

**MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING in
NON-METROPOLITAN AREAS**

Human Sciences Research Council: 7 April 2003

**MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING in
NON-METROPOLITAN AREAS**

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Doreen Atkinson
Ntobeko Buso
Daniel Pienaar
Human Sciences Research Council

Shai Makgoba
Vista University, Welkom

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INTRODUCTION

Three themes are addressed here:

- (1) The restructuring of municipal head offices, and the achievement of strategic planning and inter-departmental co-operation at this level
- (2) The role of outlying offices (satellite towns) in promoting community-based development
- (3) Relationships between municipalities and their residents (i.e. client service).

The concrete innovations described in this paper may be regarded as the early stages of implementing a strategic management paradigm, which focuses on outputs, outcomes, customer-oriented delivery, and development management.

In the final section of the paper, it is argued that international comparisons regarding municipal restructuring should be undertaken. A typology of possible municipal restructuring is presented.

It should be noted that municipal administrative restructuring goes a long way beyond the three themes discussed in this paper, and should include alternative service delivery (e.g. outsourcing of functions, public-public partnerships, etc). However, these themes are dealt with by other teams in the ODA network, and will not be discussed here. Furthermore, it is argued in the final section, that achieving strategic management is probably more important, in the short-term, than pursuing more ambitious market-oriented styles of management.

1. METHODOLOGY

The Terms of Reference required a survey of municipalities, and the derivation of “best practices”.

This required an analysis of a significant number of municipalities, from a predominantly qualitative perspective. In fact, sufficient qualitative depth was required, to uncover and explore “best practices”.

This suggested that a survey should be done amongst the predominantly stronger municipalities. However, it had to be done in a context where no-one actually knows – other than by impressionistic evidence – which the “stronger” municipalities are.

For the purposes of sampling, the team used a referral method. The team contacted known experts in the local government field, as well as provincial SALGA offices. These contacts were asked which municipalities they considered to be the “stronger” and more effective, from a *developmental* point of view – i.e. municipalities which initiate and implement significant development programmes or projects. The team also attempted to get a good spread of municipalities across the nine provinces.

From this procedure, a shortlist of 54 municipalities were derived. These were then divided into three groups of 18 municipalities. These groups roughly represented the larger, medium-size and small towns. It should be noted that municipal jurisdictions

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no longer correspond with town boundaries; nevertheless, the size of the towns gave some indication of the likely sophistication and functions (urban vs. rural functions) of municipalities. District Municipalities were grouped with the larger municipalities.

Three research staff each received one of these categories. It was felt that each staff member should focus predominantly on larger, medium or smaller towns.

At present, telephonic interviews are being conducted with Municipal Managers or Corporate Services Managers or IDP Managers. It is difficult to specify which official should be interviewed, as there are often problems of availability. Faxes are sent, with the questionnaire attached, to the Municipal Manager, who then decides whether he or she will handle the interview, or allocate it to a different official.

During an early review session, the researchers found that the telephonic interviews are not always satisfactory, for two reasons: Firstly, some municipalities simply do not respond; secondly, it is sometimes difficult to achieve the required level of depth in a general and wide-ranging telephone conversation.

Two supplementary approaches have now been adopted: (1) Follow-up telephone conversations with municipalities whose preliminary interviews indicated interesting potential "best practices", and (2) On-site interviews with selected municipalities, selected on the basis of their good reputation, and on their driving distance from Bloemfontein, mainly in the southern parts of North-West Province.

Twenty following interviews have been conducted:¹

	Name of municipality	Location
Small towns	Moses Kotane	North-West Province
	Umvoti	Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal
	Karoo-Hoogland	Sutherland, Northern Cape
	Nxuba	Adelaide, Eastern Cape
	Letsemeng	Koffiefontein, Free State
	Ga-Segonyana	Kuruman, Northern Cape
Medium and large towns	Klerksdorp	Klerksdorp, North West
	Mangaung	Bloemfontein, Free State
	Polokwane	Polokwane, Northern Province
	Sol Plaatje	Kimberley, Northern Cape
	Potchefstroom	Potchefstroom, North West
	uMhlatuze	Richards Bay, KZN
District Municipalities	Ukahlamba	Barkly East, Eastern Cape
	Ugu	Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal
	Amathole	East London, Eastern Cape
	Uthukela	Ladysmith, KZN
	Waterberg	
	Midvaal	Meyerton

¹ Two of the municipalities did not show any particularly good practices, and were therefore excluded from the report.

2. CURRENT POLICY WITH REGARDS TO MUNICIPAL ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

There is, currently, totally inadequate guidance to municipalities regarding their organisational structuring. The main guide is the Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000), in Sections 4, 6 and 51. On the face of it, Section 51 is not particularly onerous; however, when read alongside Sections 4 and 6 (which outline the functions of municipalities), then the challenge of creating a development-oriented administration becomes very significant indeed.

Section 51 deals with the organisation of municipal administrations. The main principles are:

- To be responsive to the needs of the local community
- To facilitate a culture of public service and accountability amongst its staff
- To be performance-oriented and focused on the developmental duties as required by sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution² (see below)
- To ensure that its managers and other staff members align their roles and responsibilities with the priorities of the municipality's IDP
- To establish clear relationships, and facilitate co-operation, between the political office-bearers, the administration, and the local community
- To perform its functions through operationally effective and appropriate administrative units and mechanisms, including departments and other functional or business units, and where necessary, on a decentralised basis
- To assign clear responsibilities for the management and co-ordination of these administrative units and mechanisms
- To delegate responsibility to the most effective level within the administration, and
- To involve staff in management decisions as far as practicable.

Several key features should be noted about this list of requirements:

1. **The primacy of development:** Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution are paramount, and in particular, Section 153's requirements: "A municipality must structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote *social and economic development* of the community. Clearly, municipalities are envisaged as output-oriented organisations, in a much stronger sense than was the case before the passage of the Systems Act in 2000.
2. **The need to align structures to the IDP:** In the Systems Act, the IDP is regarded as the guide for municipal activities, as well as the roles and responsibilities of managers and staff

² These Constitutional sections refer to the objects of local government to provide democratic and accountable government, to ensure the provision of services in a sustainable manner, to promote social and economic development, to promote a safe and healthy environment, and to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government (Section 152).

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3. **The desirability of decentralisation:** Section 51 of the Systems Act specifically refers to the structuring of departments on a decentralised basis, presumably to promote co-operation with local communities. This idea is taken forward in Section 85-6, which refer to the creation of Municipal Service Districts as internal spatial units within the Municipality.
4. **The centrality of community participation:** A further key dimension of municipal government is the emphatic need to involve the “community” (the term is not defined in the Act) in decision-making and implication. This requirement emerges, for example, in the following Sections of the Structures Act:
 - Section 4: The Council of a Municipality ... has the duty to “encourage the involvement to the local community”, and “consult the community about (1) the level, quality, range and impact of municipal services provided by the municipality ... and (ii) the available options for service delivery”
 - Section 5(1) stipulates that members of the local community have the right to “(i) contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality; and (ii) submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints”
 - Section 6 requires that a municipality’s administration must “be responsive to the needs of the local community; and “facilitate a culture of public service and accountability amongst staff”
 - The entire Chapter 4 is devoted to community participation, notably with regard to the drafting of IDPs, the design of performance management systems, the monitoring and review of municipal performance, and the drafting of the municipal budget.

