South African municipalities

Prospects and challenges:
An African perspective

C Thornhill
School of Public management and Administration
University of Pretoria
South Africa

ABSTRACT

In order to understand how African cities function, they should be considered from a political, social, economic, cultural and geographical perspective. Most of the cities that serve as African countries' capitals today were established in colonial times, for example, Harare (Salisbury in Zimbabwe), Lusaka in Zambia, Tripoli in Libya, and Pretoria in the Republic of South Africa. They were created to serve the political aims of that era – to govern colonial territories and provide avenues to export raw materials. Because many African cities were not originally established by indigenous communities, if the future of African cities, including South African cities, is considered, attention should be paid to the artificial nature of their initial geographical locations, demography and construction.

Cities need a vibrant economy to survive and prosper. Africa's economy in general is less robust than that of most European cities, partly due to unstable political regimes, poverty and predation by the politicians in power, rather than due to a lack of natural resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Sudan (North and South) are blessed with some of the richest oil fields in Africa. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique have the most fertile soil for agricultural production. Botswana has some of the world's largest diamond deposits. However, these countries, and by implication, their cities, are characterised by large numbers of indigent people, unable to access basic services due to their inability to pay for services. This untenable situation is exacerbated by large numbers of refugees residing in or adjacent to cities on a temporary, but long-term basis.

The question to be considered is what governmental, administrative and managerial actions are required to promote the development of African cities to meet the political, social and basic service needs of African people?

The methodology involved extensive research into the economic, governmental and administrative situation in selected African countries, by reviewing selected contemporary sources, such as the World Bank's Annual Report for 2013, Africa

i2012, released by Consulting Africa Intelligence in 2012, and African Union Summits in 2013: Africa's second transition. *These are supplemented by supporting documents on administrative arrangements and local government structures to establish whether (South) African cities can meet contemporary urban requirements.*

INTRODUCTION

Most African conurbations are not as old as some European cities, which have a history of 1 000 or more years, but they are the products of various historical developments, some over centuries. One of the oldest cities is Alexandria which was established in 331 BC, Fes (also spelled Fez) was founded in 893 AD, and Marrakesh in the 12th century. Many cities in Africa were developed by the colonial powers that occupied the different regions, for example, Salisbury (now Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe) was established by the British colonial government; Mozambique's Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) was built by the Portuguese government; and Namibia's Windhoek was established by the German government, to name but a few. Other examples are Lusaka (Zambia), Tripoli (Libya), and Pretoria (Republic of South Africa). As a result of their origins, these cities developed by the occupying colonial powers were constructed according to Western norms and customs. However, since African countries have gained their independence, from the 1960s onwards, African governments have had to reconcile the existing local government structures they inherited from the former colonial governments with the demands of a new political dispensation and the corresponding demands of formerly disadvantaged and now rapidly urbanising communities.

The article focuses on the current challenges faced by South African and other African cities regarding their capacity to provide services to citizens who demand more modern and higher quality services. The emphasis is not on the differences among countries regarding the position of municipal government in the broader political system – instead, attention is paid to the governing systems and the administrative and managerial practices used to satisfy community needs in order to identify what is required to promote good governance in general.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIES

Table 1 provides an indication of the diverse features of some African countries in terms of their size, population and settlement density. The vast differences suggest why comparisons between African countries are complex and sometimes misleading.

It is obvious from Table 1 that the countries included as examples are extremely diverse in terms of their surface areas, as well as their total population, and population density per square kilometre. It is then only to be expected that their economies are equally diverse, as may be deduced from the population density; for example, in Nigeria, the population density exceeds 440 people per square kilometre in the southwest of the country, and in the rich agricultural regions around Enugu and Oweri (Nigeria online 2014:1), while in Botswana,

Table 1: Population and population density

Country	Area (km²⁾	Population (Million)	Population/km²
Botswana	581 730	2.1	3.6
Ghana	239 240	25.6	107
Nigeria	973 768	170.1	174.7
South Africa	1 398 088	51	36.5
Uganda	241 038	35.6	147.7
DRC	2 344 858	69.6	29.7

Source: Commerzbank (2013:30

the population density is only 3.6 people per square kilometre, and most of those live in the capital, Gaberone, and small towns and villages in the east of the country, rather than in the arid Kgalagadi Desert in the west or the Okavango Delta in the north. However, the focus of this discussion is democratic local government, because urbanisation is a relatively recent phenomenon in many African countries, and the role of local government in promoting democracy should be considered in addressing the issue of sustainability.

