matters include the importance of effective urban governance⁹² and sustainable finances.⁹³ These matters are significant, given that a whole set of fiscal, legal and policy supporting structures, governance procedures and processes are required to ensure the successful implementation and mobilisation of the SDG 11 targets.⁹⁴

In addition to the above, it is interesting to note that the IUDF recognises that urban safety⁹⁵ is a basic human right and a public good.⁹⁶ While the IUDF does not include a specific policy lever for urban safety, it does emphasise that urban safety is a necessary condition for adequately realising the intended outcomes of the IUDF, such as spatial transformation, integrated and sustainable human settlements, economic development, job creation and active citizenship.⁹⁷ The IUDF views urban safety as a pre-

⁸³ See the discussion in 3 above.

⁸⁴ 11.1 adequate and safe housing with access to services; 11.2 sustainable transport systems; 11.3 participatory and sustainable human settlement planning; and 11.a supporting positive economic links between rural and urban areas.

⁸⁵ See table 1 above.

⁸⁶ The reduction of deaths and economic losses in relation to disasters. See policy lever one in table 1 above.

⁸⁷ Access to inclusive and accessible public spaces. See policy lever three in table 1 above.

⁸⁸ 11.4.

⁸⁹ 11.6.

⁹⁰ (11.b).

⁹¹ (11.c).

⁹² Policy lever eight.

⁹³ Policy lever nine.

⁹⁴ For an explanation in this regard, see UN Habitat *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development, Emerging Futures* 155–158; and Bellali, Dellas, Fischer, and Strauch-adelphi *Sustainable Development Goals New Urban Agenda and the Urban Nexus* (2016) 2–11.

⁹⁵ Living free from the threat or fear of violence and crime.

⁹⁶ See the IUDF 33.

⁹⁷ See the IUDF 33.

condition for city sustainability and stipulates that urban safety issues⁹⁸ can be addressed by each of the nine policy levers.⁹⁹ The IUDF singles out policy lever two¹⁰⁰ as significant in promoting urban safety by ensuring that safety concerns in public transport use are mitigated and planned for.¹⁰¹

In considering why the IUDF places a stronger emphasis on some of the SDG 11 targets and little or no emphasis on the remaining targets it is important to note the following observations:

- Firstly, the IUDF is informed by South Africa's *National Development Plan: Vision 2030*.¹⁰² The NDP is a broad strategic framework that establishes a blueprint for guiding development and governance until 2030. Chapter eight of the NDP focuses on transforming human settlements and lays down the developmental goals for towns and cities in South Africa.¹⁰³ The NDP identifies (a) reforming the country's spatial planning system; (b) upgrading informal settlements; (c) providing better quality public transport; (d) promoting economic development; (e) promoting rural-urban integration; and (f) promoting active participatory citizenship in spatial planning practices as crucial policy and governance priorities for promoting equality, inclusivity and sustainability in the country's towns and cities.¹⁰⁴ The IUDF explicitly states in its summary that its goals and policy levers are informed by chapter 8 of the NDP.¹⁰⁵ The IUDF further extend the goals in the NDP by including policy levers¹⁰⁶ that are significant in addressing the unique challenges that South African cities currently face.¹⁰⁷ While safety is not indicated as a policy lever in the IUDF, the right to safe urban spaces is underscored as a broader or overall goal of the IUDF and as a pre-condition for achieving the outcomes underpinning the nine policy levers.
- Secondly, in drafting and finalising the IUDF, the South African government may have drawn from international research on urban sustainability, including other international instruments that form part of the global urban agenda. Such research and other instruments may have included the work of Local Governments for Sustainability¹⁰⁸ and

⁹⁸ Such as insufficient gun control, substance and alcohol abuse, and high rates of violent crime.

⁹⁹ See the IUDF 34.

¹⁰⁰ Integrated transport and mobility.

¹⁰¹ See the IUDF 33–34.

¹⁰² Hereinafter "NDP".

¹⁰³ See the NDP 258–293.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ See the IUDF 7–10.

¹⁰⁶ Infrastructure, effective urban governance, and sustainable finances.

