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The Failure of Decentralisation in South African Local Government: Complexity and Unanticipated Consequences

By Andrew Siddle, Thomas A. Koelble

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An unanticipated and desirable consequence might be the discovery of new operating procedures which would make nuclear power safer. An unforeseen and undesirable consequence might be the evolution of a new species of predator fish, in the warmed ocean water, which destroy existing desired species. This paper concentrates on unanticipated consequences of our technologies. Anticipated negative consequences have been dealt with extensively in the literature on risk. As the local governments now have tasted power, they will resist any attempts to reverse the process. The figure below illustrates the complexity and interlinkages of the latest decentralisation reform processes, which focus on areas such as state reform, local governance, local democracy and local economic development as key aspects of a sustainable and viable local-level development process. 1990s: 2nd wave of decentralisation. Civil service reform is usually a supporting strategy for more general decentralisation in government operations or service delivery. The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. Robert k. merton. Harvard University. Anticipated consequences of purposive action has been treated by virtually every substantial contributor to the long history of social thought. 1 The diversity of context² and variety of terms³ by which this problem has been known, however, have tended to obscure the definite continuity in its consideration. In fact, this diversity of context-ranging from theology to technology-has been so pronounced that not only has the substantial identity of the problem been overlooked, but no systematic, scientific analysis of it has as yet been effected.