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*Partie II Villes secondaires, confins et métropoles : l'innovation au cœur ou à la périphérie ?*

**Brij MAHARAJ (University of Natal):**

*Post Apartheid Metro Boundaries:*

*Conflicts, Contestations and Compromises in Durban*

## **Post Apartheid Metro Boundaries: Conflicts, Contestations and Compromises in Durban<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Countries seeking to remake the structure of their societies have placed a strong emphasis on the development of a viable and effective system of local government. The restructuring of local government is especially significant in the context of South Africa's emerging democracy. A key component of this process has been boundary delimitation, which involved a process of spatial organisation and re-organisation. In South Africa the de-racialisation of local government represents a major challenge. Many affluent white local authorities were reluctant to give up the power and privileges of the old order and merge with previously black local authorities. Also, the socio-spatial distortions of the apartheid era need to be addressed through a more equitable distribution of resources, and the re-drawing of geographical boundaries. Attempts at municipal restructuring in South Africa have been fraught with problems and conflicts. The conflicts engendered, the negotiations, compromises, and coalitions generated constitute important areas of research. Examining and elucidating the manner in which these various forces have manifested themselves in the major metropolitan centres is the central theme of this paper. The focus of this paper is on boundary delimitation in the Durban Metropolitan area.

### **Introduction**

Countries undergoing political and economic transition have placed a strong emphasis on the development of a viable and effective system of local government (Mawhood, 1993; Maharaj, 1997). A critical issue is the “nature of local territorially-based communities and their potential for democratic self-governance within the complex political and economic environment” (Sancton, 1996:277). The restructuring of local government has been primarily “influenced by economic, technological, political and ideological change”, and can “modify spatial patterns of development and disparities” (Razin, 2000:7). In South Africa the de-racialisation of local government represents a major challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented in the IASTE conference “[un]bounding traditions: the tensions of borders and regions” held in Honk-Kong (December 2002)

The restructuring of local government is especially significant in the context of South Africa's emerging democracy, especially since this transformation "has taken place in a way that is probably unique from an international comparative perspective" (Swilling, Monteiro and Johnson, 1995:16). A key component of this process has been spatial re-organisation through boundary delimitation. However, boundaries are not neutral geographic lines. Boundary changes are often associated with a redistribution of political power and resources, with some institutions and parties benefiting, and others being disadvantaged (Alexander, 1982; Hasson and Razin, 1990; Keating, 1995; Cameron, 1999). Quite often boundary conflicts are associated with urban municipalities encroaching into rural areas. Unless there are redistributive transfers, urban-rural inequalities are accentuated (Razin, 2000). In a process of territorial restructuring, there are potential areas of dispute, which often reveal local, regional and national geopolitical stakes (Hasson and Razin, 1990).

Therefore, local and regional spatial restructuring led to contestations and conflicts over the delimitation of new boundaries in South Africa (Ramutsindela and Simon, 1999; Narsiah and Maharaj, 1997; 1999; Ramutsindela, 2001). The conflicts engendered, the negotiations, compromises, and coalitions generated constitute important areas of research. The aim of this paper is to analyse the effects of the contemporary territorial and administrative restructuring on urban dynamics in South Africa. More specifically, the focus is on how the process of territorial restructuring impacted on metropolitan areas as well as their hinterlands. The political and economic implications associated with attempts to extend urban boundaries into rural areas will also be assessed.

It is important to understand how boundary rationalisation and political power intersect. The nature, size, composition and governance of regions are constantly changing depending on the balance of societal forces and the dominant mode of accumulation (Markusen, 1978). Political, territorial and administrative reorganisation therefore needs to be theorised in terms of the articulation of a number of structures including those associated with ideology, bureaucracy, nationalism, gender and regimes of accumulation (Driver, 1991; Murphy, 1991).

### **Local Government in Transition in South Africa**

Since the 1990s South Africa embarked on the long journey towards reconstruction, development and planning in the post-apartheid era. Success would depend on a sensitive understanding of the "geographical legacy of apartheid and the scars it has left behind, and also to the complex local, regional and environmental diversity that characterises the South African whole" (McCarthy, 1991:23).