¹⁰⁷ Eg, service backlogs, poverty, corruption, degrading infrastructure, a lack of financial resources, and a lack of political will. See the NDP 5–32.

¹⁰⁸ Hereinafter "ICLEI". ICLEI is a large global network of more than 1500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future. ICLEI provides a platform to unite local and subnational governments over the globe by means of collective learning, exchange and capacity building. Several South African cities are members of ICLEI, including the country's most prominent urban areas of Johannesburg and Cape Town. See ICLEI "ICLEI Members: South Africa" 2017 <http://www.iclei.org/iclei-members/iclei-members.html?memberlistCountry=South%20Africa> (accessed 2017-08-21).

the outcome documents of the first and second UN Habitat conferences.¹⁰⁹ The work of ICLEI, for example, places a strong emphasis on sustainable financial management, encourages cities to review existing financial management practices and to increasingly make use of sustainable procurement practices, for example.¹¹⁰ In addition, ICLEI research is geared towards assisting local governments to improve their administrative and governance capacities and towards informing and encouraging city governments to implement sustainable urban governance practices such as innovative policies aimed at creating better a quality of life for city inhabitants without draining natural resources.¹¹¹ The outcome documents of the UN Habitat conferences focus on broader sustainability challenges in cities and are aimed at addressing challenges that include a lack of basic services and infrastructure, violence and crime, and unemployment in cities.¹¹²

- Thirdly, SDG 11 does not specify in detail the implementation measures or programmes of action required to ensure the successful realisation of its targets.¹¹³ The goal also fails to provide clarification in terms of certain conceptual issues.¹¹⁴ It is consequently the responsibility of each country across the globe to decide how and to what extent SDG 11 will be implemented at both the national and city level. The South African government, therefore, enjoyed a wide discretion in developing the IUDF and in deciding which aspects of SDG 11 would receive emphasis through the policy levers.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the IUDF was developed to address South Africa's unique urban challenges. The country's urban profile is often described as "complex", as the nation's cities and towns vary in relation to the extent of the effects of the apartheid planning legacy on their urban form, economic activity, governance institutions, and capacity, and availability of natural resources.¹¹⁵ While each town and city faces its own unique challenges, it is generally agreed that local

¹⁰⁹ See the *Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements*, A/CONF/70/15 (1976) (hereinafter "the Vancouver Declaration"); and the *Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements*, A/CONF/165/14 (1996) (hereinafter "the Istanbul Declaration").

¹¹⁰ See ICLEI "Sustainable Economy and Procurement" 2017 <http://www.iclei-europe.org/topics/sustainable-procurement> (accessed 2017-08-21).

¹¹¹ See ICLEI "Sustainable City" Date Unknown <http://www.iclei.org/activities/agendas/sustainable-city.html> (accessed 2017-08-21).

¹¹² See the Vancouver Declaration 1–54 and the Istanbul Declaration 1–52. Recently the UN Habitat III conference took place in Quito Ecuador. The conference resulted in the adoption of the New Urban Agenda A/RES/71/256 (2016), (hereinafter "the Quito Declaration"). While the Quito Declaration was only formally adopted on 23 December 2016 (after the formal adoption of South Africa's IUDF), it establishes a shared understanding of sustainable cities, and frames the next decades of sustainable urban development thinking and practice around the world. Notably, the Quito Declaration also includes matters of sound governance and financial management; and safety from violence and crime as crucial features of the sustainable city. See the Quito Declaration 5–8.

¹¹³ Bellali *et al* *Sustainable Development Goals New Urban Agenda and the Urban Nexus* 4.

¹¹⁴ Eg, clarity is needed on what is really meant by "adequate" housing and on what is meant by "convenient transport". See Loewe and Lippin *The Sustainable Development Goals of the Post-2015 Agenda: Comments on the OWG and SDSN Proposals* (2015) 57–60.