The Africa Institute of South Africa (Africa Institute) estimates Africa's population at ±900 million, with a growth rate of approximately 3% per annum (Africa Institute 2008:15). The average population density for Africa is 26 persons/km², compared to the world's average density of 42 persons/km². In Europe it is 102 persons/km² (Africa Institute 2008:15). The population distribution is equally diverse, with larger populations concentrated in a few main cities, for example, 11 million in Greater Cairo (Egypt), 11 million in Greater Lagos (Nigeria), with Lagos growing at more than 16% per year, ±9.5 million in three metropolitan municipalities in the Gauteng Province in South Africa, ±5 million in Casablanca-Rabat (Morocco), and ±2.1 million in Accra in Ghana.

Historically, Africa's cities developed in particular places for specific reasons – some, as indicated above, were the result of colonial settlement and development, others grew out of local conditions. Some started with the establishment of a church, ultimately attracting trade and permanent inhabitants, for example, Pretoria, in South Africa. In some cases, a concentration of traders along an established trade route attracted people who erected permanent dwellings, resulting in towns: Cape Town in South Africa developed in 1652 as a resupply post for ships engaged in trade between the Netherlands and the Far East, while Johannesburg was the result of the discovery of gold in 1886. The Yoruba towns of Nigeria developed as traditional towns around the palace of a rule which was surrounded by a large open space serving as a market. In the case of Ibadan, the attraction to a more densely populated area was ascribed to the civil wars which required war camps for refugees. Separate areas were also assigned to *stranger immigrants* such as the Sabo near Ibadan (Nigeria online 2014:12). Even these few examples show that various factors contributed to the establishment of African towns. Thus no uniform pattern can be identified for any city. Historical considerations have to be noted, as well as continuous changes in the nature of the state, including political turmoil, economic considerations and social issues. Climate change should also be considered.

Some countries' populations are extremely diverse, for example, the population of Nigeria, where more than 20% of the total Sub-Saharan's population live, consists of about

250 distinct ethnic groups (Africa Institute 2008:270; Nigeria online 2014:19). In South Sudan, approximately 120 languages are spoken.

During the period from 1950 to 2010 more than 1.3 billion people have been added to the populations of small cities world-wide, and double that number have been added to the populations of medium and large cities (United Nations 2013:ix). This influx to urban areas is largely attributed to trade and political upheaval, such as civil war and political instability in neighbouring countries. It has also resulted in *polynucleated* cities as new immigrants and refugees settle near to existing towns, creating the embryos of new urban areas with distinctive characteristics – in the case of South Africa, the increase in some metropolitan municipalities has been as high as 39% in one year. It has been predicted that smaller cities will primarily be situated in low and middle income countries (United Nations 2013:ix), which include many African countries.

The implications of this urbanisation are obvious: the pressure for municipal services will increase, making it more difficult for cities to provide sustainable services. Moreover, the development of informal settlements without infrastructure is likely to increase. This phenomenon could have serious environmental consequences, for example, on land use, sewage disposal and pollution, and on living conditions. To avert a crisis and mitigate the escalating effects of rapid urbanisation, specific attention should be paid to providing resources to local government to enable these units to deliver services to the urbanised communities they are responsible for. They need to achieve efficient and effective government and administration to achieve the goal of good governance.

Table 2 provides data related to the operational areas of municipal government and administration indicating challenges requiring attention if local government is to survive as a system able to provide sustainable services in accordance with the community's expectations.

Table 2: Urban population

Country	Urban population (Million)	% of Population (2005)	Urbanisation rate (2005/2010)
Botswana	1.05	57	2.5
Ghana	12.811	48	3.5
Nigeria	65.270	40	3.8
South Africa	28.420	59	1.4
Uganda	3.630	13	4.4
Libya	4.950	90	2.2
DRC	18.860	32	5.1

Source: (Africa Institute 2009:23)

In most African countries, including those referred to above, with the exception of Uganda, nearly 50% of the population could be classified as being subject to a form of local government and administration. In South Africa, the total area of the country has been divided into three categories of municipality, namely metropolitan (the eight largest cities), 46 district municipalities, covering urban and rural areas as a kind of regional government, and 224 local (urban) municipalities, in terms of the *Local Government: Municipal Demarcation*

Act, Act 27 of 1998 (RSA 1998). Thus the whole population of South Africa is subject to local government legislation and to government policies on municipal governmental and administrative affairs.

DEMOCRATIC STATUS

Most African countries profess to be democratic. A report published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2011:30) classifies states according to four characteristics – states are

- full democracies, states where citizens have full basic political freedom, and civil liberties are respected and underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy – there are 25 countries in this category, for example, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA (none in Africa);
- flawed democracies, i.e. states having free and fair elections, but there may be infringements on media freedom, basic civil liberties, and where there are also weaknesses in governance, and an under-developed political culture with low levels of political participation – there are 53 countries in this category, of which six are in Africa (11.3%), for example, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Zambia;
- hybrid regimes, referring to states with substantial irregularities preventing them from elections considered being free and fair, with government pressure on opposition parties and candidates and flaws in the functioning of government, widespread corruption and possible harassment of and pressure on journalists with a judiciary that is not independent with nine in Africa out of 37 (24,3%) with countries e.g. Malawi, Tanzania, Senegal and Mozambique; and
- authoritarian regimes, including states where political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed; these countries are mainly dictatorships, and although democracy may be professed, elections are not free and fair, civil rights abuses are common, the media are state-owned or state-controlled, and the judiciary is not independent – there are 52 countries in this category, of which 23 (44.2%) are in Africa, for example, Zimbabwe.