The contemporary South African city is reflective of a discourse of apartheid urban planning characterised by racially fragmented and discontinuous land use and settlement patterns, haphazard, dysfunctional and inefficient spatial ordering, land use mismatches, low level population density and the concentration of the poor in relatively high density areas on the peripheries and the rich in the core intermediate urban areas (Hindson et al, 1992:6).

Local government in the apartheid city was characterised by a "complex process of functional inclusion, spatial separation, and political exclusion" (Swilling, *et al.* 1991:175). In the democratic era the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) of 1994 provided an institutional base for the disbanding of race-based municipalities, scrapping of apartheid laws relating to local government, and the establishment of transitional local councils (Khan and Maharaj, 1997). About 1 260 local authorities were merged to form 843 municipalities.

However, the type of local government that materialised in terms of the LGTA did not "necessarily support the notion of 'one city' or 'one tax base'" (Wooldridge, 2002:132). In many areas the spatial inscription which prescribes the separation of areas of abject poverty from areas of affluence persists (Narsiah and Maharaj, 1999). For example, there was a tendency to exclude "settlements on the periphery of the metropolis which would lower the per capita tax base, and place a strain on service delivery capacity" (Wooldridge, 2002:132). Furthermore, "hastily drawn municipal boundaries and negotiated ward boundaries produced a fragmented system, with metropolitan areas divided into impractical substructures, and some small towns and rural areas cut up like a patchwork quilt" (Cashden, 2002:162).

In an attempt to address these problems the White Paper on Local Government provided the foundation for a new developmental local government (DLG) system (Government Gazette, 13/3/98, p. 15). It introduced the notion of the ‘wall to wall principle’ in order to ensure that all the parts of the country, including the poor rural peripheries, will be integrated in the new demarcation process. DLG exhorts local authorities to focus on achieving developmental outcomes, such as the provision of basic infrastructure and services; the creation of integrated cities and livable environments; the encouragement of local economic development initiatives; and the empowerment of communities.

Three inter-linked approaches to help municipalities to effectively play a developmental role were proposed: "integrated development planning and budgeting; performance management; and working together with local citizens and partners" (Government Gazette, 13/3/98, p.16). An important strategy to help municipalities to become more developmental is integrated development planning (IDP). Integrated development planning depends on the coordination of a range of services and regulations, including land-use planning, household infrastructure, environmental management, transport, health and education, safety and security and housing (Government Gazette, 13 March 1998, p.39). The type of municipal institutions that would best suit South African conditions was the subject of considerable discussion.

The issue of their shape, size, and boundaries was directly linked to the socio-economic dynamics. There were two different perspectives with regard to metropolitan government. For those who were interested in the growth imperative metropolitan government plays a pivotal role in promoting economic development because it provides a more effective regional infrastructure for reproducing labour power as well as promoting production and distribution; offered tax exemptions and subsidies to attract investment; and facilitated the establishment of pro-growth partnerships with the private sector. Those who favoured the equity focus argued that metropolitan government could promote more equitable land use; ensure fairer taxation; improve efficiency, service provision and capacity; reduce socio-spatial inequalities and foster rational planning (PLANACT, 1992; Government Gazette, 13/3/98, pp.81-84). In South Africa the White Paper on Local Government defined metropolitan areas as follows:

Metropolitan areas are large urban settlements with high population densities, complex and diversified economies, and a high degree of functional integration across a larger geographic

area than the normal jurisdiction of a municipality. Economic and social activities transcend municipal boundaries, and metropolitan residents may live in one locality, work in another, and utilise recreational facilities across the metropolitan area (Government Gazette, 13/3/98, p.78).

Mega cities were established in South Africa's six metropolitan areas (Johannesburg, Pretoria, East Rand, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town). A two-tier system municipal system was established comprising both umbrella councils and local councils outside these metro areas.

