

Chapter 2

Forging and Consolidating Developmental Local Government Through Area- Based Management Governance

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deliberates on the role and importance of area-based management governance in forging and consolidating the developmental local government at eThekweni Municipality in South Africa. Considering the challenges faced by developmental local government to fulfill its constitutional mandate, the chapter argues that the grounding and consolidation of area-based management governance could be instrumental in economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, and meeting basic needs. However, for area-based governance to succeed in addressing these challenges, appropriate structures of democratic accountability and coordination coupled with competent staff could be entrenched. This could also be done by sticking to key developmental goals as outlined in the eThekweni Municipality's integrated development plan. The chapter made use of secondary data in the form of books, journal articles, and governmental policies and documents as well as selected interviews with key participants in five area-based areas.

INTRODUCTION

Local government in most parts of Africa was the creation of a colonial governments and therefore, represented the interests and aspirations of the west (Olowu, 1995). According to Mamdani (1996, pp. 28-29) the local government/state in Africa was bifurcated along racial lines. Mamdani adds that in Africa, particularly South Africa, the bifurcated state meant police control over 'native movement between rural and urban areas in order to 'convert a racial into an ethnic contradiction, a cruel take by apartheid that brought forced removals and indirect rule of the Bantustans'. Thus, the colonial rule legitimised

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customary law and used it within the state (Mamdani, 1996, p. 183). Similarly, to Olowu's sentiments on colonial local government, Mamdani argues that the tribes of Africa were arbitrary colonial creations whereas those who held the roots of conspiracy to be local traced them either to tactical manoeuvres by the state to divide the people or to elite strategies to 'use' popular allegiances to gain advantage for themselves (Mamdani, 1996, p. 187).

With the global shift towards more decentralised modes of governance, local government is taking an increasingly greater social, economic, political, and fiscal responsibility for development (Reddy and Maharaj, 2008; Oluwu and Wunssch, 2004; Reddy). Hague and de Vries (2008, p. 1) argue that internationally, local governments are undergoing fundamental changes in response to challenges such as urbanisation, globalisation, poverty alleviation, environmental problems, service delivery, and financial sustainability. However dependence on local taxes and government grants are not adequate to address the challenges. In developing nations, impediments such as a lack of financial and human resources including financial constraints such as dependence on local taxes and government grants inhibit local government efficiency and effectiveness (Reddy, Hague and de Vries 2008:1).

The challenges for local government in Africa are further aggravated by the lack of independence of local government (Enumua, 2000, p. 185) and the "administrative marginalisation of local government" (Olowu, 1988, pp. 109-110). In this context the process of decentralisation is viewed as a panacea to redress stifling bureaucratic and colonial systems of local government that orchestrated the exclusion of the majority of Africans in the socio-economic and political mainstream of development (Saito, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Since 1994, the democratisation and decentralisation of local government in South Africa has created both challenges and opportunities. According to the White Paper on Local Government (1998: v) local government stood on the threshold of an exciting and creative era in which it could make a powerful impact on reconstruction and development. Unlike the apartheid-engineered type of local government (Nel, 2004, p. 23; Reddy and Maharaj, 2008, p. 186), the challenge for the new local government is transforming discriminatory and racially biased structures into a transparent and responsive sphere of government. Most importantly, Sabelo and Reddy (1996, p. 3), Nel (2004), Reddy (2008, p. 196), South African Constitution (1996, Section 152[1]) and the White Paper on Local Government (1998) assert that local government is created deliberately to bring government to the grassroots, thus, giving people a sense of involvement in the political processes controlling their lives. The challenges faced by local government range from policy formulation, and decision making to policy implementation geared towards addressing the adverse and unjust effects of autocratic and bureaucratic apartheid local government (Ismail, Bayat and Meyer 1997). Tapscott (2008) argues that lack of administrative capacity and co-ordination in South African local government remains a major challenge for policy makers and practitioners in exercising the local government developmental mandate (Nel, 2004; De Visser, 2005, pp. 72-3). Apartheid was a centralised undemocratic model of a political system that produced subjects rather than active citizens (Olowu 1995, p. 5; Tapscott, 2008). Thus, the challenge faced by local government is to bring democracy and development in the local sphere through citizen participation. In South Africa, the developmental model of local government is premised on the acknowledgement of the primacy that interfaces the delivery of development, service delivery, and local citizen participation (Mogale, 2003, p. 219). Local government stands at the threshold of an exciting and creative era in which it can and will make a powerful impact on reconstruction and development in our new democracy (White Paper on Local Government, 1998, p. v).

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