It could be argued that local government in countries with a particular kind of national regime will reveal similar characteristics. Local government usually emulates the national governmental system, and in most cases, the most influential political power in the national sphere will also be in the majority in municipal councils. In South Africa, for example, most of the 278 municipalities are under the control of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and its allies. Only one metropolitan municipality, the Greater Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality, is governed by the official opposition party, the Democratic Alliance.

It can be argued that the categorisation of South Africa and other African countries as flawed democracies implies that democratic local government is under threat. The promotion of effective and efficient service delivery requires political stability. One example of a success in this regard is Botswana, which is considered to be the most politically stable country in Africa, as there have been no politically driven unrest or any attempts to overthrow the incumbent government (Commerzbank 2013:8), although the next general election in Botswana may put this assumption to the test. This stability has, *inter alia*, resulted

in the country's boasting the highest standard of living in Africa, with a per capita annual income of ±US $ 1 750, as against South Africa's ± US $ 1 660, Nigeria's US $ 200 despite its abundance of natural resources, and Mozambique at less than US $ 100. Nigeria and Mozambique are examples of countries where access to natural resources do not guarantee a high standard of living (Commerzbank 2013:14).

It is important to consider these figures on selected African countries because the quality of urban governance is inextricably linked to the economic progress and democratic status of a country. This, in turn, is determined by the political stability of the country and the region. In considering the future of cities, and in particular, the major cities, as economic hubs of a country, note should be taken of the political stability of the urban governing system. A city or town can only provide sustainable services if it has a stable council that passes resolutions and adopts by-laws which enable its administration to operate within a clear policy framework, that can prepare programmes based on a regular annual operating budget funded by reliable and viable revenue sources, and that is governed by high ethical standards maintained by council and senior managerial personnel.

Devolution of power is widely considered a requirement for the promotion of democratic government. The famous dictum by Lord Acton is valid in this instance, namely that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Wikipedia year). Therefore, various mechanisms have to be developed to prevent a situation in which power is concentrated in the hands of only one level or sphere of government, resulting in power's being abused without recourse for the citizens, and without society's being able to question the actions of government as exercised at the central or other levels. In various African states, lip service is paid to the notion of devolution of power, as there is actually a tendency to centralise power. This seems to be the tendency in South Africa too, as more powers are transferred back to the national government, for example, as proposed in the *Public Administration Management Bill,* 55 of 2013 (RSA 2013).

In most countries, local government is considered the third or even the fourth tier of government, in other words, it is subordinate to the national and regional governments, and in some cases, to sub-regional structures. In Uganda, where there is a highly centralised system of government (Nyirinkindi 2007:iv), the district is the highest level of local government. Below the district, city divisions, town councils (for urban areas) and sub-counties (for rural areas) have been created since the reforms of 1995 (Kakumba 2008:92). In South Africa, although extensive reforms were legislated through the *Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statute,* 1993 the system has not been accepted country-wide and thus government remains highly centralised. In the Ugandan system, the district local council is the highest political organ, with a district chairperson as the political head, elected by universal adult suffrage. In the case of Ugandan municipalities and district councils, the town clerks are appointed and appraised by central government through the Public Service Commission. Thus, although the *Local Government Act,* Act of 1994 allocates the management of municipal employees to municipalities, the system is still centrally managed. The lower Ugandan levels of local government in the form of municipalities, city divisions and sub-counties supplement the system of local government through administrative units.

The *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999,* establishes a system of local government consisting of democratically elected local government councils (Afrobarometer 2008:1). According to the Nigerian Constitution, local government is an important structure

for economic development. It is required to promote rural development, reduce poverty and inequality, but major problems have been encountered in local government administration (Afrobarometer 2008:6). The limited provision and lack of adequate funding by the Federal Government is just one of the challenges facing local government (Olanipekun 1988:7), making it impossible for local governments to achieve their lofty goals regarding development in their respective areas.

Chapter 2 and 20 of the Ghanaian Constitution state, *inter alia*: "Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as is practicable, be decentralised" (Ferrazzi 2006:3). Local government issues are dealt with rather extensively in the Constitution. The following characteristics are noteworthy for the purposes of this article (Ferrazzi 2006:3):

- people are to be given the opportunity to participate in local government;
- district assemblies have deliberative, legislative and executive powers and are the highest political authorities in the districts; and
- further decentralisation of central government's functions is envisaged as governed by the relevant laws.