¹¹⁵ See the NDP 233–234.

government authorities are battling to keep up with the current pace of urbanisation and the intensifying demand for housing, infrastructure, and services.¹¹⁶ Despite well-meaning laws and policies, the country's cities have remained racially and spatially segregated and rife with inequality.¹¹⁷ Corruption, mismanagement of finances, and a lack of functioning governance structures and processes¹¹⁸ increasingly threaten any progress made towards reshaping them and addressing the apartheid legacy.¹¹⁹ Therefore, for sustainability to become a reality in South African cities, the IUDF should not only be informed by SDG 11 but should also aim to facilitate the promotion of sustainability in a manner that addresses the country's specific urban challenges.

With the above observations in mind, it is submitted that South Africa's IUDF is well matched to the expectations established by SDG 11 for the pursuit of the sustainable city. It may be argued that the IUDF provides a valuable example of a national policy tool that is aimed at promoting sustainability in a manner that is in line with what is expected by SDG 11, yet it also takes into account localised urban development challenges and context. The IUDF emphasises the SDG 11 targets that may be best suited to addressing sustainability-related challenges in South Africa's urban context. It is thus submitted that the policy document is clearly informed SDG 11¹²⁰ and provides a tailored approach to the pursuit of urban sustainability in South Africa. The IUDF further identifies and stipulates important features of the sustainable city that are not directly reflected in SDG 11 but that are also relevant to the pursuit of urban sustainability generally and in the South African context in particular.¹²¹

5 COMMENTS AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to question the extent to which the IUDF provides for strategic goals and policy levers towards the pursuit of sustainable cities in South Africa as understood in SDG 11.¹²² SDG 11 is the world's first stand-alone goal for sustainable development in the urban context.¹²³ The goal is ambitious and requires a fundamental paradigm shift in how cities are governed, financed and planned.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, it may be argued that if the attempt to attain it is appropriate, the goal will provide a roadmap for more balanced and equitable urban development.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ South African Cities Network *State of South African Cities* 28.

¹¹⁷ South African Cities Network *State of South African Cities* 47–81.

¹¹⁸ Especially in smaller localities.

¹¹⁹ Department of Planning, Management and Evaluation *Twenty Year Review South Africa 1994–2014: Background Paper on Local Government* (2015) 30–40.

¹²⁰ As especially reflected by policy lever's 1–7. See the discussion in s 4 above.

¹²¹ As reflected in policy lever's 8–9. See the discussion in s 4 above.

¹²² See s 1 above.

¹²³ Parnell 2016 78 *World Development* 530.

¹²⁴ UN Habitat *Roadmap for Localising the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level* (2016) 6–8.

¹²⁵ Kanuri, Revi, Espey and Kuhle *Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities: A Guide for Stakeholders* (2016) 1.

South Africa's IUDF is specifically informed by SDG 11 and sets the policy framework for transforming and restructuring South Africa's urban spaces into more "liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive, and globally competitive, where residents actively participate in urban life".¹²⁶ The IUDF includes nine policy levers developed to achieve this vision. A review of the policy levers has revealed that the IUDF matches well with SDG 11's requirements of cities in the pursuit of urban sustainability. Of the nine policy levers, seven aim¹²⁷ to promote the sustainable city as envisioned in six of the SDG 11 targets.¹²⁸ While the IUDF does not address the entire bouquet of SDG 11 targets,¹²⁹ it may be argued that the targets that are addressed by the policy levers may contribute in part to the broader sustainability goals in South Africa as included in the country's NDP.¹³⁰ The IUDF also follows a wider approach to fostering urban sustainability by introducing matters that are significant in achieving sustainability but that are not necessarily referenced or included in SDG 11. These matters, namely, good urban governance, sustainable financial management and¹³¹ urban safety, are arguably equally important for promoting sustainability in general and in the South African context in particular.

It is promising to see the South African government take seriously the international agenda for sustainable urban development. The IUDF is a respectable attempt to interpret SDG 11 and its targets in terms of South Africa's national developmental agenda for urban areas and in terms of its unique urban challenges, including the framing of a necessary and effective response to the legacy of apartheid urban planning.

¹²⁶ See the IUDF 40.

¹²⁷ Albeit to a limited extent.

¹²⁸ See the discussion in 4 above.

¹²⁹ See the discussion in 4.1 above.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Although this is described in more general terms.