In addition to these provisions, a close examination of municipalities’ potential developmental functions poses even more formidable challenges for the future. Section 4(2) of the Systems Act requires municipalities to “contribute, together with other organs of state, to the progressive realisation of the fundamental rights contained in sections 24, 25, 26, 27 and 29 of the Constitution”. These rights are:

- Rights to an *environment* that is not harmful to their health or well-being (Section 24 of the Constitution)
- Rights to *property* (Section 25) – and significantly, this includes “the nation’s commitment to *land reform*, and to reforms to bring about *equitable access to all South Africa’s natural resources*”
- Rights to *adequate housing* (Section 26), and there is a positive injunction that the state “*must* take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right”
- Rights to *health care, food, water and social security* (Section 27), which includes health care services, sufficient food and water, and social security, including “if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance”. Once again, there is a positive injunction that the state must “take

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reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these right”.

- Rights to *education* (Section 29), which includes basic education, adult basic education, and further education.

Several observations can be made about these rights, which, significantly, municipalities are *obliged* to implement, according to the Municipal Systems Act:

- The rights are defined in very inclusive and holistic terms
- Municipalities have a positive obligation to promote *land reform* (which is not mentioned in Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution)
- Municipalities have a positive obligation to promote people’s access to *housing* (which is not mentioned in Schedules 4 and 5)
- Municipalities have a positive obligation to promote people’s access to health care (which is mentioned in the Schedules, but has been whittled away by the recent definition of “health” as only “environmental health”)
- Municipalities have a positive obligation to promote people’s access to *social safety nets* (which is not mentioned in the Schedules)
- Municipalities have a positive obligation to promote people’s access to *education* (which is not mentioned in the Schedules).

In other words, the functions of municipalities, as envisaged in the Systems Act, are significantly more wide-ranging than those stipulated in the Schedules of the Constitution.

3. PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURING

How, then, should a developmental municipality be structured to take on these developmental challenges?

In many South African municipalities, basic organisational and developmental questions have not been addressed at all – for example, the relationship between municipal head offices and outlying offices; the creation of co-operative mechanisms amongst municipal departments; and improving municipalities’ public relations within their communities.

According to the old adage, “Form should follow function”. This means that the restructuring of municipalities should be based on their developmental goals. In this context, the emphasis has been placed primarily on the drafting of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), on the grounds that IDPs should be the foundation for municipal structure.

The argument that “Form should follow function” is, generally, a good one. The argument, as expressed in the Systems Act, is that IDPs should be the framework

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according to which municipalities should be organised. However, in many cases, the basics of municipal organisational structuring has not been addressed, with unfortunate consequences for basic service delivery. The inordinate focus on drafting IDPs has drawn attention away from this basic requirement of administrative competence.

As will be argued below, the main focus of municipal organisational transformation in South Africa is currently towards achieving strategic management – a term which encompasses an emphasis on outputs, outcomes, customer service, integrated decision-making and delivery, and performance measurement. (This is a more narrow view of organisational transformation than market-oriented perspectives, which emphasise outsourcing, alternative service delivery, privatisation, and contractual relationships).

Even though the goals of strategic management are more limited than the movement to market-oriented management, the challenges for municipalities should not be underestimated. The “good cases” described in this paper are often the product of many months, or even years, of debate and effort within the respective municipalities. Such “good cases” are remarkable achievements in their own right, since they are often achieved in contexts of resource constraints, rapid environmental change (e.g. the re-demarcation of municipal boundaries in 2000), rapid policy changes at national level, and far-reaching levels of staff turnover.

In the sections below, three issues are examined: (1) The functioning of municipal head offices, (2) The relationship between head offices and outlying offices, and (3) Municipalities’ orientation to client service. In all cases, some positive features have been found, despite the lack of guidance regarding organisational design.

4. HEAD OFFICE MANAGEMENT

A few observations can be made regarding medium-sized, smaller and more rural municipalities. Traditionally, smaller municipalities in South Africa consist of three Departments: Administration or Corporate Services, Finance, and Technical. The Technical Department is often the most important delivery department at present, since it carries responsibility for the ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) of municipal infrastructure, roads, pavements and open space.

By default, technical departments usually become responsible for “development” – which is not surprising, due to the heavy bias towards infrastructural projects (such as projects funded by the Consolidated Municipal Infrastructure Programme, or the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry). These departments are given the nominal responsibility of overseeing (they would prefer to call it “project management”) the building of things that are usually undertaken by external service providers. The real oversight (project management) responsibility often lies with the consultants (engineers, architects or other professionals who designed the project). Thus the technical department is responsible for managing and ensuring compliance with massive (in terms of volume and complexity) contracts, but they do not have contract management skills.

This type of structure leaves little scope for real community development to take place on a significant scale. The current system of municipal organization overloads

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the senior staff in the Finance, Administration and Technical Department. Department heads often become swamped in a variety of projects. This is usually in addition to their normal line staff functions. Many of these staff members lack project and contract management skills, and in particular, skills of interacting with developing communities. Due to the existing levels of overwork in municipalities – often due to staff cuts, in turn caused by rising wage bills, in turn caused by trade union pressure – many municipalities simply outsource development projects to consultants. While consultants may have specialised knowledge, they cannot offer prolonged support to communities during and after implementation of projects. In rural areas, consultants typically pay fleeting visits to project sites. They are also very expensive.

What, then, would an IDP-guided organisational design look like?

Firstly, it will be important for municipalities to be primarily “*output-based*”. Such municipalities would focus on developmental outputs such as infrastructural projects, poverty alleviation, community projects, or investment promotion. In smaller municipalities, this may involve the creation of a single, strong Developmental Department as the primary centre-piece of the municipal organization.

Secondly, in such an output-oriented municipality, the administrative, financial and technical departments would be primarily aimed at *supporting the developmental functions* (whether located in the economic, social services or technical departments). Their allocation of resources would be substantially programme- and project-oriented. The development departments would be able to call on the supporting departments for resources, in different combinations, on different programmes or projects.

Thirdly, given the revised conception of municipal functions, developmental municipalities need *much higher levels of developmental staff* than they have at present. Such staff should have some qualifications and experience in development management, programme management or project management. In a typical smaller or more rural municipality, it is possible to envisage a Head of Development Department, assisted by at least three Project Managers. In the context of amalgamated municipalities, such Project Managers should be spatially distributed, i.e. located within each town or rural settlement, so that they can offer hands-on project guidance and support. It goes without saying that the appointment of development staff should avoid the pitfalls of political patronage, and focus strongly on their experience within development organisations and programmes.

Fourth, the need for municipal departments to *co-operate and co-ordinate* their activities in the implementation of development projects will be intensified. In small municipal establishments, this need not be a severe problem, since most of the senior and middle-level officials will probably be able to co-ordinate their activities informally. However, it may be necessary for their existing co-ordination efforts to be made more strategic and with a greater degree of long-term vision.

As IDPs are implemented, development departments will need constant inputs from the support departments (Administration, Finance and Technical). This creates a classical problem of cross-departmental co-ordination and co-operation. For example, an LED or poverty alleviation or land reform project may require financial inputs (capital or operating expenditure), administrative inputs (e.g. staff, training, buildings or facilities), and technical inputs (e.g. equipment and vehicles).

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Elements of “matrix organization” will be needed to resolve this situation. This means that specific Programme or Project Managers will be given the responsibility for liaising directly with senior and middle-level officials within the support departments. Clearly, there is scope for clashes and confusion, as support officials become subject to the demands of their line department heads and the Programme Managers simultaneously. However, given the multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature of most development projects, there is simply no other way to do this. A way has to be found of giving Programme Managers sufficient authority to lever resources from the support departments.

Each municipality will probably resolve this problem in its own way. Various suggestions can be made for possible solutions. Firstly, all programmes and projects need to become cost centres, with their own budgets. Secondly, the resources of municipal support departments need to be costed (e.g. rate per hour of staff time, and vehicles). Thirdly, municipal support departments need to specify, in their annual budgets, the amount of resources they can provide to each development programme or project. Fourth, programme or project managers will need to do their own cost accounting. Finally, a uniform, easy to implement and understandable financial management system should be introduced, to assist Head Office staff and branch managers to manage revenue and expenditure.