The intention of local government autonomy in Ghana is clearly enunciated. However, there is still significant central governmental involvement, for example, a district's chief executive officer is appointed by the President (*Loc. cit.*). The President also appoints 30% of a district assembly's members. It should be noted that the broad term of local government covers a plethora of local level institutions, such as districts (currently there are 138), urban councils, town councils, area councils, and unit committees (*Loc. cit.*). This variety of institutions makes it difficult to establish whether there is indeed a hierarchy of local government structures in Ghana. Ferrazzi (2006) argues that in spite of the clear intentions contained in the Constitution, some challenges remain. These include possible instability of covers policies, and insufficient democratic scrutiny, which could endanger the effectiveness and legitimacy of the laws passed to regulate local government (Ferrazzi 2006:8).

It can be deduced that African states seem to acknowledge local government structures in their countries. However, it can also be argued that the relevant sphere or local level of government is not necessarily assigned sufficient powers and functions to operate fully as a democratically elected body operating only on the mandate of a local electorate.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL CAPACITY

It is self-evident that services can only be delivered if an efficient administrative system is established and efficient managerial practices have been designed to create the framework for the operational actions to be performed. It is important to remember this basic principle in the context of global population increases. The *Global Trends 2030* report (cited in Institute of Security Studies 2013:4) estimates that the world will require 35% more food, 40% more water and 50% more energy in the next 20 years to cater for an expected 8.3 billion people (an increase of 1.22 billion on the current population). The expected increase in population will also have an impact in the form of increased urbanisation (see Table 2 for a sense of the distribution of the population in cities). This implies that the infrastructure required of local

government will increase, and that such institutions should prepare their administration and management systems and practices to provide municipal services to an expected increase of 14.5% of people, who will continue to demand not only basic services, but also a higher standard of services. This is particularly important in South Africa, where recent trends suggest that the percentage of the population living in urban areas will probably increase to 67% during the next decade.

In this regard it is also important to note the possible effects of climate change and the commensurate natural disasters that urbanised communities face. This is exemplified by the earthquakes and tsunamis which hit Indonesia on 26 December 2004, leaving 230 000 people dead or missing; the tsunami that hit the east coast of Japan on 11 March 2011, leaving 28 000 dead or missing; and Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans in the United States on 29 August 2005, flooding 80% of the City. These disasters illustrate the need to adopt administrative systems and develop managerial practices able to react speedily to, or better still, to act proactively in anticipation of possible natural disasters. Good governance requires not only effective services at a particular stage, but continuously, even in or immediately after a natural (or human-induced) disaster.

It may be argued that the examples cited above are exceptional occurrences. However, they do happen, and they have a detrimental effect on normal service delivery. African countries may not have experienced disasters of the same magnitude as those cited above, but many are prone to drought, and indeed civil war, which requires regions and cities flooded by refugees to deal with the effects of these phenomena. Some countries lack even basic municipal administrative systems to provide normal basic services such as water, electricity, refuse removal and sanitation. A lack of water due to droughts in Africa highlights the need for the ability to adapt to crises and to manage unplanned situations, for example, due to conflict in adjacent countries, resulting in refugees' entering neighbouring cities that may not be prepared for such increases, and do not have the required resources to cope with these new entrants. South Africa is currently facing a large influx of refugees from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and Nigeria, putting additional strain on municipalities to provide basic services to South African citizens and non-South Africans.

Financial acumen

States use divergent strategies to finance their local governments. Section 252 of the Ghanaian Constitution of 1992 for example, determines that Parliament "shall annually make provision for the allocation of not less than five per cent of the total revenues of Ghana to the District Assemblies for development…" These amounts must be distributed among all the district assemblies on the basis of a formula approved by the Ghanaian Parliament. No firm basis could be established on which the 5% allocation is based. This strategy implies that local government is highly dependent on central government for financial support, in particular concerning development.

Since the decentralisation policy was adopted in Uganda in 1992, local governments have obtained autonomy to manage their own financial and planning affairs (UN-HABITAT 2002:27). A Local Government Finance Commission has been established to recommend the amounts to be allocated as various grants to each local authority. In fact, central government provides more than 80% of the financial requirements of local government,

and local government only manages to raise ±20% (UN-HABITAT 2002:34). Government still retains the powers to determine the types of taxes to be levied by local authorities and also prescribes the control and accountability measures required (UN-HABITAT 2002:28). Local governments share their revenues according to legal requirements. This allows for equalisation among divisional councils in each city or municipal council (UN-HABITAT 2002:28).

