

Towards a typology of government interventionism in municipalities

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ABSTRACT

Although significant progress has been made since democratisation in 1994, much still needs to be done before all local, district and metropolitan municipalities in South Africa are fully functional, sustainable, and developmental. In response to general municipal dysfunctionality with inadequate service delivery levels and rising levels of public protest, the South African Government has a statutory and moral obligation to intervene in the affairs of municipalities. The nature, scope, and intensions of such interventions are, however, not always clear. It is evident though that Government increasingly views interventionism as a viable approach. Embracing such an interventionist paradigm in government requires scholars to more closely scrutinise municipal interventions, not as loose-standing and isolated occurrences, but as part of an emergent strategy in South African governance. The purpose of this article is to make a contextual and conceptual contribution to the analysis of interventionism by developing a theoretical construct in the form of a typology. This typology could stimulate further scholarly perspectives into the phenomenon of government interventionism in South African municipalities.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the local sphere of government has probably been the largest undertaking within the entire governance adjustment processes since democratisation in 1994. Although significant progress has been made, much still needs to be achieved before all 278 local, district and metropolitan municipalities (due to change with the municipal elections scheduled for August 2016) are fully functional, sustainable, and developmental. In response to the numerous high-profile performance and viability failures amongst municipalities, deteriorating service delivery records, and rising levels of public protest, the South African



Government has a moral obligation and legal responsibility to intervene. The nature, scope, and intensions (both overt and covert) of such interventions are, however, not always clear.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the extent and scope of national and provincial government's interventions in municipalities since 1994 with the aim of developing a typology of such interventions. The research compiled in this article was conducted from the premise that the above-mentioned interventions in local government represents a discernible and distinguishable phenomenon, that manifests beyond parameters of what could be referred to as *normal* governance. Consequently, the phenomenon (as reflected in the title of this article) is referred to in conceptual terms as *intervention-ism*, thereby denoting its status as a designated scientific construct and distinguishable governance approach or method.

The article commences with a brief orientation of the status of municipalities in South Africa's system of government, after which government intervention and interventionism is clarified in general theoretical and conceptual terms. Accounting for these perspectives, a typology of government interventionism in South African municipalities is posited, consisting of four main graduations that correlate the extent of municipal *dysfunction* (problem) with the extent of intervention (solution). This section also contains comprehensive data on municipal interventions that has been collated for the first time. The article concludes with a brief analysis of the possible political ramifications of government interventionism.

THE STATUS OF MUNICIPALITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

Municipalities recently emerged as the fulcrum of South Africa's system of multi-sphered government. Being the most devolved sphere of government in South Africa, local government has been positioned in ideological and governance terms as the primary locus of socio-economic development, both in providing redress for the injustices of apartheid and in actualising the benefits of democracy. Venter and Landsberg (2011:134) indicate in this respect that the local government sphere, consisting of municipalities, is the primary site for service delivery. Thus, as Steytler (2005:183) notes, the post-1994 transformation of local government has seen it turning into a vehicle for the equitable redistribution of resources and the integration of society. This role of municipalities is affirmed and enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, thereby positioning local government as a cornerstone of the South African state and society.

For purposes of this article it is important to note that municipalities are autonomous. Municipal powers are derived from the Constitution, 1996 and are not delegated from the national or provincial government. The by-laws of a municipal council can be regarded as legislative acts and, therefore, not reviewable in terms of administrative law. The two principles in section 41(1) of the Constitution that are relevant in this context are the following:

All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must ... respect the constitutional status, institutions, powers and functions of government in other spheres; and ... exercise their powers and perform their functions in a manner that does not encroach on the geographical, functional or institutional integrity of government in another sphere.

Respect for the constitutional status of local government and the prohibition of encroaching on the institutional integrity of local government is important in the context of Section 139 of the Constitution 1996. It means that provinces, in exercising their power to intervene in the affairs of municipalities, must be guided by the notion that the Constitution, 1996 affords local government a considerable degree of autonomy.

