METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: RE-MODELLING FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Joseph E. David, Anis Mahomed Karodia

This is part one of a three-part series on metropolitan governance in South Africa. The introductory part covers issues of the concept of metropolitan governance and the problems and challenges associated with the phenomena. Part two will focus on the essential and key elements of metropolitan governance and the factors that contribute to its effective functioning. The final part will conclude by showing why there is a need for a re-modelling and paradigm shift in metropolitan governance in South Africa.

Abstract
In this paper an attempt is made to establish whether metropolitan governments in South Africa are efficient, effective, economical and equitable, especially in the delivery of municipal services. Through a comparative analysis of metropolitan governance structures in other emerging economies, the study found that models of metropolitan governance in South Africa are seriously wanting and as a result have a negative impact on service delivery. Some general conclusions have been drawn from the research and certain recommendations made to improve the overall performance of metropolitan areas in South Africa. Finally, a model for metropolitan governance is suggested. The recommendation emphasises the need for a paradigm shift – a model which prescribes reduction in the size of municipalities so as to increase their efficiency and effectiveness is strongly recommended.

Keywords: Metropolitan, Governance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy, Equity, Service, Urbanisation

1. Introduction

Recently, the issue regarding metropolitan governance has become a subject of major debate. More specifically, issues relating to service provision, maintenance and improvement of infrastructure, challenges of management, the demands of an ever-growing population, the generation of revenue, employment creation and the need for an overall improvement in quality of life of communities have come to the fore.

Indeed, metropolitan governance has become a very complex issue. In order to understand the role and purpose of metropolitan governments it is necessary to appreciate that these important public sector institutions echo the functionings of similar organisations in the private sector. To this extent, the establishment and organisational structure of metropolitan governments should be based on the similar theoretical and institutional foundations as any organisation in the private sector. According to Scott (1987:22) “... organisations are collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting relatively highly formalised social structures” (Scott, 1987: 22).

This suggests that when metropolitan governments are established they must be structured against the backdrop of specific goals and within sound theoretical and institutional frameworks. Such a perspective is the norm in organisations that operate within the private sector. As much as metropolitan governments operate under similar conditions, in South Africa and other emerging economies, the political aspect seems to have gained ascendancy, particularly at the expense of sound operational and institutional considerations. As a result, there is a tendency for metropolitan
governments to become dysfunctional and they seem to fail in their prime duty of service provision to the very communities which they are beholden to in terms of the democratic process.

In terms of the White Paper on Local Government (1998: 59-60) there are three specific reasons for the establishment of metropolitan governments:

- to create a basis for equitable and socially just metropolitan governance;
- to promote strategic land-use planning and co-ordinate public investment in physical and social infrastructure; and
- to develop a city-wide framework for economic and social development and enhance the economic competitiveness and well-being of the city.

In terms of the above, the democratic government in South Africa chose the following roles and duties for metropolitan governments, namely,

- City-wide spatial integration and socially inclusive development;
- the promotion of equity, social justice and economic prosperity;
- the promotion of local democracy; and

The rationale for instituting metropolitan governments in South Africa as well as the roles and duties of these bodies outlined above appear universal. Furthermore, the new post-apartheid government sought to simultaneously use these institutions to redress the imbalances of the apartheid era.

2. Metropolitan Modelling

There are many models used in the planning of municipalities around the world. The key however, is that municipalities must be designed and structured to deliver basic and other essential services to its citizens in an efficient, effective, economical and equitable manner. To this end, it is important that these institutions possess the necessary quality, expertise and institutional integrity for the proper exercise of their mandates. Such an organisational constituency should include a sustainable economy with the potential for growth, adequate resources, good quality leadership and appropriate technical skills within manageable areas of jurisdictions. In developing countries, in particular, certain critical factors impact on the viability of local municipalities and must be considered when these institutions are established. Some factors that ought to be considered are as follows:

- the economy and potential new economy of the region (including poverty/wealth levels);
- natural resources;
- existing and future populations;
- methods of access to citizens;
- development challenges;
- state of existing infrastructure; and
- backlogs in infrastructure and services.