The South African system of local government was reformed totally in 1995, and the process was finalised through dedicated legislation passed in 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2004. The new system allows for the whole of the country to be divided into 283 (now 278) municipalities. The functions assigned to municipalities have increased significantly, requiring properly qualified managers to ensure that the services are delivered effectively and efficiently. Unfortunately, most municipalities fail to develop the administrative and managerial infrastructure needed to deliver the services assigned to that sphere of government. This concern is in line with the Auditor-General's reports regarding the financial status and management quality of most of the municipalities for 2011/2012, the *Consolidated general report on the audit outcomes of Local Government 2011/2012* (Auditor-General 2011/2012:25)

- Clean audits: 17 (no metropolitan municipality received a clean audit);
- Qualified opinion with findings: 71 (three metros, six district municipalities, 55 local municipalities and seven municipal entities);
- Adverse opinions with findings: three (one district municipality, two local municipalities);
- Disclaimer of opinion with findings: 82 (one metro, eight district municipalities, 67 local municipalities and six municipal entities); and
- Audit reports not issued: 21 (20 local municipalities and one municipal entity).

A matter raised in the Auditor-General's report that is of particular concern is that 65 cases were reported of municipalities' non-compliance with legislation. Of the 338 reports (278 municipalities and 60 municipal entities), a total of 300 received audits with findings. A worrying 50% of the metros and 64% of the district municipalities showed a regression (Auditor-General 2011/2012:25). In the same report, the Auditor-General indicated that the five year trend towards unqualified financial statements showed a slight increase in municipal entities from ± 68% to 77%; district municipalities improved from ± 48% to 66%. Local municipalities improved from 30% to 40% in 2010/2011, but regressed again to 36% in the year under review. Metropolitan municipalities improved from 50% in 2007/2008 to ± 62% in the five-year period, but regressed back to 50% in the 2011/2012 report by the Auditor-General.

The areas of the adverse and/or qualified reports that are most commonly a problem are the following:

- the valuation of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment was inaccurate, or it was not valued (76%);
- irregular expenditure (supply chain-related) occurred (53%), mainly a problem due to incompleteness; and
- the valuation of receivables (e.g. revenue from rates and taxes) was incorrect (at 49%), or there was inaccuracy.

New qualifications showed some downward trend. In the case of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment, only 8% of the 138 auditees were reported as having no findings. Only 15% showed irregular expenditure related to supply chain management as a reason for qualified findings, and only 10% of 102 auditees reported negatively on receivables (Auditor-General 2011/2012:49).

In a number of cases, senior managers lack the required skills and qualification to manage municipal funds. This is borne out by the audit reports mentioned above. It is also visible in the fact that some municipalities fail to spend the funds at their disposal, as up to 54% of district municipalities were unable to deliver even 50% of the basic services (water, electricity, refuse removal and sanitation). A total of 95 of the 278 municipalities were classified as being in financial distress (National Treasury 2013, cited in SA Local Government Research Centre 2013:14).

Human resource capacity

One of the crucial issues in any institution determining effective and efficient service delivery is undoubtedly its human resources. In a number of African countries, the availability of high quality employees, especially in the managerial echelon, is limited. Various reasons could be proposed for this situation. In some countries, for example, Kenya, senior officials such as the town clerk are recruited through the Kenyan Public Service Commission. The Minister of Local Government has full discretion on the appointment of most senior appointments. Thus, municipal and town councils do not exercise final authority over the appointment of their key officials. This could have a negative effect on efforts to promote sound relations between officials and the political authority in a municipality.

Botswana is a small landlocked country, with a population of only 2.1 million people. Most of the country is arid throughout the year, with a small urban population in nine districts and six urban councils. The country has vast diamond deposits, and poverty is not a serious concern. However, Botswana is faced with serious human resource challenges in its second tier of government. This is particularly the case in the technical and professional fields (Botswana online 2013:393). The situation is partly due to disparities in salary structures and staff progression between local authorities and central government, resulting in low morale and high staff turnover in local authorities.

In South Africa, municipalities appoint their own employees. The municipal manager, as head of administration, is appointed by council. This official has to possess specific skills, qualifications and competencies, as prescribed in section 54 A of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act,* Act 32 of 2000 (RSA 2000). According to the Act, an appointment made in contravention of this prescription is null and void. However, the provincial Member of the Executive Council responsible for local government in a province in which a municipality is situated could approve a deviation from this rule if a suitable candidate is not found. Unfortunately, this leaves open an avenue for municipalities to circumvent the Act and to appoint unqualified cadres on the basis of their political affiliation. In 2013, 17.3% of the municipalities had acting municipal managers; 21.6% had acting chief financial officers; while 7.9% had acting officials in both positions (SA Local Government Research Centre 2013:15). It is also of concern that 226 of the 278 municipalities (71%) had to make use of consultants to complete their financial statements. A total of 35% of the municipal managers

did not meet the minimum competency levels; 33% of the chief financial officials did not comply, and 36% of the supply chain managers failed to meet the minimum competency levels (SA Local Government Research Centre 2013:15). This makes a mockery of the efforts of government to improve the managerial capacity of municipalities to obtain efficient and effective municipal administration and management. Pravin Gordhan, in his capacity as Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, reiterated this unacceptable situation in a speech to the South African Local government Association (SALGA) at Kempton Park on 2 September 2014, and requested that attention be given to this deficiency in expertise.