However, the three spheres of government are not fully equal. According to Ismail and Mphaisha (1997:3), Mettler (nd) and Steytler and De Visser (1999:6) there is an undeniable hierarchy. The Constitution, 1996 (Sections 44(2), 139 and 155(4)) recognises this hierarchy and establishes *clear lines of subordination between the three spheres of government*. It further seems that municipal interventions are in conflict with the very nature of co-operative government. It may be argued though that such intervention serves the same purpose as co-operative government, namely to mitigate tension that may arise between decentralisation of powers to other spheres of government and attempts to foster an efficient administration.

In line with their constitutional mandate, municipal councils have executive and legislative powers for the delivery of these functions (i.e. services). Thus, they have the right to make laws and decisions about the affairs of residents and communities in their area of jurisdiction and are entitled to claim fees for the rendering of such services. It could be argued that should municipalities not adhere to their developmental and constitutional mandate, not deliver the specific functions as specified in Schedules 4B and 5B, and not adhere to the stipulations of the statutory prescripts, government has a moral and legal obligation to intervene in the affairs of municipalities. More than 80% of the country's GDP is urban based, with the economic nodes concentrated in the country's metropolitan centres (Department of Finance nd:1). Effective municipal governance is thus critical to achieve government's broader national objectives. Furthermore, integrated rural development and the delivery of basic services to all communities are dependent on the effective performance of local government.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONISM: CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL CLARIFICATION

According to Van der Waldt (2015:36) interventions of government in the affairs of the state are closely associated with the perceived purpose and role of government in a particular society. On one end of the socio-political spectrum liberal thinking may regard governmental intervention as interference or intrusion in people's lives, whilst on the other end socialistic conceptions may perceive such intervention as an unnegotiable precondition to facilitate order, stability, and equity in society. A literature review reveals that government interventions can be categorised into social, economic, and political interpolations. Social interventionism is often the result of pressing societal needs, such as epidemics, natural disasters, education, and human destruction that demand a rapid response from government (*cf.* Parton 1994:14; McClelland 1996:89). Where social interventions are viewed as paternalistic, autocratic, unethical, and only aimed at benefitting a certain societal grouping (i.e. elites), citizens would generally disapprove such interferences (Bermant, Kelman and Warwick 1978:176). Economic interventions include political control over economic transactions, legislation and regulations, and fiscal interventions. Rose and Miller (1992:175) regard political interventions as one country's interferences with the internal politics of another. Foreign political



interventions may include the use of methods such as sanctions, trade protectionism, and foreign relations (Pearson 1974:262), but, in its extreme form, may include the use of military force to establish order and stability in a foreign country.

The way governments intervene in society are highly diverse in nature. Such interventions may include regulatory interference by means of policies, by-laws, directives, and guidelines, as well as more facilitatory interventions such as strategies, programmes, and projects (*cf.* Vermeulen and Kok 2012:186). The nature of interventions in fact are so diverse that it might be useful to design a typology ranging from direct to indirect interventions, strong (i.e. prescriptive) and weak (i.e. guidance, facilitation) interventions, and hard and soft interventions (Van der Waldt 2015:37). The *right* way to intervene probably lies in striking a careful balance between an appropriate level or intensity of intervention. For purposes of this article, government interventionism is defined as an analysis of the nature, extent and types of systemic, socio-economic, political, policy, strategic and programmatic interventions of government to leverage certain outcomes in a country. It should be noted that the nature of these interventions is case-dependent.

Municipal interventions in South Africa

Evidence suggests that in recent times, government has increasingly favoured more direct interventions in dealing with dysfunction in local government. Such interventionism could be seen on a continuum, from basic support (i.e. grants, expertise, and monitoring) on the one end to strong intervention (i.e. overturn the autonomy of municipalities) on the other. This trend of favouring more direct intervention is best exemplified by the phenomenon of municipal mergers between so-called *low capacity* and *high capacity* municipalities. It further seems that the nature, scope and frequency of interventions by provincial government in municipalities, according to Section 139 of the Constitution, 1996 are on the increase.