In comparison to local municipalities, metropolitan governments on the other hand possess a fairly common type of structure the world over, barring South Africa. Metropolitan governments are usually established in metropolitan areas. South Africa’s blue print for local government
transformation, the White Paper on Local Government defines a metropolitan area as, “large settlements with high population densities, complex and diversified economies, and a high degree of functional integration across a larger geographic area than the normal jurisdiction of a municipality” (White Paper on Local Government, 1998: 58). When one considers metropolitan governments in terms of this definition a metropolis such London, New York or Tokyo comes to mind. The definition from the White Paper ties in with the layout of these metropolitan areas and governments. Metropolitan governments around the world are densely populated and highly developed areas. This fact is borne out in Tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: A Comparison of Population Densities in Other Metropolitan Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METROPOLITAN</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>DENSITY 1000/km²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>13000000</td>
<td>3680</td>
<td>3533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>2503281</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>3973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>3254000</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>3389000</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>3808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>5608000</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>3299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>7937932</td>
<td>999.6</td>
<td>7941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: David, 2009: 150)

Certain metropolitan governments in South Africa possess areas of jurisdiction far beyond its metropolitan area. A case in point is the eThekwini Metropolitan Unicity Council. This scenario is evident from Table 2 and Map 1 below.

Table 2: Population Density of Durban

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>DENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New unicity boundary</td>
<td>2790258</td>
<td>2297</td>
<td>1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old metropolitan boundary</td>
<td>2519995</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional rural land</td>
<td>270263</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: David, 2009: 96)

Johannesburg (Table 1) and Durban (Table 2) metropolitan governments do not have sufficient population densities when compared to other metropolitan governments in both developed and developing countries. In fact as one moves away from the developed world into the developing world the population density increases for example Lagos in Nigeria has a population density of just under 8000 people per square kilometre. In striking contrast to this phenomenon, South African metropolitan government’s population densities are far lower than even the metropolises of the developed world. South African metropolitan municipalities are unique in this regard. The additional areas if extensive, as is the case in Durban, place a strain on its resources and results in diseconomies of scale rather than the opposite. Even the available resources which are needed to sustain such a scenario have thresholds as to how far these can be stretched. To expand on the Durban scenario, Map 1 exposes this shortcoming.
Map 1: The eThekwini Metropolitan Unicity Area

The area shaded in yellow is largely the old City of Durban’s area of jurisdiction during the apartheid era. The areas shaded in red were, and some of these still are, dense informal settlements that abutted the old Durban boundary. It is this region, both yellow and red shaded areas that constitute (with some stretch of the imagination) high population densities and a complex and diversified economy, and a high degree of functional integration which can possibly qualify this region as a metropolitan area. What the authorities did however was to extend that area to include vast tracks of rural land (see dotted line) to establish a ‘metropolitan municipality’ during the interim phase of transformation in year 1995. During the final phase of transformation in year 2000 the boundary of this ‘metropolitan municipality’ was extended further to include even more rural land depicted on Map 1 by the solid red line. This growth in geographical size, population density and number of households is depicted in Table 3, below.

Table 3: Boundary Determination and Size of Durban
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro boundary:</th>
<th>Geographic size in kms²</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Population density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERIM PHASE</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>2519995</td>
<td>609358</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL PHASE</td>
<td>2297</td>
<td>2790258</td>
<td>645744</td>
<td>1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>270263</td>
<td>36388</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage increase</td>
<td>+68</td>
<td>+11</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>-66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From Map 1 and Tables 1; 2; and 3 above, the following is evident:

- the area covering the yellow and red shades in Map 1 have elements that may constitute a metropolitan area;

- the metropolitan boundary of the interim phase (the blue dotted line) in Map 1 produced a population density well lower the norm in the developed world, let alone the developing world; and

- in the final phase of transformation massive rural lands were added to the existing boundary reducing the population density even further.