Co-ordination and mutual adjustment of priorities will be the order of the day. This will require a high degree of leadership from the Municipal Manager, who will need to be sufficiently and constantly informed of project requirements and dynamics. Turf jealousies and rivalries about resources will need to be amicably sorted out.

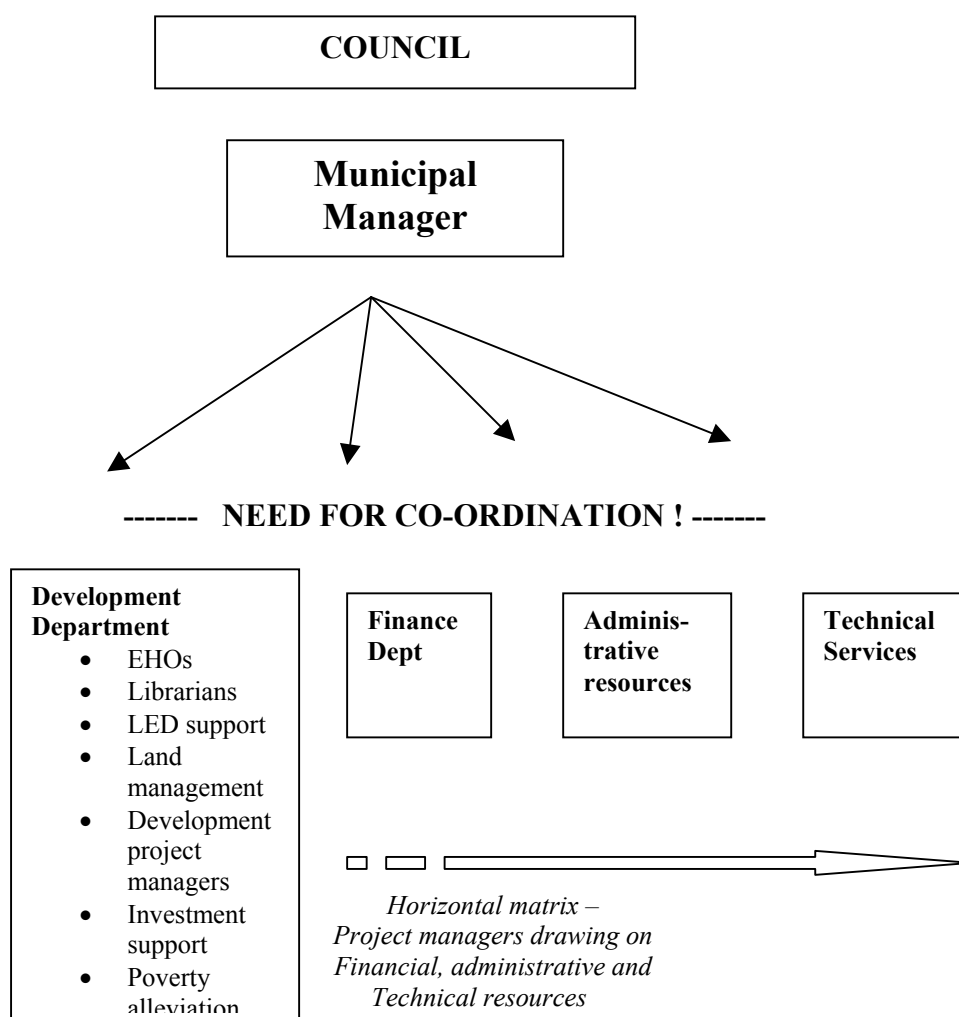
Clearly, this approach will require a high degree of management skill on the part of the Municipal Manager (or his or her nominee). Municipal Managers must exert a strong integrative force in order to secure consensus and co-operation between the spatially-based Development Officers and the head office staff of the municipal line departments. Such Municipal Managers need to have sufficient developmental knowledge and experience, as well as personal qualities, to integrate the spatial and vertical lines of authority within a Municipality.

Section 55 of the Municipal Systems Act makes rigorous demands on Municipal Managers (i.e. CEOs). Managers are tasked with (and held accountable for) “the formation and development of an economical, effective, efficient and accountable administration”, which is equipped to carry out a municipality’s IDP, which is also operating according to the municipality’s performance management system, and which is responsive to the needs of the local community. Clearly, the Act envisages the appointment of persons as Managers who have a substantial abilities regarding strategic development management.

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Diagram 1: Proposed municipal organisational structure



4.1 Staffing

In the survey, municipalities were asked what their levels of white collar and blue collar staff were.

Table 2: Staffing levels

	Name of municipality	White collar	Blue collar
Small towns	Moses Kotane	35	40
	Umvoti	63	114
	Karoo-Hoogland	28	72
	Nxuba	37	100
	Letsemeng	75	106
	Ga-Segonyana	76	137
Medium and large towns	Klerksdorp	Not available	Not available
	Mangaung	1005	3520
	Polokwane	About 404	About 600

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	Sol Plaatje	539	929
	Mbombela	About 400	About 800
	Potchefstroom	About 425	About 556
District Municipalities	Ukahlamba	Not clear	About 180
	Ugu	150	468
	Amathole	466	305
	Uthukela	81	292
	Waterberg	40	14

Interviewees were not explicitly asked whether they consider themselves to be under-staffed, or whether they need more developmental staff. (Such questions would require much more intensive on-site investigation than can be achieved in a telephonic survey). However, the following question was posed:

Question: What types of staff does your municipality need most urgently?

Some of the answers related to secretarial staff or maintenance staff, while others related to developmental staff:

Municipality	Secretarial staff needs	Development staff needs
Moses Kotane	Professional secretaries Revenue collectors with computer literacy skills	
Umvoti	Technical skills	Planning and project management, social development and facilitation skills
Karoo Hoogland	Financial management, human resource management, technical skills	Town planning, spatial development
Nxuba	Municipal secretary Building inspector	LED officer
Letsemeng		LED officer and IDP officer
Ga-Segonyana	Middle management	Middle management
Mangaung	Customer services clerks	LED, project managers, community consultants, community trainer for empowerment programme, marketing specialists
Polokwane	Debt collectors Traffic officers	
Mbombela	Traffic officers Technical skills	
Potchefstroom	Accounting	Health, public safety
Ugu DM	Waste management staff	LED officers, field staff
Amathole DM	Technical and finance skills	

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	(to reduce costly mistakes)	
Uthukela DM		IT staff
Waterberg DM		More developmental staff especially in the Planning, Social Services and Economic Development Department.
UMhlatuze DM		Artisans: Electricians and plumbers

Both of these categories are significant. The need for secretarial and technical staff indicates that several basic municipal activities are still understaffed – in particular, technical operations and maintenance may be affected. The need for “developmental staff” indicates that municipalities are increasingly suffering the impacts of increased levels of programme and project implementation, often without any project management experience.

4.2 Allocation of Development Functions on the Organogram

One of the problems with many municipalities is that key functions are not recognised as “developmental”. This is the case, for example, several of the municipalities interviewed. They have environmental health officers, librarians, museum staff, and planning staff, primary health care, or “land matters”, who are located in the Administrative or Corporate Services Department. Nxuba Municipality, for example, has the IDP and LED function in its administration department, and Letsemeng Municipality has primary health located in its administrative department. In Ugu District Municipality, even the HIV/AIDS programme is located within the administrative department.

Such functions have huge developmental potential, and can play a notable support role to other development projects, e.g. by raising sanitation or environmental awareness, or by promoting entrepreneurship, or by promoting tourism.

Question: What are the components of your Administrative or Corporate Services Department?

Ideally, administrative departments should contain functions such as in Moses Kotane (general administration, disciplinary committee or corporate affairs), or in Umvoti (protection services, committee administration, registry, staff housing and municipal halls).