Chapter 7 of the Constitution, 1996 gives provincial government specific obligations and powers in respect of municipalities. The provisions dealing with the issue of provincial oversight (monitoring and support) are found in Sections 154(1) and 155(6) and (7). The power to supervise municipalities is found in Section 139. The constitutional basis of the monitoring power is set out in the Constitution, 1996 where it provides that “each provincial government ... by legislative or other measures, must provide for the monitoring and support of local government in the province.” Provincial supervision of local government is described in Section 139(3) as a *process*, consisting of, in the words of the Constitutional Court, a number of *successive steps*. These steps include the review or monitoring of local government by the provincial executive, the identification of the non-fulfilment of executive obligations by the provincial executive, and the intervention by the provincial executive in the functional and institutional terrain of local government (Section 155(6)).

Section 139 entails more than the provincial executive taking remedial action; it includes also a process of review or monitoring. The Constitutional Court said that provincial supervision of local government in terms of Section 139 has two components: the first entails a process of provincial review of the actions of local government so as to measure the fulfilment by local government of executive obligations conferred by statute, and the second is a process of implementing corrective measures should local government fall short of its obligations. The Court added that a similar meaning is attributed to *supervision* in Section 100. The review

of local government (or monitoring) should thus be seen as an integral component of the power to intervene. Indeed, the act of review is a limited form of intervention albeit without immediate or direct consequences. When dealing with the requirements of Section 139, then, the implicit powers of review should also be recognised and articulated. The successful implementation of a review process may either prevent the use of the corrective measures or, if it is unavoidable, make only the least intrusive measures necessary.

According to the *Policy Framework for Municipal Borrowing and Financial Emergencies* (Dept. of Finance nd:25), government has responded to financial problems with a number of legal and programmatic initiatives, ranging from *Project Viability* and the *Municipal Support Programme* to interventions made in terms of Section 139 of the Constitution, 1996. But the systemic nature of the crisis usually renders *ad hoc* solutions to the problems of individual municipalities inadequate. It seems that a more systematic programme of assistance to municipalities, designed to advise, support and (where necessary) to supervise them in strengthening their financial position, is advisable. A typology of interventions in this regard could make a significant contribution to classify and typify the nature and scope of interventions as well as the possible intensions and consequences of each.

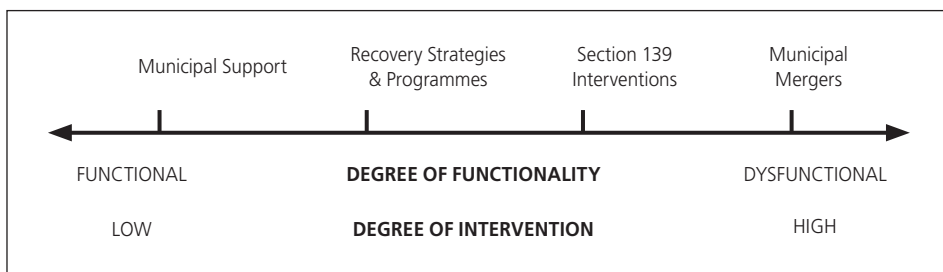
TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF MUNICIPAL INTERVENTIONS

From content analysis of official documentation and media statements it is evident that municipal interventions are predominantly aimed at the general sustainability and performance of municipalities. Interventions are thus generally directed to restore or improve the financial status of councils (e.g. debt administration, revenue collection; procurement) and to restore or improve the capacity of municipalities to render basic services. But, the possible political dimensions and motives of interventions are often *hidden*. As stated, this article intends to further explore these political dimensions and motives.

It should be noted that interventionism by the Government is multi-faceted and multidimensional (political, economic and social). These dimensions are supported by the ruling party's particular intent i.e. the main reasons behind the intervention. In the context of government intervention in local government in South Africa a literature survey and observations reveal that the scope, intent and nature of national and provincial government interventions can be plotted on a continuum of interventions. One end of this spectrum of intervention represents a governance approach that aims to maintain or gradually influence the status quo through general monitoring and support functions. Such an approach is generally suited to *functional institutional contexts*, and may be viewed as the least disruptive manifestation of government interventionism. As the functionality of the governance context deteriorates, thus the need for more disruptive, rapid and interventionist approach grows. Accordingly, recovery strategies and programmes, Section 139 interventions and municipal mergers represent an intensification of interventionist approaches. The latter represents the most institutionally disruptive interventionist approach, since a municipal merger and/or demarcation seeks to totally redefine the local government parameters in a given context. Indeed, municipal mergers appear to be an interventionist strategy reserved for the least feasible (and therefore least functional) iterations of local government. Consider the typology (figure 1):



Figure 1: A typology of government interventionism in municipalities



Source: Authors' own construct

Below, each type of intervention within the suggested typology is highlighted.