In the case of the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality it is clear that the metropolitan boundary extends well beyond the metropolitan area. Whilst the notion that rich areas must subsidise poorer areas is well acknowledged, it must be remembered that resources possess thresholds on how far they can be stretched and retain their utility value. Surpassing the thresholds of resources often results in diseconomies of scale rather than the opposite. In the case of the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality it faced huge challenges during the interim phase when its boundary was much smaller suddenly saw its challenges soar incredibly high with an even more daunting demarcation.

3. The Durban Metropolitan Municipality

In the case of the Durban region, its challenges are critical to the size and form of its municipality. Besides, when a municipality is underperforming, as is the eThekwini Municipality, “it must review the method of delivery and decide on the required organisational restructuring; the required capacity-building and training and/or the use of outsourcing and alternative service delivery mechanisms (Kroukamp 2001, 23). In view of all of the above, a new strategic model is proposed for the Durban region.

A two tier system of metropolitan government based upon the following structure:

1] an overarching metropolitan council responsible for metropolitan wide master planning; equitable service delivery and funds distribution; management and procurement of water and electricity on behalf of local councils and policy and tariff determinations; and

2] strong autonomous local councils for the distribution and provision of municipal services per schedules 4 and 5 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
It is strongly recommended that the boundary demarcation be revisited in order to reduce the inefficiencies brought about by the incorporation of such massive under-developed areas into the metropolitan area of jurisdiction. ‘Demergers’ are not unusual and can be done, as was the case in Canada. In that situation, the Headingley area of the City of Winnipeg was allowed to secede from the unicity which had come into effect some 20 years earlier (Sancton 2005, 323). Reducing the boundary to the outer perimeter of the orange areas in Map 1 will immediately increase the population density, concentrate the economy within the metropolitan area, alleviate pressures on resources and improve efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the rendering of municipal services.

The intention is not to deprive the outlying areas from municipal services but rather to use limited resources where the population and demands for such services are highly concentrated. The route the South African government took when it established some of the municipalities went against the grain of a key principle in democratic states, namely, ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’. The result of diluting resources to a point where they have little value alters this principal to ‘the least good for the greatest number’. As the economy grows and extends beyond the proposed boundary through increased settlements and demands for municipal services, then boundaries should be reviewed. Until that takes place national and provincial authorities should provide municipal services to areas beyond properly defined metropolitan regions. In the case of urban demarcations, boundaries should follow developments; or else boundaries may well be set without limits, much to the detriment of proper and adequate service delivery in areas of high concentrations of people.

Once a more manageable demarcation is sought, the metropolitan area will still be fairly large with a population of several million people, still too large for all power (both political and administrative) to be centralised. Reasonably sized local municipalities with wide ranging authority should then be instituted which can then take local government to local people over the whole metropolitan region. The breaking up of the metropolitan region into several local municipalities’ will make interaction with local communities’ easier and far more meaningful. Manageable size municipal areas also make efficiency and effectiveness highly possible and plausible. Accountability can become a reality due to the closeness of the municipality to the public. It must be added that the basic theory of two tier metropolitan government is simple: a metropolitan authority is established for those functions of local government that require a metropolitan-level solution, usually metropolitan-wide land-use planning and major inter municipal physical infrastructure; and within the metropolitan government local municipalities are established to provide local-level services such as zoning and recreational facilities (Sancton 2005, 321). According to Manor (1999, 55), there are four necessary conditions for decentralised institutions to succeed. These are “sufficient powers to influence the local environment including significant development activities, sufficient financial resources, adequate administrative capacity and reliable accountability mechanisms” (Manor 1999, 55). These features have been weak in African municipalities (Layele & Olowu 1989). In recent years, however, there has been a slow shift away from centralist control governments to more decentralised structures. In South Africa, though, metropolitan governments have opted for central control. These massive central structures have a dramatic impact on efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equity. A further setback is that accountability and responsiveness to the citizenry becomes a challenge.