Question: Where, in your organogram, are the following services located: Environmental Health, Libraries, Museums, LED, Land Management, HIV/AIDS Programmes, Poverty Alleviation Programmes?

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Some municipalities have brought their developmental functions together in a single department:

Ga-Segonyana (Kuruman), for example, has a Community Services Division which includes traffic, libraries, parks, recreation, housing and health.

Mangaung Municipality (Bloemfontein) has a Community Services and Social Development Department, which includes environmental health, libraries, museums, HIV/AIDS Programmes and Poverty Alleviation Programmes.

Mangaung also has an Economic Development and Planning Department which includes planning, economic development, property management, environmental management, housing, SMME support, investment support, tourism, spatial land use planning, transport planning and building management and control. These examples can be regarded as “best practices” of consolidating developmental functions organisationally, to promote synergies.

Sol Plaatjie Municipality (Kimberley) has a Community Services Department which includes emergency services (ambulances), library services, markets, environmental health, parks and recreation, and traffic services.

Amathole DM has a curious mix of divisions located in the Administration Department. This includes Museums, Land Management and Housing. Furthermore, LED is located in the Municipal Manager’s office. The Mayor’s Office has recently been established and will in future be playing a key role in driving special programmes (e.g. HIV/AIDS and LED). This is a novel approach, and its success or failure should be closely noted.

Some municipalities have taken a lot of effort to bring “development functions” closer together. A notable case is Waterberg DM, which has a Strategic Planning Department (which includes the IDP function and legal services), and a Planning, Social Services and Economic Development Department. This Department includes economic development, town planning, social services, health services, and administration and secretarial services.

Another excellent case is Potchefstroom, where the Service Delivery Directorates act as a cluster in the same department. These directorates include: Infrastructure, Housing, Health and Environment, Public Safety, Social Services, and Local Economic Development. However, Land Management is still located in Corporate Services, which may not be conducive to integrated development.

4.3 Securing inter-departmental strategic co-operation

As stated above, the need for strategic synergies between municipal departments has become a very important priority, both in the drafting and the implementation of IDPs. Financial Departments and Administration Departments (or “Corporate Services”) have to provide the means whereby front-line development departments (e.g. Technical Services or Community Services) can initiate development projects and programmes.

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Question: Do Heads of Department meet to discuss policies or programmes? If so, how often?

Some municipalities gave encouraging answers in this regard. In Moses Kotane, for example, monthly meetings are held to discuss housing and spatial strategies, and Heads of Department discuss strategic budget decisions (such as the decision to set water tariffs at a low rate). In Umvoti Municipality, weekly meetings are held on topics such as IDPs, performance management, land use management, and financial strategies. In Karoo-Hoogland Municipality, monthly management meetings are held to discuss strategic planning and specific projects. Strategies such as a new credit control policy, the indigent policy and the compilation of a five-year financial strategy have been discussed at management meetings.

It is possible that such meetings concern primarily operational and urgent issues, instead of strategic planning. In the case of Ukahlamba District Municipality, for example, Heads of Department meet at least once a week to discuss budget priorities and negotiate finances for their own department. Consequently, the discussions tend to take the form of trade-offs, i.e. which department needs money most urgently and for what purpose. Policies on levy collection, car schemes, and IDP implementation are taken collectively since they affect all departments.

Mangaung Municipality has a strong Executive Management Team (EMT). Meetings take place every second Friday of each month. Examples of policies which have been drafted are the alignment of departmental IDP plans, a procurement policy, a language policy, client services strategy, and an economic development strategy.

A good example of an interdepartmental strategy took place in Ugu District Municipality, where "Project Turnaround" was adopted to foster a new culture of organisational development and promote Batho Pele principles. In Uthukela District Municipality, free water provision was a collaborative decision that was taken by all the Heads of Departments; and capital works projects involve every HOD so they meet to discuss every project undertaken by the municipality. In Waterberg, HODs meet once a week. Policies discussed are IDP, placement policy, employment equity, budgetary process and community based public works programme (CBPWP).

A different approach is that of the Klerksdorp Local Municipality, where the Office of the Speaker has a small policy unit. Furthermore, Heads of Departments meet with the Municipal Manager twice a month. At the first meeting, issues relating to the Council is discussed. The second meeting is devoted to strategic issues. According to the interviewee, "A policy is usually initiated by specific department. From there on, it goes to the Municipal Manager's office. After that, it goes to the Executive Mayor's office. It is his responsibility to make a value judgment whether the policy fits into the council's political imperatives. If a given policy will only influence the council's internal activities or administrative issues, this is the normal route of policy-making. However, if a policy will have an effect on the community, then we are obliged to undertake extensive public consultation".

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4.4 *The role of the Municipal Manager's Office*

In developmental municipalities, which involve numerous sectoral activities over a large jurisdiction, the integrative role of the Municipal Manager becomes imperative. In Klerksdorp, the Municipal Manager's office contains an audit office, it does Performance Management, and it monitors whether proposed policies will fit into the political imperatives of the municipality.

One good example of this is Mangaung Municipality, where the office of the Manager includes several important functions:

- Strategic Planning and Organisational Transformation
- IDP
- Auditing
- Performance management
- Support to Executive Mayor and Speaker
- IGR
- Gender and Disability
- Client services
- Legal services
- Internal audit
- Communication and Committee support

Amathole DM has also given a lot of thought to its municipal manager's office. It plans the creation of a Strategic Management Unit, to advise the entire municipality on development goals, and strengthen interdepartmental decision-making. Furthermore, the strategic role of the Municipal Manager's office will be enhanced by an integrated Municipal Information System, as well as an Internal Audit Unit. Interestingly, the LED strategic function is placed in the Municipal Manager's office, while LED implementation is placed in a Department of Administration and Project Management (alongside land reform and IDP implementation).

4.5 *The role of Corporate Services Departments*

Corporate Services Departments, or Departments of Administration and Finance, are important "input" departments. They provide the "raw material" (people, money, and equipment) which are needed to make development initiatives succeed. It is important that these Departments provide the full range of resources needed; however, it is also important that these Departments do not become ends in themselves. They should remain "lean and mean", providing streamlined support services to the "output" departments.

In the case of Mangaung Municipality, the Corporate Services Department provides the numerous important services. It provides the organisation with advice with regards to **all Human Resources issues**, as well as interpretation of policies and teaching them how apply those policies. It is also a corporate services function to train and develop staff and develop skills plans. The **Placement function** is also within this directorate, where other directorates inform the employment section of their staff needs and this section plays a supportive role in providing them with HR needs. The **Labour Relations** provides advice on disciplinary matters, interpretation

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of legislation and conditions of service. **Information technology** assists in communication, the department also assists with regard to all IT related problems. **Personnel Administration** deals with records, leave, funds, administration and medical aids. **Stores Administration** deals with the purchase of equipment and stationary for other departments according to the rules and regulations of the municipality. **Property Management services** makes sure that all corporate buildings are well-kept, the usage thereof is well managed and there is control in funds that are accumulated in the usage of the property that can be rented out. **Office Automation** assists with telephone records, record keeping being hard copies and electronic data.

In Sol Plaatje Municipality, the Corporate Services Department also assists developmental departments by bringing them up to date regarding national regulations.

The interviewee from Midvaal District Municipality captured the kind of day-to-day support which Corporate Services provides: “ A Departmental Head may complain that there’s a problem in his or her department, then we (Support Services) will discuss the problem to see how we can become involved. For example, the Head may complain that the department is critically short of personnel, and that it can’t produce fast enough. The question from our side (Support Services) will be: how can we help? Can we take over some of the functions? An elementary example is something like letterheads, and (business) cards. You can market yourself or your department, we handle it on behalf of all the departments”.