Level 1 – Municipal support

The constitutional basis for municipal support is set out in the Constitution, 1996 where it states that “(e)ach provincial government must provide for the ... support of local government in the province; and must promote the development of local government capacity”. The nature of support derived much of its significance from Section 154(1) where national and provincial government are compelled to “support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities”. The power of support can be employed by provincial governments to strengthen existing local government structures, powers and functions and to prevent a decline or degeneration in such powers, structures and functions. The power of support is further to be read in conjunction with the legislative and executive role of the province in terms of sections 155(6)(b) and (7) in terms whereof the province has the power to promote the development of local government capacity to perform its functions and the province may assert such powers by regulating municipal executive authority to see to the effective performance of municipal functions. This control is not purely administrative and could encompass control over municipal legislation to the extent that such legislation impacts on the manner of administration of local government matters.

The *Practitioner’s Guide to Intergovernmental Relations in South Africa* (2007:34) explains intergovernmental support as measures of assistance to ensure that another sphere is able to perform adequately. The intergovernmental support may include policy, strategies, training, financial, human, technical and administrative assistance which the provincial and national governments must provide to municipalities to enable them to achieve their developmental objectives. In this regard, Van Donk *et al.* (2008:339) observe that the national and provincial governments deliver public goods and services under the charge of municipalities to beneficiaries who are living, working or located in local areas. In this respect, the support which the provincial and national governments must provide to municipalities is to strengthen their financial, human, technical and administrative capacity so as to enable them to achieve their developmental objectives.

Municipal support is further outlined in the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act*, 32 of 2000 which stipulates that an MEC must establish mechanisms, processes and procedures to assess the support needed by municipalities to strengthen their capacity to manage their own affairs, exercise their powers and perform their functions. The MEC

has further the power to, as a support measure, issue standard draft by-laws in respect of matters for which a municipality may make by-laws. The provincial departments responsible for local government and the offices of the Premier are the oversight, support and lead governance entities in provinces. Other support initiatives include the establishment and capitalisation of the *Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit* (1997) and the design of the *Municipal Services Partnerships* policy framework. Also with the initiation of *Project Consolidate* in 2004 and the *Municipal Infrastructure Grant*, Government illustrates its hands-on support intensions to low-capacity municipalities. Furthermore, CoGTA and National Treasury developed a classification system acting as a diagnostic instrument to identify municipalities in distress. The system makes provision for high capacity/high performing municipalities. According to the Annual Performance Plan (CoGTA 2011:16) there are four classes of municipalities derived from spatial, social, municipal capacity and economic indicators, namely:

- Class 1: Very high vulnerability (i.e. Local Municipalities:57; District Municipalities:12)
- Class 2: High vulnerability (i.e. Local Municipalities:58; District Municipalities:11)
- Class 3: Medium vulnerability (i.e. Local Municipalities:58; District Municipalities:13)
- Class 4: Low vulnerability (i.e. Metros:6; Local Municipalities:58; District Municipalities:12).

Four agencies in particular are tasked with providing direct municipal support, namely the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), Department of Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), (including the nine provincial departments), National Treasury (NT) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). However, as performance challenges mounted in the local sphere, it became apparent that these support mechanisms were not sufficiently institutionalised. This is mainly due to the absence of post-intervention measurement of improvement, and the weak application of intergovernmental checks and balances by oversight and support structures such as the Minister, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) and the provincial legislatures (Motingoe and Van der Waldt 2013:10). Furthermore, service delivery protests that continue to engulf municipalities necessitate more comprehensive government interventions. Therefore, depending on the particular case, government move to the next level of intervention which is more systemic, broad-based, and comprehensive in nature.