There has been concern that mega cities reduce efficiency and equity, and are also remote from the communities they serve: “Efficiency was reduced by insufficient scale and costly externalities; effectiveness was reduced by obstructive municipal boundaries and a lack of citywide coordination; and equity was lacking in intermunicipal variations in the quantity and quality of services” (Barlow, 1997:400). The focus on mega cities overlooked the potential contribution of South Africa's 500 small towns to growth and development (Centre for Development Enterprise, 1996b). The government contended that the fragmentation of metropolitan areas into single municipalities would maintain inherited social and economic inequalities (Government Gazette, 13/3/98, p. 81). There were considerable contestations over the delimitation of new local government boundaries (Cameron, 1999), and the next section illustrates this by focusing on the Durban experience.

### **Territorial Contestations in Durban**

Durban is located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), one of the most densely populated regions of the country, with one in every four South Africans living in the province. In Durban, the local state was forced to respond to a multitude of problems and demands as it attempted to come to terms with burgeoning numbers, a depressed economy, and political demands for a non-racial city. The case of Durban is important because the city has to be examined "in terms of the local conjunction of different restructuring forces (deriving from and operating at different spatial levels) with specific social, cultural, political and institutional circumstances of the locality itself" (Pillay, 1994:83). In terms of the LGTA the Greater Durban Metropolitan Negotiating Forum (GDMNF) was established in June 1994, and comprised sixty-six local authorities. One of the key issues that the Forum had to address was the determination of the boundaries of the metropolitan area.

***The First Demarcation Process***

In September 1994 the GDMNF accepted provisional boundaries for a greater Durban Metropolitan Area, which would span the area between the Tongaat River in the north, the Umkomaas River in the South, and Cato Ridge in the west (Figure 1). In accepting these boundaries, the Forum was taking cognisance of the development realities of the region, as well as the objectives of the LGTA. For example, an important principle approved by the Forum was that the “areas of existing local authorities should not be split up, even if this meant including politically sensitive tribal areas” (Pillay, 1999:206). More specifically, the adoption of the boundaries was based on the following considerations:

- i) The restructuring and amalgamation of black and white local authorities.
- ii) The future financial viability of the metropolitan area.
- iii) The functionality of the metropolitan system in economic, spatial and social terms.
- iv) The redistribution of resources and upliftment of disadvantaged areas.<sup>2</sup>

While the proposals of the GDMNF was widely accepted, there were a few dissenting voices, especially from smaller, affluent white local authorities who were reluctant to give up the power and privileges of the old order. The Borough of Westville, for example, had commissioned a study to examine the feasibility of ‘going it alone’, and had sought advice to determine whether “the legal situation allows Westville some way or other of standing alone and retaining its identity” (Daily News, 27/10/94). Responding to criticisms that the Westville Borough's actions were ‘racist’ and ‘scandalous’, Mayor Nicky Armstrong stated:

We are not trying to maintain a small white enclave. We want a council that will reflect the rich, multi-cultural diversity of our area, while retaining Westville's name as well as the special ambience we have here (Daily News, 27/10/94).

The Forum deliberated for five months, and resolved on 21 September 1994 that the boundaries of the new metro would extend from the Tongaat River in the North, the Umkomaas River in the

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<sup>2</sup> Understanding the Durban Metropolitan Area Demarcation Process (1993-1996), Support Document 3, August 1999, p.7.



South, and the Tribal areas of Ximba, Qadi and Kwanyuswa in the West (Figure 1). This was submitted to the Minister of Executive Council (MEC) in charge of local government.

The KwaZulu-Natal Demarcation Board, comprising 16 members was established in September 1994. However, the Board and the MEC could not reach agreement over the submission made by the GDMNF, especially the inclusion or exclusion of territory under tribal jurisdiction. In an attempt to address the impasse, the Demarcation Board initiated a process of consultation with the various stakeholders.

It has been suggested that only when boundaries or other forms of territorial interventions "find political acceptability that they begin to make enormous impact and gain implementation".<sup>3i</sup> There were divergent views relating to the “inclusion or exclusion of tribal authority land located on the edge of the existing metro boundary ... a result of the interwoven nature of the geographic sub regions of the former province of Natal and the former homeland of KwaZulu” (Pillay, 1999:207). The exclusion of the majority of tribal areas suited the interests of the governing Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KZN.