In 2013 the South African government introduced the *Public Administration Management Bill,* 55 of 2013 (RSA 2013). This Bill provides for a single public service to accommodate employees in all three spheres of government, to be governed by the same legislation. The intentions of the Bill are honourable, and would allow the best available employees to be made available to any sphere at any place where that person's knowledge or skills may be required. It will benefit the rural municipalities, who cannot afford highly qualified senior officials such as municipal managers and city treasurers. The Bill is faced with strong opposition from organised local government, as it impedes the authority of municipal councils to appoint their own employees and negotiate their own remuneration structures. The main advantage of the Bill is that it may bring about rationality in the remuneration of municipalities, where in some cases 60% of the operating budget is spent on salaries and wages, leaving limited funds for actual service delivery. However, it could also be seen as another step in the centralisation of authority in the national sphere of government.

Citizen involvement

Local government is the governmental structure closest to most people in a country. In most cases, it is also the first point of contact between a citizen and a public institution. This contact may occur simply in the payment of rates and taxes, a visit to a clinic, the use of public transport or the acquisition of services for a residential property. Councillors are normally elected on a ward basis (or proportionally and on a ward basis, as in South Africa). The essence of a democratically elected representative is that he/she lives and governs in close proximity to the people affected by council's decisions and the actions of the employees of the municipality.

The services rendered by a municipality affect the daily lives of the citizens of a municipality. Lack of service delivery is directly observable, and inefficient actions are easily identifiable. Therefore, it is to be expected that the actions or inactions of councillors to take decisive action and of officials to render the required services will attract continuous (negative) attention from the citizens affected by decisions and actions. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's 2013 report *SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey* found that there was a marked decline in the South African municipal confidence rating by 10.8% from 2012 to 2013, resulting in an overall rating of only 48.6% (SA Local Government Research Centre 2013:2). The same report also found that 62.3% of the population (an increase of 13% compared to 2012) argue that the government does not care about its people. This rating has not changed significantly in recent years. The matter is not pursued in this discussion but calls for concern. If people do not trust the government, they may be reluctant to pay taxes,

obey the law, and become more likely to thwart policies, launch destructive protests and become engaged in corrupt activities.

In some countries active civil society organisations are operating to some extent, but not necessarily effectively. For example, ward committees are established in most municipalities in South Africa. Each ward committee consists of ten members elected informally to represent communities in a ward. Particular attention is paid to representation by women, the physically disabled and interest groups that are not necessarily directly represented on council. A ward committee is chaired by the ward councillor. South Africa has a dual system of councillors: voters normally vote for a particular political party in an election. In some cases, a proportionally elected councillor is also assigned by a party to participate in ward committee meetings. This strategy is not very successful, especially if the two councillors represent different parties or represent opposing groups. In such cases, the views expressed by the ward committee may be clouded by political motives, and may fail to represent the needs of the inhabitants of the particular ward.

The South African ward committee system had been designed to augment the democratic system of municipal government. It affords ward councillors opportunities to access members of society who would not otherwise have the opportunity to express their views on municipal matters. The success of the ward committee system largely depends on the willingness of the ward councillor to take note of the concerns of the committee members and, if need be, to raise the issues in a council meeting. However, in many cases, the councillor does not attend such meetings and does not respond to members' concerns.

A recent development that is gaining momentum in several South African municipalities is ward-based planning. This implies that an integrated development plan for a municipality commences in a ward. The plans of the wards are then integrated into a plan for the municipality as a whole. It is expected that some expert advice will have to be available to wards to prevent proposals from becoming mere wish lists which cannot be translated into operational plans with budgets and the other resources assigned to achieve the set goals.

At this stage, it is still too early to determine all the reasons for the high rate of public protest in South African municipalities. The increasing frequency of these protests and the violence accompanying them are detrimental to the safety of citizens. These protests are ostensibly due to lack of service delivery. However, in some cases, they also occur in well-managed cities. One argument that has been put forward is that these protests could be partially ascribed to the large influx of refugees from other countries, resulting in extreme pressure on existing infrastructure, and leading to its collapse, and ultimately to unrest due to the lack of services. In some cases, the protests result in the destruction of facilities which have no direct bearing on municipal services, such as clinics and schools. Table 3 indicated the rise in the number of protests in the last decade.