Level 2 – Policy, strategies and programmes

Since 1994, Government has embarked on the design of a comprehensive policy framework to direct the functioning of municipalities. To give effect to these functions, Parliament has promulgated an extensive statutory framework to set parameters and guide municipal actions. The most prominent laws governing municipalities are briefly outlined in table 1.

Furthermore, the amounts for intergovernmental fiscal transfers (i.e. provincial grants) are published yearly in the Division of Revenue Act. These policies can be regarded as a policy intervention measure to guide, direct and control municipal operations. In this respect Mogale (2003:229) states that in order to assist municipalities to meet developmental requirements and speed up service delivery to the poor, extensive resource acquisition in terms of funding, human resources, appropriate and most importantly the adoption of

Table 1: Core statutory prescripts for local government

Legislation	Intent
Local Government: <i>Municipal Demarcation Act, 27 of 1998</i>	Provides for the demarcation of municipalities
Local Government: <i>Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998 (as amended)</i>	Sets out categories and types of municipalities and provides for elections and other matters
Local Government: <i>Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (as amended)</i>	sets out systems within which municipalities should operate and procedures that they should follow in their day-to-day operations
Local Government: <i>Municipal Property Rates Act, 6 of 2004 (as amended)</i>	Regulates the power of a municipality to impose rates on property; exclude certain properties from rating in the national interest; make provision for municipalities to implement a transparent and fair system of exemptions, reductions and rebates through their rating policies
Local Government: <i>Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003 (as amended)</i>	Provides for secure, sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of municipalities

key and enabling legislative measures became essential to realise developmental local government objectives.

On a strategic level, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) developed a *Five Year Strategic Programme of Action* commencing in 2006 with a view to further consolidate municipal support, governance and institutional development. Due to their scope and prominence, especially two intervention strategies deserve special mentioning, namely the *Local Government Turn-Around Strategy (TAS)*(2009) and more recently, the *Back to Basics* campaign (2014). As far as the *Back to Basics* campaign is concerned, former Minister for CoGTA, Pravin Gordhan, stated that the campaign’s rationale is

to reduce the number of unviable municipalities, ensure stronger governance and better functioning municipalities that serve the needs of communities ... the redetermination of municipal boundaries of some local municipalities is one measure to ensure the financial sustainability and viability of the affected and other municipalities.

This statement neatly underpins the research focus of this article, namely that government is increasingly using interventionist strategies in an attempt to remedy local government dysfunction. As the Minister indicates, such interventionism has now, in effect, become a matter of *policy*. This campaign (i.e. strategy) signals more active and direct interventionism when compared to the ambitious yet largely ineffectual *Local Government Turnaround Strategy* and the failed *Operation Clean Audit* (cf. Powell et al. 2014).

On a programmatic and project level, government interventions are mainly directed at specific areas of responsibility of local, district and metropolitan municipalities. These programmatic interventions are thus aimed at regulating and controlling specific municipal functions. It goes beyond the mere *support* interventions (typology, level 1). Table 2 briefly outlines some examples in this regard.

Table 2: Municipal intervention programmes

Source: Authors' own research

The regulatory power of the provincial or the national governments could determine issues such as essential national standards in respect of the establishment or closing down of certain facilities, the minimum service standards, monitoring, oversight and other minimum requirements. Through these programmes provincial government is granted substantial powers to regulate local government, especially in low capacity municipalities.

The *Government-wide Monitoring & Evaluation System* (GWM&ES) (2007) was established to monitor and evaluate the successes and failures of the implementation of these policy programmes. CoGTA is responsible for the methods, processes and systems of monitoring the performance of municipal programmes to the Presidency. The monitoring and evaluation initiatives of CoGTA should evolve from the *Performance Management Systems* (PMS) of municipalities. Kanyane and Mabelane (2009:60) point to the fact that a PMS is an integrated system to measure the performance of a municipal council. In terms of Chapter 6 of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000* every municipality is required to develop and implement a PMS.