Potchefstroom Municipality has undertaken an extensive review of the functioning of Corporate Services. Potchefstroom’s IDP refers to ‘e-governance’ strategy. As the interviewee said, “In order to become a model council, in order to improve productivity, to keep costs down, we have to develop an effective IT system. But this needs to be effective, it’s easy to shoot yourself in the foot and put system in place that wastes money. However, this needs to be well managed and implemented.”.

There are sometimes some debates about where functions should be located. In Klerksdorp, for example, Corporate Services includes Human Resources, Administration and Land Affairs. The interviewee felt that this was a wholly inappropriate allocation for Land, since Land Affairs, LED, Town Planning and Housing are closely related. Some external consultants proposed an ‘very interesting’ structure for the municipality, but the status quo prevailed, and consequently, land management is still located in Corporate Services.

4.6 *Drafting municipal budgets*

Municipal departments should have some latitude to draft their own budgets, based on their own assessments of resource requirements for development programmes. This is appropriate in the context of departments becoming cost centres in their own right.

Questions:

- Do Heads of Department draft their own departmental budgets?
- Do Heads of Department meet to discuss budget priorities?

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In Moses Kotane Municipality, Heads of Department draft their own budgets, and take them for public scrutiny through ward committees. In Ukahlamba District Municipality, Heads of Department are largely responsible for their budgets, and the same situation prevails in Karoo Hoogland Municipality. In Mangaung, Heads of Departments are involved in extensive consultation in the budget committees with the committee councillors.

In contrast to these practices, the Finance Department in Nxuba Municipality appears to occupy a pre-eminent position. It compiles the budget, based on departmental inputs, but the impression is gained that the real financial decisions are made in the Finance Department. In Letsemeng, the Heads of Departments draft their own budgets, but are guided by the Municipal Manager and the Chief Financial Officer.

Sol Plaatje Municipality has created Departmental budgeting capacity by situating a financial manager in each sub-directorate. These financial managers work closely with the executive director of each department in compiling the budget.

A well integrated process seems to be in place in Ugu District Municipality, where there is a budget process plan which aims to help departments when setting priorities. This makes them aware about the financial implications of every priority, policy and programme.

The experience of Potchefstroom Municipality is very enlightening. Departments draft their own budgets, and they are outcomes-based. The Potchefstroom interviewee captured this very well:

“There was a major effort this year to prepare outcome-based statements before the figures were considered. Departments had to show linkages to the IDP by asking ‘what is my outcome’. If the engineer says that he delivers services, he has to motivate this by saying what services. At first they said it was basic services. This is correct, the IDP states that they do deliver basic services, but if you tease them out a bit you discover some important aspects. For example, if you tell the electricians ‘do you know that you made a contribution towards crime prevention’. He agrees and you ask him if he states this in his motivation for the budget. Then he says ‘oh is this what you mean’. In other words, you should be innovative in your thinking. You should see what kinds of responses we get once people start thinking like this. This is what we mean by outcomes based budgets.”

In Potchefstroom, there is a Budget Steering Committee. The budget process is a joint political and administrative exercise, in the sense that the political responsibility lies with the executive, but administrative inputs are essential. The IDP, the budget and Performance Management System are regarded as three integrated entities. The KPIs are used as measurements, as an input to the IDP review; the IDP, in turn, has an influence on the budget.

4.7 Location of the Development Planning function

There are various likely alternatives for locating the IDP function. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages:

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- Option 1: In the Municipal Manager's Office (so that the IDP process can draw on the seniority of the Municipal Manager and thereby ensure integration and co-operation). The disadvantage is that the planning function is then separated from implementation, so that feedback loops in the project cycles are less effective.
- Option 2: In a Planning Department, which has the advantage of specialisation, but is again separated from implementation. Furthermore, other line departments may not take the Planning Department as seriously as in Option 1.
- Option 3: Combined with implementation departments (e.g. LED or a Development Department). This has the advantage of being closely linked to implementation, and can draw insights from the implementation process. However, it may not command effective co-operation from other planning departments.

Question: Where, in your organogram, is the planning function located?

Municipality	Municipal Manager	Planning Dept	Implementation Dept
Moses Kotane		Problem of poor links with technical department	
Umvoti	Seen as most strategic location		
Karoo Hoogland			In the Economic Development Dept – seen as functioning well
Letsemeng			
Ga-Segonyana		Seen as functioning very well	
Mangaung			In Directorate of Community and Social Development – the Health Services Unit
Klerksdorp		In Economic Affairs Department – seen as not optimal - should preferably be its own Department or linked with LED	
Polokwane			Directorate of Planning and Development (together with LED, land use, building inspectorate and housing) – works well
Sol Plaatje	Currently here – not satisfactory	Plans to establish Planning Directorate	

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uMhlatuze		Directorate Dev Planning – works well – alongside environmental planning, building, EIAs etc.	
Ukahlamba DM		Uses PIMSS Centre	
Ugu DM	Works well		
Amathole DM			
Midvaal DM		Dir Development & Planning. This works well – alongside LED, tourism, Local Agenda 21, Land Use, Gender etc.	

In some cases, the IDP function is still located in the Administration Department (e.g. Nxuba, Letsemeng), which can be regarded as a less suitable location, because it has none of the advantages of Options 1, 2 or 3 above. However, Amathole DM has the IDP function located in the Administration Department, and claims that it works well, because it is linked to the land and housing section of the Department. However, it may well be asked why the land and housing section are located in the Administration Department in the first place, and not in a more Development-oriented Department.

5. LINKING CENTRES AND SATELLITES: THE SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF NEW MUNICIPALITIES

The new municipalities are geographically much larger than before. In the Northern Cape, most local municipalities consists of three to four towns, and have a diameter of up to 150 km. In the Free State, huge local municipalities were created – the most radical case is that of Kopanong, which combines nine erstwhile municipalities, and has a diameter of 150 km.

The challenge of administrative amalgamation in such contexts is huge. The challenge of effective development administration is even more daunting. All lessons in development management (see, for example, Lowndes 1996) point to the fact that only a limited number of development functions can be performed from far away. Development, especially in very underdeveloped contexts, is highly labour-intensive. Mentors and guides and managers have to be available regularly, often at unscheduled times, to promote local leadership skills, build institutions, deal with practical problems, and give advice to beneficiaries.

Despite such obvious developmental pressures for spatial devolution of functions within municipalities, this issue has rarely been put on the agenda. Most municipalities are still too engrossed in amalgamating the administrations of the erstwhile TLCs to think through the far-reaching implications – in particular, the developmental tasks and staff – required for the implementation of their IDPs. At a more fundamental level, however, there is a lack of political clarity about the merits of devolution of functions. Clearly, some investigation and debate are required about

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the merits and problems associated with the spatial distribution of municipal capacity and functions.

In the questionnaire, interviewees were asked about the existence and functions of outlying offices, and their relationship with Head Office.

5.1 *Functions of outlying offices*

Question: What are the functions of the outlying offices?
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In some municipalities, different outlying offices perform completely different functions. This was their way of amalgamating the erstwhile TLCs: Where staff were located with strong skills in a specific field, that outlying office became the “centre” with regard to that function. This effectively amounts to a “deconcentration” (spatial dispersing) of Head Office functions:

- In Moses Kotane, for example, Madikwe provides technical and financial support to its residents, whereas Mogwase provides IDP and administrative support.
- In Karoo-Hoogland, Williston is the Administrative HQ, Fraserburg is the Civil and Electrotechnical HQ, Sutherland is the Economic Development HQ, and Williston and Fraserburg share the Financial Management Function.
- In Ugu District Municipality, Parkdene is mainly concerned with water services, Port Shepstone is the Administrative Head Office, and Oslo Beach focuses on water and sanitation issues.

One advantage of this model is that it has not reduced the status of the outlying offices in relation to the “capital city”. This may well have significant development implications, compared to municipalities where a large concentration of functions in the “capital city” is taking place, and development in outlying areas is becoming marginalized.