Decentralisation and improved local governance cannot be abstracted from the movement toward greater democratisation. This is known as the ‘third wave’ of democratisation (Huntington 1991). The key initiative of ‘governance’ is to strengthen the relationship between civil society and government structures which can and should enhance public participation in the decision-making process of governments. This relationship is more visible and robust at local rather than at higher levels of government, as the trend towards decentralisation has probably reinforced local initiatives.
towards improved governance (Stren and Cameron, 2005: 278). Furthermore, the subsidiarity principle of “governance should take place as close as possible to the citizens” (Community Law Centre, 2005) can become a reality.

It is recommended that the metropolitan council be made up of representatives of each of the local councils and should only deal with broad policy issues such as rating policies, the setting of tariffs, negotiating prices for bulk purchases where economies of scale can be yielded, integrated development planning and other broad based issues that are regional in nature. In other words, metropolitan governments should deal with issues that have an impact on the entire metropolitan region and beyond.

The metropolitan council must have the power to raise income through levying the local municipalities for a small percentage of their income, perhaps a maximum of up to 15% per annum, in order to redistribute financial resources should this be necessary.

Reducing the size of the metropolitan authority’s area of jurisdiction and further fragmenting the demarcated area into several local municipalities will reduce the bureaucracy, speed up service delivery, improve public participation in the matters of local government and certainly increase efficiency and effectiveness. The full weight of the entire metropolitan authority can still yield economic benefits through bulk buying and distribution. In essence, municipalities must be empowered and adequately resourced to govern.

Municipalities exist to serve their communities by providing them with basic services such as housing, water, electricity, refuse removal and sanitation. Municipalities also provide certain other services and facilities such as the provision of roads, street lighting, public transport, parks, libraries and museums that enhances the quality of life of its citizens. Furthermore, metropolitan governments, because of their size and developmental potential, provide certain national and international facilities such as sports arenas and conference centres.

Municipalities must provide municipal services that develop environments in which its citizens can prosper and grow to great heights. The environments that municipalities create must be conducive to all kinds of social, commercial and industrial activities to enable its citizens and visitors to live, work, worship and have leisure. Municipalities must cater for individual choices without compromising the wider interests of their communities. The leverage however must exist for this to happen.

The point is that municipalities are derivatives of the state, empowered through legislation for the purposes of providing services and facilities to all who live, work and visit the municipal area. A municipality must operate in an efficient, effective and economical manner; hence its usefulness may be called into question. A municipality is accountable to both the state and the community it serves. The control of municipalities, however, is always in the hands of its elected representatives.

The key to its success lies in what it is given at birth and how its leadership nurtures and develops it to reach its full potential.

4. Conclusion

This paper sought to establish whether metropolitan governments in South Africa are efficient, effective, economical and equitable in the delivery of municipal services. Some general
conclusions have been drawn and certain recommendations made to improve the performance of municipalities. A model for metropolitan governments is suggested. Local councils within metropolitan governments are a worldwide phenomenon used in practice to take local government to local people.

The emphasis here is on reducing the size of municipalities so as to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. This can be achieved by smaller, area-focussed bodies in which challenges can be contained and addressed through processes of meaningful consultations with all stakeholders. At the same time, they will be large enough to be economical in the delivery of services.

Authors:

Joseph David (PhD): Is a Senior Faculty Member and visiting Lecturer and Academic at the Regent Business School and works in a senior administrative position within the Durban Municipality.

Anis Mahomed Karodia (PhD): Is a Professor, Senior Faculty Member and Researcher at the Regent Business School, Durban South Africa.

References


eThekwini Municipality - Quality of Life of Durban’s people, 2000, Durban.


eThekwini Municipality – Quality of Life, 2005, Durban.