It is a feature of many large African cities that they seem to attract more and more people from rural areas, as well as refugees from other countries. This increases the pressure on cities to deliver. However, most of the refugees and even the displaced citizens of the country cannot make any financial contribution by paying rates and taxes. This implies that the permanent citizens who have houses as assets are burdened with the rates and taxes levied, but suffer interruptions of services, leading to protests and the damaging of infrastructure.

PWC in Partnership for New York City (2012) has published a comprehensive report entitled *Cities of opportunity.* The report, which highlights the possible future scenarios of 27 major

Table 3: Protests in municipalities in South Africa

Year	Number of protests
2004	10
2005	34
2006	2
2007	32
2008	27
2009	107
2010	111
2012	173
2013	155

Source: SA Local Government Research Centre (2012:45)

cities of the world, quotes Aristotle's *Politics*: "Man when perfected is the best of animals, but when he is isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all." This report is not dealt with in detail here, with the exception of issues relating to the health and safety, and security of a city's inhabitants, which the report considers the primary concern of cities. Five factors are used to measure the success of 27 major cities, namely, the number of hospitals, health system performance, end of life care, crime control and stability of the political environment. In terms of these criteria rankings, Johannesburg, the economic hub of South Africa, is ranked at the lower end of the scores. It comes in at 18 out of 27 for number of *hospitals*, but its *health system performance* is the lowest at 1 out of 27, *end of life care* is scored at 11 out of 27, *crime* control at 5 and stability of the *political environment* at 11 (PWC 2012:51). If one argues that Johannesburg is a typical African city, it is obvious that urbanised communities in Africa are not enjoying the quality of life that someone migrating to a major city would expect.

INHIBITING FACTORS

An important inhibiting factor in the public sector, and one particularly rampant at the municipal level, is increased interference by politicians in the normal administrative activities of the executive institutions. The Second Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service held in 1998 in Morocco raised the following question, *inter alia*, at the outset of the conference (Department of Economic and Social Development 2000:9):

> What are the causes and the consequences of public administration's decline in the esteem of both the officials and the public they are supposed to serve? The 'withering' of this institution, once vibrant, has been attributed to political interference…and the global shift from a state led development strategy to reducing that role, among other factors.

A second limitation in the efforts of a developmental state to promote development is the absence of an active of or otiose role played by civil society. In Zambia and in Zimbabwe,

for example, there are a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that try to promote development, but public opinion is rarely solicited on public administrative issues (CAFRAD 2006:137, 143). Thus the expectations of society and its aspirations are not necessarily accommodated in policies and executive actions. The diversity of South African society (one of the legacies of apartheid) also prevents municipal councils from obtaining sufficient consensus on issues such as the name changes of towns and streets to reflect the role of freedom fighters and traditional leaders from the past. The protest actions of civil society in South Africa have a severe effect on service delivery, especially when buildings (such as clinics and schools) and other infrastructure are damaged. Further funding is then needed to restore damaged infrastructure that could have been used for service delivery. This strange twist in the effects of protests has blamed on anger resulting from the perceived inability to communicate with governmental structures. Therefore, almost every structure representing any governmental institution is targeted, irrespective of whether it is involved in municipal service delivery or is the responsibility of another sphere of government.

During the Second Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service in 1998, Ourzik highlighted the socio-economic and technological challenges that should be addressed by the African public service and argued (Department of Economic and Social Development 1998:17):

> Facing up to the economic challenges requires that the public service adapt its missions and structures to the new role of the State, take due cognisance of the impact of globalization and liberalization, and institute measures aimed at improving performance and global competitiveness…, the public service would need to undertake activities in support of human and civic rights.

It can be argued that the public service, supported by local government, should undertake the activities required in terms of the developmental role the state is expected to play. If the public sector and the local government structures supporting it fail, the goals of the developmental state cannot be attained. The South African government has adopted a set of *Development Indicators* (RSA 2008) to monitor its rate of success with its developmental policies. As far as the basic services are concerned, a number of challenges have arisen regarding the capacity of municipalities to increase the rate of service delivery by municipalities as monitored by provinces (2011).

Table 4: Improvement in municipal service delivery: households with service

Service	2000/2001	2004/05	2009/10	2011/12
Sanitation	78%	82%	83%	84%
Electricity	73%	75%	76%	77%
Potable water	78%	86%	92%	97%

Source: RSA. Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (2011/2012:205)

The findings suggest that the South African government has succeeded in improving the delivery of basic services to communities. However, municipalities face a crisis due to the unprecedented influx of illegal immigrants and refugees. These new additions to the urban

population cannot be planned for, but they also require services, without making any significant contribution to the revenue required to provide the services planned for legal citizens. As a result, the availability of services may fail to improve across the whole municipality. Infrastructure must still be maintained and, if funds are not available, the system collapses. This situation then results in further protest actions, and may lead to damage to existing facilities.