In other Municipalities, outlying offices serve basic service delivery functions. This is the most typical approach. In Umvoti, for example, field offices perform revenue collection, they control public amenities, and deliver water, sanitation, refuse collection and road maintenance. In Letsemeng, field offices function as implementation agents for various Head Office departments. In Ga-Segonyana and Sol Plaatje, their primary function is handling service accounts and serving as payment points.

Only a few municipalities are using their field offices to provide developmental initiatives at a level close to the community. Mangaung is an example of this. It has decentralised various departments, including Housing/Economic Development/ Planning; Library and Social Development; and Emergency Services. Outlying offices are located in Thaba Nchu, Heidedal, Mangaung Township, and Botshabelo.

In uMhlathuze, LED has been partially decentralised. There are health officers and LED officers at Empangeni, which caters for the western area, while Richards Bay caters for the rest of the jurisdiction. The municipality believes that it would not be

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economical to have sub-offices in all the areas, as transport routes to Empangeni and Richards Bay are adequate. The Empangeni office has significant discretion, and all projects are tailored to local conditions.

Polokwane has explicitly adopted a developmental rationale for field offices. It aims at making the outlying offices (located at Seshego, Mangweng and Sebayeng) fully functional, because the needs of the community in those areas are the same as in the main office. Outlying offices are regarded as full service centres, and not simply satellites. This is a major conceptual distinction.

In the case of District Municipalities, the outlying offices serve primarily the role of technical and road maintenance (e.g. Ukahlamba and Amathole). However, the exception of Ugu District Municipality should be noted (see above).

5.2 *Staffing of outlying offices*

The location of community-based development officers in the outlying areas is particularly important. This is the appropriate level from where community projects and assistance can be undertaken.

Questions: What developmental staff are located at the outlying offices? Do they have some discretion regarding the design and implementation of development projects? Are projects tailored to local conditions? Is such discretion and initiative encouraged by head office? How are developmental staff in outlying offices supported by Head Office?

Several municipalities do not have community developmental officers in the outlying areas (e.g. Moses Kotane, Umvoti, Nxuba).

In Moses Kotane, the senior staff can recommend staffing allocations for development projects, and allocation of funds according to local priorities and infrastructure requirements in the outlying areas. They also recommend lists of beneficiaries for projects (e.g. the use of municipal commonage). Some discretion is allowed to the outlying offices, but they need to update the municipal head office on a monthly basis.

In some cases, only librarians and clinics can count as developmental staff in the outlying areas (e.g. Letsemeng, Umvoti, Sol Plaatje), and typically, they have very little discretion or inputs in budget-making.

In the case of District Municipalities, the staff in outlying offices consist mainly of technical staff, with limited discretion (Ukahlamba and Amathole). Ugu District Municipality has a more decentralised approach, with engineers in the outlying areas. The engineers have some discretion to structure projects according to the needs of local areas, and their initiative in this regard is encouraged. There is a direct e-mail link with the main office, and monthly meetings. The field officers also participate in the budgetary process.

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Mangaung Municipality had a more pro-active approach, with “librarians, emergency services staff and housing officials” located in the outlying areas. Outlying staff make inputs at an early stage of project design, and head office encourages initiative. Regular meetings are held between head office and outlying offices to address their problems. They also make inputs into the budgetary process.

Similarly, Midvaal District Municipality emphasises the importance of the outlying offices in municipal processes: “At the moment we are working on our IDP review, and almost everybody has a role in that. Are projects tailored to local conditions? Of course, the staff at the outlying offices know what the people there want’. The staff in outlying areas are also encouraged to use their discretion and show initiative. The planning and implementation of projects in outlying areas involved extensive co-operation between the staff of the outlying offices, and those at Head Office.

The difficulties of service provision in the outlying areas were well described by the interviewee from Ga-Segonyana (a cross-border municipality based in Kuruman, which now also administers numerous communities in North West Province): “We have people with the right qualifications, but with absolutely no experience. For example, our whole Health Department consists of new people. We have too little personnel with too little experience ... The surface area of our municipality increased by 612% when the new demarcations came into effect, yet we have only received two more staff members since 2000. It is impossible for us to do the job”.

The most remarkable example of community-level service delivery is Polokwane (erstwhile Pietersburg). The municipality is strongly in favour of decentralisation. The three outlying offices are full service centres. The field staff report to a manager in those centres, and these managers have a significant degree of discretion. All projects are tailored in terms of the needs and priorities of the community, and are not prescribed by head office.

6. WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: CLIENT SERVICE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Much of the emphasis regarding municipal restructuring has been placed on the higher echelons of municipal establishments. The role of the front-line staff is seldom discussed. Nevertheless, this is where the municipality meets the citizen/resident/consumer, or put differently – “where the rubber hits the road”. The question of a positive client interface is a critical and deeply neglected matter.

A recent study of a Northern Cape municipality (Bekker and Van Zyl:2002) makes several useful recommendations: A community education and development programme should be undertaken as a matter of urgency; training and development programmes for councillors and staff should be undertaken, to change the mind-set of the Municipality towards client service; where development projects have been undertaken, “after-care programmes” should be provided. This should include Monitoring and Evaluation of client opinions.

Furthermore, councillors should meet with ward committees on a regular basis. Such meetings should be synchronized with Council meetings. Agendas and minutes of Council meetings should form the basis of discussions at meetings of ward committees. Training for Ward Committee members should be provided. Venues for Council meetings should be rotated between the various towns of the municipality,

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and this should include “road shows” in each town (including meetings with ward committees, with interest groups, Council meetings, and community feedback meetings).

Consultative strategic planning process should be undertaken in conjunction with key social and economic interests in the Municipality (e.g. agriculture, business, HIV/AIDS groups, SAPS). Innovative communication methods should be designed, e.g. newsletters, road shows, and informed communication by front-line staff. A Public Relations Officer should be appointed, who should issue a regular municipal newsletter. The PR Officer should co-ordinate press releases, act as secretary for ward committees, and organize community meetings. One-stop Service Desks should be provided, at Head Office and all the satellite offices. Officials will need multi-skilled training for these tasks. Community members should be provided with guidance in identifying development projects. Communication with all National and Provincial Line Departments should be promoted.

This formidable list illustrates the type of changes in organizational culture which many municipalities will need to experience before they become truly responsive to community needs for services, information and empowerment.

A proper analysis of the myriad aspects of customer relations would require a much more in-depth study than this survey allowed. However, the issues outlined here provide some indicators and key findings.

6.1 *Handling of complaints*

<p>Questions: How are complaints handled? In your opinion, is the system of complaints handling effective?</p>

Typically, municipalities rely on front-line staff and receptionists to handle complaints (e.g. Moses Kotane). Most smaller municipalities do not have a dedicated person to handle complaints. This is not always a problem; in Karoo-Hoogland municipalities, complaints are handled through personal interviews and immediate attention to their complaint.

Letsemeng Municipality has a customer care service centre, and a book in which all complaints are entered. These are then sent to the relevant departments for responses. This is considered to be an effective system.

In Ga-Segonyana Municipality, complaints are handled by the Corporate Administration Manager, who sends the complaints to the relevant head of department. The Corporate Administration Manager checks up to verify that action was indeed taken, and he phones complainants personally to check whether their concerns had been addressed to their satisfaction. This system works very well.

Klerksdorp has a computerised system of complaints. All complaints are logged onto a computer. The system is monitored on a daily basis by a clerk, who checks on the progress made on dealing with complaints. The telephone numbers for lodging complaints are included on the municipal accounts.

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A noteworthy document is Klerksdorp's "Consolidated Batho Pele Targets", which provides exact performance targets for each function and sub-function in the municipality. In many cases, these targets refer to customer services, e.g. length of time before responding to complaints and correspondence, and even the speed with which the telephone is answered. This document is a very useful outline of all the functions of a mid-size municipality, and a great deal of thought has evidently gone into compiling the targets for each department.