A major problem was attempting to differentiate between urban and rural areas. In this regard Khan and Maharaj (1994) supported the creation of a city-region (as in most Latin American and Asian cities) that includes urbanised, peri-urban and significant tracts of rural land. This perspective opens up the prospect for integrated development by combining urban, peri-urban and rural development processes in a single institutional moment and contributes in part to the rationalisation of settlement patterns by way of addressing one of the multiple underlying causes of circulatory migration.

There was a need to consider the complex and dynamic interface between rural and urban areas in terms of services, commuting patterns, development potential and community interdependence. Furthermore, attempts to define ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ are fraught with problems. The official definition of ‘urbanised’ or ‘extensively developed’ within a local authority, is

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.20.

patently deficient as it excludes the rapidly urbanising population within informal settlements that are functionally linked to formal towns and cities.

Rather than using rigid dichotomies to define future administrative areas and institutional jurisdictions, it would be better to view rural and urban as either end of a spatial-developmental-political-institutional nexus. This approach becomes all the more urgent in light of the fact that the highest levels of poverty and lowest levels of employment are to be found in rural areas. May (1993) estimated that only 28% of the potentially economically active rural population in KwaZulu was formally employed in 1992. A mere 18% of women were formally employed. In 1992 the mean household income within rural areas of KwaZulu was a meager R862 per month and the mean per capita income was R130 (May, 1993).

The Demarcation Board held 15 public meetings, as well as three workshops with different stakeholders and interest groups. The Board also held separate meetings with tribal authorities. However, largely as a result of political tensions and misunderstanding of the need for demarcation, tribal chiefs were suspicious of, and antagonistic towards, the Board. In its final recommendation of 11 September 1995 the Board did include tribal areas that were “functionally integrated (in political, economic and spatial terms) into the fabric of the greater metropolitan area. The Board concluded that while people in the tribal areas lived in what are colloquially termed rural areas, this did not in reality mean that these areas were not part of the organic, albeit, very distorted, metropolitan area” (Pillay, 1999:209).

However, the MEC rejected the recommendation of the Board, citing technical and legal reasons. Nonetheless, the main reason for rejection was the inclusion of large areas of tribal authority land into the metro. The MEC submitted an alternate proposal in which tribal land was excluded. The Board was unable to reach agreement on this proposal and the matter was referred to the Special Electoral Court for resolution. On 28 November 1995 the Court supported the MEC’s proposal. However, the Court did stipulate that the MEC should negotiate to have rural areas adjacent to the metro to be included if all parties were in agreement. Subsequently, the Folweni, Ingqungqulu and KwaMgaga tribal areas were included in the final boundary that was proclaimed on 18 December 1995 (Figure 1).

A major concern was that the metro boundary closely mimicked and reproduced existing administrative and geo-political arrangements by leaving out significant areas which fell in the former KwaZulu bantustan, as well as stretches of north coast farming land held by monopoly capital (Khan and Maharaj, 1994). The exclusion of substantial Tongaat-Hulett's land set a precedent in that it sent a message to modern day land barons that the present distribution of productive resources is just and no pressure for change will be brought to bear on them through instruments like land taxation and/or property taxes. Tongaat-Hulett's has the potential of wielding unchallenged power in determining the morphology of the region through their substantial industrial and commercial crossholdings.

It was clear from the Durban and other experiences that it was possible to manipulate transitional interim measures by "excluding settlements on the periphery of the metropolis which would lower the per capita tax base, and place a strain on service delivery capacity; demarcating local boundaries to create (or perpetuate) stark differences in per capita tax base between localities" (Wooldridge, 2002:132). Many boundaries had been hastily drawn and were unviable and unsustainable, both administratively as well as in terms of service delivery. Also, in many traditional authority areas there was no accountable or democratic local government hence, there was an urgent need for a new demarcation process.