In spite of these measures, the *State of Local Government Assessment Report* (CoGTA 2009:5) points to the fact that despite significant gains, many municipalities are in deep distress. They continue to falter in delivering basic municipal services which include clean water, electricity and sanitation. The *Consolidated General Report: Local Government Audit Outcomes* (2010:96) also indicates that the weak monitoring and oversight processes of systems within the national CoGTA and provincial departments of cooperative governance and traditional affairs (CoGTAs) lead to decline of audit opinion within the municipalities (Motingoe and Van der Waldt 2013:4). From evidence to date, it is clear that much of local government is indeed in distress, and that this state of affairs has become deeply-rooted within the system of governance. This may lead to a more significant type of intervention, namely Section 139 interventions.



Level 3 – Section 139 interventions

Section 139(1) of the Constitution, 1996 stipulates that

...when a municipality cannot or does not fulfil an executive obligation in terms of legislation, the relevant provincial executive may intervene by issuing a directive describing the extent of the failure to fulfil its obligations and stating any steps required to meet its obligations; and assuming responsibility for the relevant obligation to the extent necessary to maintain essential national standards or meet established minimum standards for the rendering of a service...

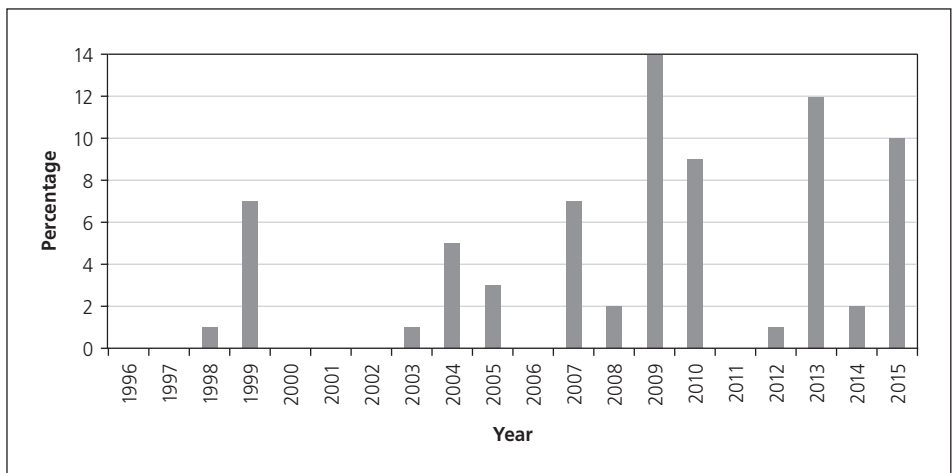
Some of the most common failures that have triggered S139 provincial interventions fall into three broad categories:

- Governance: political infighting, conflict between senior management and councillors and human resource management issues (*cf.* Municipal Systems Act, Section 51)
- Financial: Inadequate revenue collection, ineffective financial systems, fraud, misuse of municipal assets and funds.
- Service delivery: Breach of sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution, 1996 which outline service delivery obligations of municipalities.

These interventions should not be seen as a punishment, but a form of assistance in cases where municipalities cannot address specific issues. The main purpose is to restore the functioning of a municipality and the intervention should stop when that purpose has been reached (De Visser 1999:43).

To the authors' knowledge there is no reliable comprehensive list of Section 139 interventions in South African municipalities available, either from government or private sources. Thus, a significant part of the research for this article involved compiling such a comprehensive list by consulting various archival sources, including parliamentary portfolio committee minutes, government gazettes and departmental media briefings. According to

Figure 2: Section 139 interventions (1996–2015)



Source: Authors' own research

this list (as illustrated in figure 2), there have been a total of 74 Section 139 interventions between 16 March 1998 and 10 September 2015. When charting the trends of Section 139 interventions, it would appear as if the frequency of interventions has risen significantly since 2009. Whereas there were 26 interventions in the twelve years between 1996 and 2008, since 2009 there has been a total of 48 interventions. This clearly illustrates an increasing trend in provincial interventions, which if extrapolated, is likely to increase in future. Such a trend would also suggest that conventional policy initiatives aimed at strengthening local governance have proved ineffective, and that provincial government has to a large extent been forced to intervene directly on a more frequent basis.