Several municipalities are experiencing difficulties in creating an effective complaints management system. This is not surprising, since complaints management requires accessibility by customers, quick referral to the relevant departments, rapid reaction to complaints, and monitoring of the reaction procedures. Mangaung has a call centre where all calls are logged onto a system, a follow-up is made and the issue is referred to the relevant department. The interviewee felt that this system is not working particularly well – it is too lengthy a procedure and this delays the responsiveness of the municipality. Similarly, Polokwane's system is also not working very well. All complaints are directed to departments via the Municipal Manager, and this causes delays. In Ukhahlamba District Municipality, the system is not effective because there is no recording of complaints received or resolved and some get lost in the system.

The complaints system in Sol Plaatje is working well. There is a call centre that handles all complaints or enquiries from the community. The call centre registers every call and refers to the relevant department. The interviewee noted that there have been a number of letters congratulating the municipality about its increased responsiveness.

Potchefstroom also has an innovative system. 'There's been a system in place for almost two years. It is called 'The Good Clean Green Line', and it is a direct telephone number that people can call to report any complaint. The Municipality also has suggestion boxes at every Directorate, and it has designed special forms that are easily accessible to the public. According to the interview, "The suggestion goes into the box, and each directorate clears the box in the middle of month. A report is then written on the basis of the suggestions received, and then discussed at the MMC forum. This is a strong and systematic process that we are very proud of".

In some cases, ward councillors are regarded as a key channel for complaints. In Moses Kotane, this was not considered very effective, because residents complain that ward councillors do not attend to their complaints. Amathole District Municipality also relies on councillors for recording complaints, but is in the process of appointing community liaison officers.

Because some district municipalities have not provided services directly to residents, they have not evolved effective complaints procedures. Some district municipalities do not record complaints, with the result that some complaints get lost in the system.

Ugu has a system of complaints handling (a customer care line and computerised logging system). However, because most residents in the rural area do not have telephones, it means that a fair number of complaints never reach the municipality.

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6.2 *Training of front-line staff*

Questions: Have front-line staff (e.g. office staff, meter readers) been trained in customer relations? If so, has it been effective? If not, has it been identified as a priority?

Several municipalities have not undertaken initiatives in this regard. But some municipalities have flagged this issue as an important one.

Karoo-Hoogland Municipality and Ga-Segonyana plan to address this issue in terms of their Skills Development Programme.

Umvoti Municipality has offered some *ad hoc* courses, and Polokwane provides training on an ongoing basis. Similarly, Amathole DM has trained almost all of its staff members in customer relations, and this continues all the time. In Uthukela DM, a number of training programmes and workshops were undertaken to improve customer relations. The council appointed a number of consultants to offer training on customer relations. In Midvaal DM, the secretaries were sent on a “polishing course”, because they often deal with the public.

One of the most encouraging responses was that of Sol Plaatje Municipality. A Batho Pele Programme on customer care was developed by the municipality to train front-line workers about customer care. The course was specifically designed to address the problems encountered by front-line staff in their dealings with the community. Similarly, Ukahlamba District Municipality has sent front-line staff on various training courses in customer relations; however, the impact of this training has not been tested.

An important intervention is that of Amathole District Municipality, which is in the process of appointing community liaison officers that would be responsible for interacting with communities, as well as dealing with complaints.

One of the most interesting municipalities is Potchefstroom, where the meter readers have been outsourced. The municipality undertook a study that showed that it was actually losing money on parking meters. “Now we have people with hand held computers, that monitor the cars (they type in your registration number) and also tell you how much money you owe before you leave. In this way they also form part of our crime prevention strategy”, according to the interviewee.

6.3 *User-friendly municipal accounts*

Questions: Do you believe that your municipal accounts are comprehensible, even to under-educated residents? What steps has your Municipality undertaken to make accounts user-friendly?

The difficulties in making complex accounts to be comprehensible, should not be underestimated. Some municipalities frankly admitted that their accounts are not

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user-friendly. In Mangaung, there has been a language redesign. The previous accounts were mainly in Afrikaans and not everyone understands the language so the municipality is now using English, but this measure is probably not sufficient for Sesotho-speakers. According to the municipal manager, the previous accounts were difficult (even for him) to understand!

Other municipalities are also making some effort in this regard. Moses Kotane Municipality is in the process of making accounts understandable through simplified language, and there is going to be a toll free number for residents to use. Similarly, Uthukela DM is presently redesigning its accounts to ensure that they will be user friendly. Before the end of March 2003 the municipality would be sending new and improved accounts that are easy to understand.

Some municipalities take pro-active measures to explain accounts to residents. Karoo-Hoogland is undertaking roadshows to explain the outlay of accounts to residents. Ga-Segonyana sends officials from the Financial Department to address ward committees to explain municipal accounts to the public. Klerksdorp also uses ward committees; but the interviewee admitted that the accounts are not user-friendly at all.

Polokwane believes that its accounts are user-friendly, so no action has been taken. Sol Plaatje has also made several changes in their accounts, after public participation initiatives. However, the municipality recognises that there will always be a minority of people who do not understand their accounts (just as some people do not understand ATM or pay slips!).

6.4 *Recording the views of residents*

<p>Question: In what ways, if any, does your Municipality collect information about customers' views and opinions?</p>

Some Municipalities take no special measures at all.

Umvoti Municipality uses a diversity of methods, including representative forums, ward councillors, PMS audit committee meetings, and surveys. Letsemeng uses community meetings, ward meetings, a representative forum, and IDP meetings. Amathole runs outreach programmes from time to time, with councillors and staff, so that the municipal officials can ascertain how the community sees the municipality.

Karoo-Hoogland also sends out questionnaires from time to time. Similarly, Ga-Segonyana commissioned a survey in early 2002 where respondents were asked to give their impressions of the services performed by the municipality. Mangaung has also undertaken surveys and research, and has used the IDP process extensively. Ugu District Municipality conducts regular surveys. Amathole DM has also conducted surveys in the past (up to about three years ago), and now tends to rely on municipal visits to communities. In Uthukela, a formal survey will be undertaken soon (financed from provincial funding), to determine the view of the community. A tender is being drafted to invite all service providers.

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Polokwane has a toll free line, and emergency lines are available for people who need to comment on issues.

Sol Plaatje has a special municipal newspaper (Sol Plaatje Call). The IDP forums and ward committees are also used to get information from the community.

In Klerksdorp, the interviewee gave an example of the writing of a procurement policy: "Our procurement policy involved meetings with all 60 ward committees (each with 10 people). We also had public meetings as well as meetings with each one of the business groups in Klerksdorp, and believe me, there's a lot of them. We started working on it at the beginning of last April (2002) and we only finished at the end of September (of the same year). This policy went through seven drafts, and I can say that we had meetings with anybody that could possibly have had an interest in it. This type of extensive consultation means that we produce workable and effective policies, although it's of course never possible to keep everybody happy". The municipality has lists of stakeholders that is used to contact such groups, when a particular policy that might affect them is proposed.

Midvaal DM has implemented a system of community consultation on specific projects: "Public participation is big function for us ... if a developer considers a park and he tells us that the park looks like an ideal place for him to build town houses and would we consider granting permission for him to do so and selling him the land? We then send a letter, with a due date, to all the houses surrounding the park. In the letter we ask them whether they would like us to sell the land or keep the park. It's their neighbourhood. We get a response rate of 70% that tells us to sell the land and that's it. We are required to act this way by the Municipal Systems Act". There is usually a period of 14 day for people to respond.