### ***The Second Demarcation Process***

In terms of the Municipal Demarcation Act (1998) the independent Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) was established to determine the criteria and procedures for the delimitation of municipal boundaries (Sutcliffe, 2002). With regard to the delimitation of metro boundaries, the following criteria were considered:

- i) A conurbation featuring areas of high population density; and intense movement of people, goods and services; extensive development; and multiple business districts and industrial areas.
- ii) A centre of economic activity with a complex and diverse economy.
- iii) A single area for which integrated development planning is desirable.

- iv) Having strong interdependent social and economic linkages between its constituent units (Sutcliffe, 2002:2).

As Cameron (1999:14) has emphasised, “while these criteria can never be regarded as scientific, they nevertheless try to capture certain objective considerations”.

There was some agreement that in terms of the above criteria the existing metropolitan boundaries in Durban were not cohesive or integrated, and were unsustainable economically:

The demarcation of the present boundary has not helped to resolve all of the problems associated with service delivery and infrastructure in areas outside the urban core, especially in informally settled areas. Poverty, inadequate housing and infrastructure, land tenure, unemployment, crime, a lack of skills and environmental problems continue to manifest themselves in these areas, which remain functionally linked to the Metro core<sup>4</sup>.

The Durban Metro viewed the demarcation process as an opportunity to streamline urban governance and management in the metropolis and its surrounds. In order to prepare a submission to the Demarcation Board the Durban Metro appointed a Technical Task Team (TTT). The criteria that the TTT considered in developing its boundary proposals included sustainable service delivery; interdependence of people, communities and economies; financial viability and administrative capacity; and political acceptability.<sup>5</sup> The intention was to "set optimum boundaries which recognised existing and future peri-urban growth and attempted to match it with the most rational use of natural and municipal resources" (Sole, 1999:2).

The submission of the Durban Metro to the MDB is reflected in Figure 1. The areas identified for inclusion were immediately adjacent to, and were functionally linked to the Durban Metropolitan area, and had a total population of 313 522.<sup>6</sup> This will mean the need to build and service an additional 60 000 households. The new inclusions would not contribute significantly

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<sup>4</sup> Durban Metropolitan Area Boundary Submission to the Municipal Demarcation Board, 25 August 1999, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Technical Information Support for the Durban Unicity Committee Boundary Submission, Support Document 1, August 1999.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

to the rates' base of the city, but will add to the existing backlog in the delivery of basic services.<sup>7</sup> Many of these areas were already being serviced by the Metro on an agency basis (Sole, 1999).

The draft proposals of the MDB for the Durban Metro revealed that it had included vast rural areas to the north and south of the city (Figure 1). According to Teresea Dominik, convener of the unicity committee technical task team on the boundary issue, the Metro was "flabbergasted" by the proposals of the DMB:

The sense we are getting from the Board was that it was focusing on economic and financial viability. This would tend to exclude rather include rural and other marginal areas ... These areas are rural and in terms of Durban's growth path they are going to stay rural (Sole, 1999:2).

There was also the suspicion that the MDB's draft proposals had political undertones. The inclusion of large rural areas adjacent to the metro could reduce the support base of the IFP in a region where the ANC controlled the Metro but not the province. Some of the traditional authorities were also concerned about losing their powers and jurisdictional influence.

In an attempt to address the impasse, Dr Mike Sutcliffe, Director of the MDB, appointed a technical committee to investigate the various concerns and review the Board's draft proposals.<sup>8</sup> The committee focused on three specific regions: Inanda-Ndwedwe, the Durban North Alignment and the Durban South Alignment. The issues to be investigated were: functional relationship of indicated areas to Durban (e.g. commuting, shopping); servicing patterns (where bulks from) and financial implications; density and settlement patterns, urban vs. rural use; issues relating to the integrity of tribal areas; and views of key technical stakeholders in Durban and affected areas.

#### *Inanda-Ndwedwe*

The key disputed areas were the Shangase tribal area in southern part (falling within the iNdllovu Regional Council boundary), the Phephetha Tribal area and the whole northern portion between

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>8</sup> Brij Maharaj was part of the Technical Team, and this section of the paper draws generously from the report submitted to the MDB.

the proposed DMC boundary and the proposed MDB boundary (falling within the Ilembe Regional Council).

