



Cyril Ramaphosa: A return to the NDP?

There is little doubt that the ANC's newly-elected President, Cyril Ramaphosa, has had much to deal with over the past month - including internal divisions within the ANC and winning over investor and international leaders in Davos. But local government, with its mass of service delivery challenges, has a way of forcing its way on to any leader's plate. In Ramaphosa's case, Cape Town's Day Zero is the first local government challenge to arise. Aside from providing leadership on such crises, are there any pointers to the direction in which Ramaphosa might point local government policy?

Focus on cities

Cyril Ramaphosa has been mandated with "radical economic transformation" and land reform priorities, but he has also shown a sensitivity to ensuring that associated programmes are not counterproductive or constitutionally compromising (municipaliq.co.za).

This balancing of development goals means that he is likely to emphasise the need for transformative urban policies (www.anc.org.za), with Ramaphosa elaborating in 2016:

"[The ANC's vision] extends beyond building of houses and just connecting lights. Our vision requires a fundamental transformation of the spaces where our people live. We need to rapidly grow sustainable and inclusive communities at an economic level." (www.news24.com).

Ramaphosa's broad-ranging life experience - from activist, trade unionist, lawyer, negotiator, businessman and Deputy President have little direct overlap with local government, but they speak to an urban background and constituency that could be considered his core base and possible focus for South Africa's development trajectory. Pragmatically he may also spend time trying to woo back voters in these areas, especially in Gauteng, where ANC support has been eroded.

As someone at home with international industrialists and investors, there is also little doubt that Ramaphosa is likely to drive the growth and development of South African cities, and this may well be informed conceptually by his time spent chairing the National Development Plan (NDP) which many have speculated may be dusted off

for more rigorous implementation. But this emphasis is likely to be complemented by sustained concern about rural development. Ramaphosa is quoted as arguing (from what could be viewed as the NDP hymn book):

"We want municipalities that will craft effective plans. Plans that will talk to how they will move economic development in their own areas.... [Rapid urbanisation] is not sustainable because our cities cannot handle all those people. A significant influx of people can place huge strain on our cities. It also affects the issue of social cohesion... Make sure we do not ignore rural areas - particularly in provinces like KZN where the majority of areas where people live are still very rural." (www.news24.com).

In addition, Ramaphosa, as a drafter of the Constitution may well be an interesting leader in any debates and considerations about constitutional issues and mandates, such as reconsidering local government's power to distribute electricity or water in light of wide-scale failure to collect revenue for this or maintain assets. He has already commented on the inter-governmental framework in which municipalities need to work (www.news24.com).

While it is very early to foresee the influence Ramaphosa might have in local government, it is likely that he will try to strike a balance between equitable urban development and rural upliftment and that the NDP may return to centre stage of government policy.

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