A comparison of Section 139 interventions and service delivery protests reveal a strong correlation, especially from 2007 onwards. Thus, it would appear that interventionist strategies have played a significant part in provincial governments' attempts to stabilise the volatile sphere of local government. If this is indeed the case, it is doubtful that interventionism has had a stabilising effect on local government, since both the number of interventions and the frequency of service delivery protests exhibit an increasing tendency.

Level 4 – Municipal mergers

The Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) was established in 1998 as envisioned in Section 155 of the Constitution, 1996 which required that municipal boundaries be determined by an independent board. Thus, the MDB came into being after the first local government elections were held in 1995-1996. Prior to that point, the demarcation of municipal boundaries were the responsibilities of nine separate provincial demarcation boards, a process that resulted in discrepancies and inconsistencies in the demarcation outcomes in provinces (Cameron 2004:209).

Pycroft (2000:152) explains that among the numerous considerations that inform the demarcating activities of the MDB, its actions were to be guided by the "economic and financial viability of each municipality" and to

consider the need to rationalise the total number of municipalities to achieve the objectives of effective and sustainable service delivery, financial viability and macroeconomic stability. Here the influence of new public administration principles is apparent, as South Africa seeks to reduce the size and cost of local bureaucracies.

It is, therefore, evident that, from its inception, the core functions of the MDB was accompanied by a developmental mandate, and that the reconfiguration of municipal boundaries was regarded as one among many instruments to achieve developmental local government. As a result, the MDB has played a significant role in reconfiguring the South African local government landscape over the last seventeen years, as demonstrated in table 3 (DPLG 2004:21; MLGI 2011:8):

The drastic reduction of the number of municipalities between 1994 and 2000 occurred as a result of the reconfiguration of local government. Practically, this occurred through a process of amalgamation (also known as merging) that entails the reorganisation of municipalities through the demarcation of boundaries and combining parts of, or entire municipalities (FFC 2014:308). Between the 2000 and 2011 local government elections the



Table 3: Municipal mergers (1994–2016)

Period	Number of Municipalities
Post-1994	1 262
Post-1995/1996 elections (DMB established)	843
Post-2000 demarcation	284
Post-2006 demarcation	283
Post-2011 demarcation	278
Post-2016 demarcation (planned)	266

Source: Authors' own research

number of municipalities remained relatively stable, with the consolidation of five separate municipalities to constitute the new Buffalo City (East London) and Mangaung (Bloemfontein) metropolitan municipalities occurring before the 2011 local government elections. In 2013, the MDB announced that it would commence with a new process of municipal demarcation with a view to the 2016 local government elections, anticipating that this would result in a reduction of 11 local municipalities and one district municipality (IOL 2013). During November 2015 the MDB confirmed that it had completed the re-determination of 13 cases, resulting in a net reduction of 12 municipalities (MDB 2015:2).

As indicated, it is the intension of this article to not only suggest a typology of Government interventions in municipalities, but also to engage the possible covert or hidden intensions of such interventions. This could be regarded as political consequences of interventions. Although the MDB dispelled whatever questions there may be about political motivation behind their decisions, it is inevitable that mergers would lead to dramatic changes in the composition of wards, political representation, and the general constituency base of political parties. It would also affect local democracy in general due to the possible lack of direct representation. One should also consider CoGTA's view that amalgamation of non-viable municipalities within larger blocks with an urban centre goes hand in hand with the potential metropolitan status for emerging districts.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to make a conceptual contribution to the understanding of municipal governance in South Africa. As a flashpoint of socio-economic and political conflict, the sphere of local government is faced with numerous challenges that require not only urgent practical remediation, but also scholarly attention. In developing a theoretical construct in the form of a typology, the authors hope to stimulate new research and scholarly perspectives into the phenomenon of interventionism in South African municipalities. Certainly, there are numerous other avenues of inquiry that emerge from this article, for example the possibility of a chrono-political analysis of Section 139 interventions and the impact and repercussions of a trend of increased interventionism.

What is clear from this article's research is that government increasingly views interventionism as a feasible and practicable approach to governance in the context of heightened public dissatisfaction and dysfunctional local government institutions. Embracing such an interventionist paradigm in government requires scholars to more closely scrutinise municipal interventions, not as loose-standing and isolated occurrences, but as part of an emergent strategy in South African governance.

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