

Experiences in establishing local SDIs-Cape Town Case Study

Dr. Solomon T. Bhunu
City of Cape Town
Corporate GIS
44 Wale Street
8018
Cape Town
South Africa
+2721 487 2264
Solomon.bhunu@capetown.gov.za

Abstract

The paper deliberates on the challenges and experiences encountered in during the implementation of City of Cape Town's SDI.

The first real challenge that is faced in the establishment of the local Spatial Data Infrastructure is the naming of the process i.e. could it be "SDI establishment or something else". This is important in getting the "buy-in" from all the sectors of local government. In this regard, Corporate GIS branch (City of Cape Town) coined the SDI, "The establishment of a partnership and coordination framework".

It is quite clear that in many local authorities, ICT (Information Communication Technologies) and GIS's are introduced but the benefits are modest as no changes take place in technical and organisational structure of organisations and digital databases and other related systems continue mushrooming in great variety within departments. If we look at Nolan's model of automation of an organisation's processes, it clearly states that the computer (IT) technologists assume an a very important role within the automation's life cycle, but at the end, the system is expected to be driven by the Systems administrators and users. What has however happened in most of the cases, the computer technologists hasn't let go his position of "authority" and "influence. This has presented one core area of conflict in driving the establishment of SDI's as the potential clash between the SDI's requirements and the technologist's requirements are different. A plethora of Acts is quite evident within local authorities: on Data Archiving, on Heritage Management, On Access to Information etc, and this has meant that within the local authorities finite environment, we have a number of officers delegated with overseeing the adherence of the municipalities to the requirements of the laws, and again there is no clear frame work on which this is implemented, a real challenge to the SDI.

Most local authorities, including the City of Cape Town are an amalgamation of several smaller municipalities. Each constituent municipality was running its own GIS unit, data acquisition techniques and data formats, standards, business structures, personnel and unique designation structures. In short, heterogeneous units have been amalgamated and expected to deliver a service to the people. Compounding this problem is the need to service internal systems (non-spatial) with the spatial component, e.g. billing, revenue and quite recently, the linking of the spatial Data Base to SAP.