Potchefstroom has used wards extensively, as part of a ward-based planning approach. According to the interview, at first people were very unsure as to what this meant. Then the municipality started compiling a list of the projects initiated in the various wards. "We found gaps, a number of wards had no projects in them. This was listed as a priority for the coming financial year. What we are considering is to make an amount of money available to each ward to spend on projects as it sees fit. This usually has to do with fences, cleaning operations, parks, stuff like that. This means that the council can concentrate on more important projects that will benefit the entire town".

Furthermore, Potchefstroom Municipality is busy working on a social economic survey that has been initiated at the highest level. This may be carried out in June. The idea is that the Municipality will repeat the survey periodically in order to be in possession of reliable data. One of the components of the survey will deal with customer services.

6.5 *Accessibility of offices*

<p>Question: Are your offices physically accessible to all residents (e.g. disabled access, location of pay points)</p>
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Municipalities face difficulties of creating accessible offices, particularly in the remote rural areas. In Umvoti, the rural tribal area of 2563 km² is not easily accessible for municipal officials.

Several municipalities admitted that their offices were not very accessible to the disabled. One exception is Ukahlamba DM, where all satellite offices have wheel chair ramps. Only head office lacks the necessary access points for the disabled.

In contrast, Sol Plaatje Municipality has specially designed access points for wheelchairs, and has created a sufficient number of pay points in outlying areas. Amathole has also ensured wheel chair access, but it is too costly to provide pay points throughout the rural areas.

7. TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

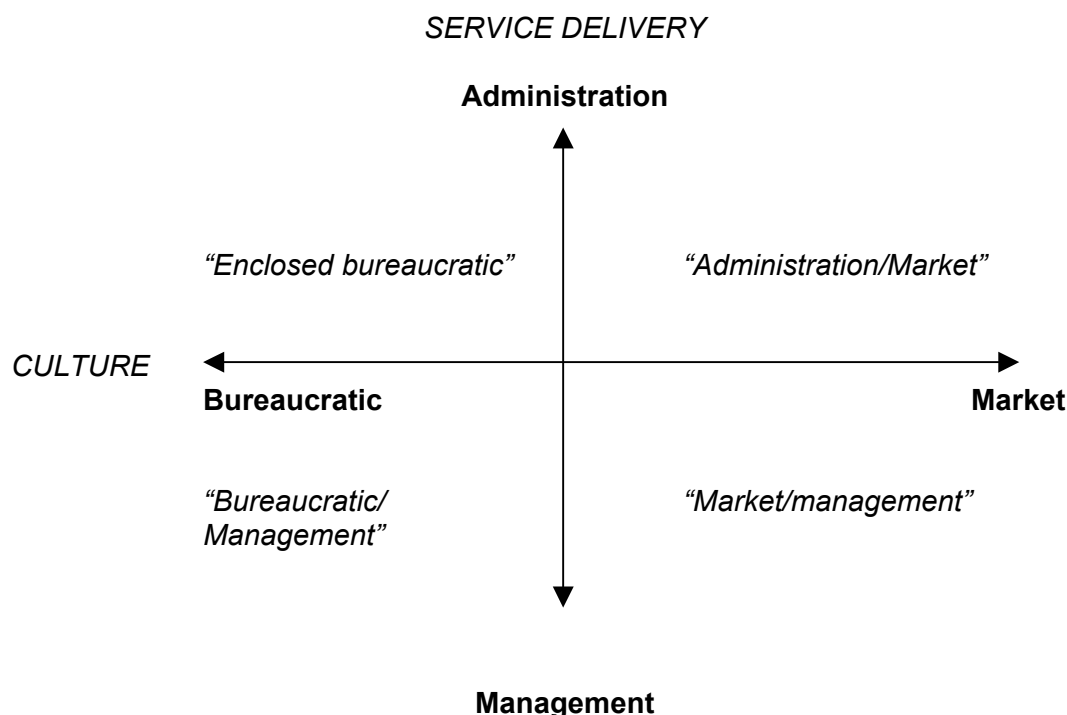
The themes identified in this paper should be regarded as only the tip of the iceberg, of much broader international debates about the direction of municipal restructuring. Particularly in the United Kingdom, the Labour Government's "Third Way" has initiated changes in the ways in which municipalities function. The Third Way transcend the Conservative Party's emphasis on privatisation and outsourcing, and attempts to bring issues of multi-stakeholder partnership and civil society to the fore. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on strategic planning and management, outcomes and impacts, and performance measurement (Wilson and Doig 2000; McLaughlin and Jenel, 2002; Hartley et al, 2000).

In the UK, the debates surrounding the "Modernizing Local Government" Paradigm postulates an overarching theme of municipalities being an "enabler" of development – a role which allows for partnerships as regards the actual "provision" of services. Ultimately, the key role for municipalities is strategic management, specifying service management goals and targets, and promoting development impacts.

Wilson and Doig (2000:71) derive a very useful typology to sketch the options for municipalities. There are two continua of development: *Culture* (which is a continuum from "bureaucratic" to "market-oriented"), and *service delivery* (which is a continuum from "administration" to "management". The resultant matrix offers four possibilities:

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Many South African municipalities are still in the *top-left* corner (*"enclosed bureaucratic"*), i.e. self-contained organisations, offering little structured opportunities for non-state actors and other government agencies to exert influence or participate in programmes. However, the IDP process is nudging municipalities to the *bottom-left* quadrant (*"bureaucratic management"*), where new styles of strategic management, planning, an orientation towards output and outcomes, and performance goals and measurement are being introduced.

The *top-right* quadrant and the *bottom-right* quadrant refer to the involvement of municipalities in market-oriented processes (outsourcing, privatisation, partnerships, and also, *"internal markets"*, i.e. businesslike linkages between municipal units). In South Africa, the discourse of municipal service partnerships is heading in this direction, as well as the distinction between *"authorities"* and *"providers"* (as in the water sector). It also includes the current perspective on municipal departments as *"cost centres"*, and the need to build inter-departmental teams.

Each of these quadrants has its strengths and weaknesses, although there is a general view that the more municipalities are oriented to management and to markets, the better.

For South Africa, this leads to numerous questions. Firstly, given the fragility of many municipalities, how far should experimentation with new organisational style go, and how rapidly should it be pushed? How many municipalities are able to handle sophisticated marketing and contractual arrangements? Should these changes be introduced *before* municipalities have consolidated their organisational structures, or should they experience a period of stability (possibly in the top-left quadrant of *"enclosed bureaucratic"*) before they are forced out into the chilly waters of organisational redesign?

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Secondly, to what extent should such changes happen naturally, or by example of other municipalities, or by guidance (rewards, punishments) by central government? And how fast should this happen?

Thirdly, how can the potentially negative aspects of the new styles of management be reduced? For example, do greater market-oriented styles of management enhance the danger of corruption and the exclusion of marginalized populations? Will the emphasis on financial value undermine issues of community empowerment?

The hesitant steps which municipalities have taken towards strategic management, suggest a possible argument: That movement towards “bureaucratic management” may be a major achievement in its own right (and several municipalities have introduced interesting experiments in this regard). Furthermore, it suggests that movement towards more market-oriented styles of management may have to wait a while until some level of organisational consolidation and basic management systems have been put into place.

CONCLUSION

This overview provides a broad overview of some municipal organisational changes which have taken place. Some municipalities have shown impressive initiative, but there is still a lot of room for improvement. Nevertheless, the interviews provide pointers for more in-depth research regarding municipal experiences which may then be usefully shared with other municipalities.

The research process should also be regarded as the first step in devising appropriate and meaningful qualitative indicators about municipal organisational design and functioning. It also raises questions about the (ideological) direction of current municipal organisational change, and suggests that the introduction of strategic management principles (as illustrated in this paper), is a major achievement in its own right. The re-design of Head Office, the re-conceptual of the developmental role of satellite offices, and the importance of creating an effective “client interface” are very important challenges which are already being addressed in several municipalities. These municipalities should become the beacons from which their peers can learn.

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