This densely settled area was functionally linked to the Durban Metro (in terms of interdependence of people, communities and economies). It is in urgent need of essential services. The bulk of existing services, especially water and the Metro in partnership provides electricity with Umgeni Water and ESKOM, respectively.

The Metro acknowledged this functional relationship. However, it argued that many people preferred a rural lifestyle as long as they obtained some services. If the outlying areas were incorporated, the Metro questioned whether it was practically possible to provide services to these areas, given the remoteness and relative inaccessibility, as well as the inability of the people to pay.

The area was classified as the poor periphery of the Metro. The Ilembe Regional Council has little to offer these areas in terms of servicing and economic development. Although the opinion of the Durban Metro was that it too will be hard pressed to service these areas, from a sub-regional perspective the communities within the area would be equally, if not more, disadvantaged by remaining with the Ilembe Regional Council. The Metro was keen to expand its economic base as this would strengthen its ability to deliver, and was concerned about incorporating additional areas that could become financial/economic liabilities.

The traditional leaders felt that their authority will be severely undermined if the rural areas were incorporated into the DMC. While acknowledging the functional linkages with the city, they argued that Inanda-Ndwedwe did not qualify for incorporation into the Metro because they do not comply with Section 25 of the Municipal Structures Act's definition of a metro area as "extensively developed areas that could be defined as a conurbation".

*Durban: Southern Alignment*

The key disputed areas relate to the Macala and Makhanya traditional authority in the south western part of the study area, the Embo/Nkasa, the Toyana, Maphumulo, Makhanya, Sobhanakhona and Luthuli/Umnini areas, which fall within the Ugu Regional Council boundary.

The Metro agreed that southern alignment areas were more functionally linked than the northern areas. However, once again, it was concerned about the costs of providing services in additional areas proposed by the MDB. This would create false expectations and the people did not have the capacity to pay. This would contribute to a drain in the Metro's resources. The Metro was ill equipped to deal with rural agricultural areas and argued that District Councils would viably manage such areas. Moreover, the proposed boundaries of the MDB would undermine the need for a compact city. However, high-density areas immediately outside the Metro's boundaries could be incorporated. But this would go against the principle of not dividing tribal areas. Dividing traditional authority areas would exacerbate development problems.

The Magabeni and Folweni districts have been referred to as economically deprived and were heavily dependent on the Metro. The inclusion of these areas into the Durban metro is supported by the following factors: The interdependence of people, communities and economies - these areas have social, economic and spatial linkages to the Durban Metro in terms of existing and expected patterns of human settlement and migration; employment; commuting and dominant transport movements; spending; use of amenities, recreational facilities and infrastructure; and commercial and industrial linkages.

While acknowledging functional linkages with the surrounding communities, the Metro was aware that "some of these may not necessarily identify themselves with the DMA".<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore:

Whilst functional considerations and various planning and development initiatives show a strong relationship between the DMA and these communities, some other strong non-

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<sup>9</sup> Support Document 1, August 1999, p. 33.

technical factors may need to be considered in the incorporation of these areas into the DMA.<sup>10</sup>

Another problem was that most of the tribal authority land was administered by the Ingonyama Trust. This was likely to lead to conflicts over land ownership and boundary disputes which would stymie development projects because "developers find it difficult to understand a plethora of legislation applicable to different land ownership arrangements, and which institutional structure needs to take responsibility for development."<sup>11</sup>

*Durban: Northern Alignment*

The Qadi, Makhanya and Cele tribal authorities expressed fears of losing power. They accepted a change of lifestyle of urbanised communities within their areas and the right of people to obtain services. However, they preferred to remain within the district councils that recognised their historical authority.

The Tongaat-Hullett Group argued that urban and rural areas need to be separated because their management requires different expertise. What is rural in nature has an economic base that is rural in character. The Illovo Sugar Group supported the northern boundary as proposed by the Durban Metro. It argued that the extension of the Metro boundaries might result in inefficient management.