CONCLUSION

The article discusses some of the crises faced by cities in Africa, with particular reference to South Africa. The evidence shows that local government in most African countries is mainly centralised. In some cases, countries started with the noble intention of democratising their governmental systems, but this aim soon faltered, due to internal factionalism or political intolerance amongst groups. Centralisation came to be seen as a possible way to consolidate power and to prevent possible secession by opposing groups.

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,* Act 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996), promotes decentralised governmental structures. However, recent trends indicate that there is an increasing tendency to centralise power as a reaction to the inability of municipalities to provide services efficiently and effectively. The result is a loss of true democratic local government. The residents of municipalities with poor governance become alienated from the representatives they elected, because residents see their representatives as unable to satisfy residents' needs, especially where it seems that elected councillors are more intent on vying for political positions than concerned with municipal affairs.

To safeguard democratic local government, it is imperative to develop an enabling framework for municipalities to function effectively and efficiently. This will require access to sustainable sources of revenue. Perhaps even more important is the need to recruit and retain competent managers and other skilled employees to provide services that meet the expectations of urbanised communities.

REFERENCES

Africa Institute (Africa Institute of South Africa). 2008. *Africa A–Z: continental and country profiles.* 2nd revised edition. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Afrobarometer. 2008. *Briefing paper No 53.* [Online] Available at: **www.afrobarometer.org** (Accessed on 25 July 2014).

Auditor-General. 2011/2012. *Consolidated general report on the audit outcomes of Local Government 2011/2012.* Pretoria: Auditor-General.

CAFRAD (African Training and Research Centre in Administration and Development). 2006. *Country reports on public administration in Africa.* Vol I. Tangier: CAFRAD.

Chikulo, B. 2010. Democratic local governance in the Southern African development community region: Some emerging issues and challenges. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance.* Special issue:145–157.

Consulting Africa Itelligence. 2012. *Africa 2012: Will the dynamics of governance change?* [Online] Available at: **mhtml:file://C:\Documents and Settings\User/MyDocuments\Africa in in Dynamics of government** (Accessed on 13 February 2014).

Could, D.J. and Amaro-Reyes, J.A. 1983. *The effects of corruption on administrative performance: Illustrations from developing countries.* Washington, DC: World Bank

De Beer, J. and Lourens, L. 1995. *Local government:Roads to democracy.* Midrand: EDUCUM. Department of Local Governance and Traditional Affairs. 2008. *State of local government in South Africa: Overview report national state of local government assessments.* Pretoria: Department.

Report from the Economist Intelligence Unit. [Online] Available at **www.eiu.com** (Accessed 25 June 2014

Ferrazzi, G. 2006. *Ghana Local Government Act 1993: A comparative analysis in the context of the review of the Act.* Ghana: Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

Institute of Security Studies. 2013. *The future of intrastate conflict in Africa: More violence or greater peace.* ISS paper 246. May.

Kakumba,U. 2008. External control systems in the enhancement of accountability in local government: The case of Uganda. PhD thesis, Pretoria, University of Pretoria.

Kakumba, U. 2009. Community participation as a new approach in local government service delivery and rural development: Experiences from Uganda. International Conference on Administration.

KPMG International. 2012. *Infrastructure 100: World Cities Edition.* [Online] Available at: **www.kmg.com/ infrastructure100** (Accessed on 25 June 2014.

United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2013 team. *The rise*, NY *of the South: Human Progress in a diverse world.* New York: United Nations.

WC in Partnership for New York City. 2012. *Cities of opportunity.* New York, NY: Partnership for New York City.

Uganda. 1993. *Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statute*

RSA (Republic of South Africa). 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,* Pretoria: Government Printer.

RSA (Republic of South Africa). 1998. *Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act,* Act 27 of 1998. Pretoria: Government Printer.

RSA (Republic of South Africa). 2000. *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act,* Act 32 of 2000. Pretoria: Government Printer.

RSA (Republic of South Africa). 2013. *Public Administration Management Bill,* 55 of 2013. Pretoria: Government Printer.

RSA (Republic of South Africa). Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. 2012. *Development Indicators 2011/2012.* Pretoria: The Department.

SA Local Government Research Centre. 2013. *The SA Local government Briefing.* Cape Town: The Centre.

South African Cities Network. S.A. *Guide to the state of city finances. Johannesburg*: The Network.

United Nations. 2011. *The global social crisis: Report on the World Social Situation 2011.* United Nations.

Wikipedia

World Bank. 2013. *The Annual Report 2013.* Washington, DC: World Bank. [Online] Available at: **www. worldbank.org** (Accessed on 25 June 2014).