The technical committee recommended Ndwedwe on the outer western boundary and Umbumbulu on the southern border of the proposed boundary is incorporated. With regard to the northern alignment, Buffelskloof should be included into the Durban Metro boundary as the area is functionally linked to Tongaat; Zimbali should be excluded from the proposed DMC as it is functionally linked to the Dolphin Coast.

The final determination by the MDB for the Durban Metro (renamed eThekweni Unicity) area revealed that it had only deviated marginally from its original proposals. The geographic size of

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*



the Metro had increased by 931 sq km, with an increased population of 229 742, comprising 36 388 households. The draft budget of the Unicity for 2002 revealed that there were financial difficulties in providing basic facilities and service for the newly incorporated rural areas which did not generate a commensurate rates revenue (Mchunu, 2002a). There were also difficulties in providing adequate policing services for these communities (Mchunu, 2002b).

## **Conclusion**

There is no aspect of urban change or development that can be understood without an understanding of the nature and operation of urban power structures and political processes. As Barlow (1981) points out, the city is a spatial expression of urban political systems. Critical issues in the process of municipal restructuring and consolidation include “efficiency, democracy, distribution and development” (Keating, 1995:117), or as Barlow (1997:400) expresses it, “efficiency, effectiveness and equity”. However, local territorial restructuring is also political – “it involves political choices and political processes in pursuit” of political goals (Higgins, 1986:221). In the South African context attempts are being made to address the socio-spatial distortions of the apartheid era through a more equitable distribution of resources, and the re-drawing of municipal geographical boundaries. However, this paper suggests that urban transformation in South Africa with particular reference to municipal restructuring has been fraught with problems and conflicts.

It is evident from this paper that notwithstanding the noble intentions of the LGTA as well as the White Paper on Local Government, the integration of fragmented communities cannot be achieved merely “by a legislative act” (Barlow, 1991:305). The paper revealed that those with resources (largely the largesse of apartheid) attempted to insulate themselves from the larger socio-spatial fabric, and demonstrated a reluctance to share and redistribute resources. Examining and elucidating the manner in which various social, economic and political forces have manifested themselves in the process of boundary delimitation in a major metropolitan centre as well as adjacent rural areas was a central theme of this paper. The paper drew attention to the political and economic implications of boundary delimitation at the local and regional levels.

In developing the new South African local government system with the goal of socio-spatial equity, it appears that the main issue was to define the city or the metropolitan areas as a whole with the integration of different fragments. This was illustrated in this paper with reference case to the disputes and contestations over the new Durban Metro boundaries. Tensions were further heightened between urban and rural regions because traditional leaders believed that their territorial jurisdiction and authority were being undermined as the Municipal Demarcation Board radically redefined the administrative geography. Clearly, boundary demarcations “shaped the political conjunctures of power at local government level” (Cameron, 1999:4). Also, as Keating (1995:129) has argued, a boundary change “shifts burdens and opportunities and creates fears and uncertainties”.

Affluent metro authorities like that in Durban were opposed to the spatial extension of their boundaries because of the costs of the providing services and infrastructure in the deprived margins. Similarly, there was concern that incorporation of rural areas will result in increased municipal service charges being imposed on these communities. Hence, there was also “contestations around the financial implications of different boundaries” (Cameron, 1999:4). As Barlow (1991:305) has emphasised, regardless of “how tightly the boundary is drawn there will be significant differences between centre and periphery that generate significant divergent interests”.

The spatial-political-administrative complexes that were finally adopted ultimately emanated from an uneasy combination of historical factors, political compromise and administrative convenience (Coates, et al 1986). The merger of traditionally white and black fragments of secondary cities often resulted in many black locations continuing to be marginalized as they were under apartheid. There appears to be neither the political will nor the economic capacity to upgrade these zones of marginalized urban communities. While the Municipal Demarcation Board was largely successful in eliminating the political geography of apartheid at a macro-scale, the greater challenge for government and policy makers is to reduce the socio-spatial and economic inequalities that appears to be still very high and perhaps increasing. The simultaneous transformation of both the social and spatial structure of South African society is a contested area of

struggle and will ultimately be determined by the complex and diverse interaction of various social, economic and political contingencies at different spatial scales.

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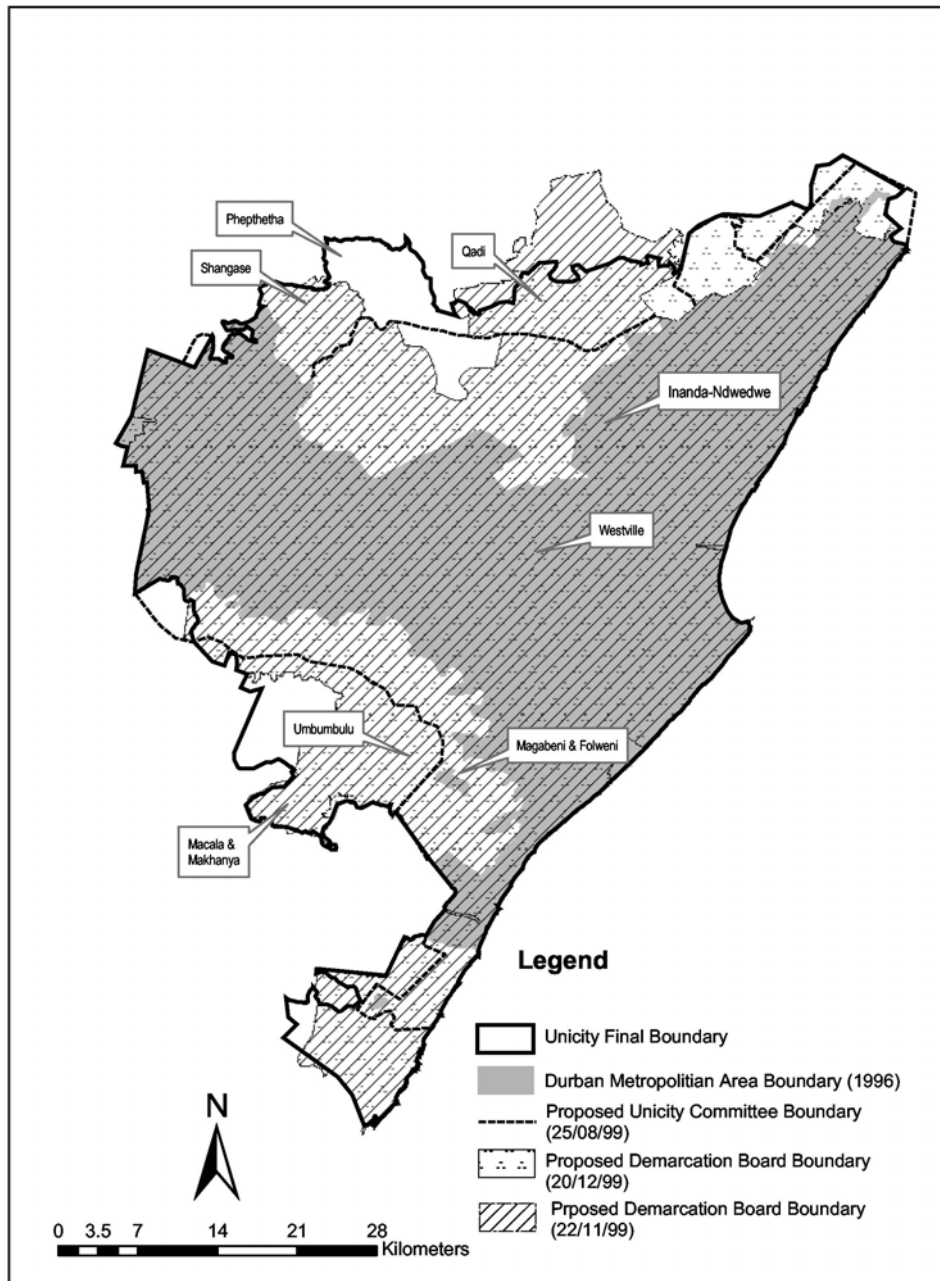


Figure 1 Municipal Demarcations in the Durban Region 1996-2000