AREA BASED MANAGEMENT (ABM)

Understanding ABM in a transforming local government context

Over the last 20 years South Africa has been preoccupied with a very particular form of local government reconstruction that sought to unify the old apartheid structures and to create unified municipalities that were institutionally coherent. A major focus has been to address a mandate of comprehensive service delivery without discrimination - where necessary through some local level redistribution. Not all councils have followed the same path in pursuing this objective. Ethekwini Metropolitan Authority (EMA) stands out as having adopted a centralised model of metropolitan governance, deciding not to adopt any formal sub metropolitan organisational form. At first glance the idea of area-based management in a centralised administration may seem like an anomaly for EMA.

When contrasted with the approach to urban management and local democracy adopted by the Metropolitan Authorities in Gauteng and the City of Cape Town, it becomes important to understand the rationale or purpose of the ABMDP in the transition process. This is best done comparatively, starting by looking at the different ways ABM is conceptualised and how its purpose can be variously linked to enhanced service delivery and democratic practice. Internationally, ABM has been adopted for a variety of reasons and the form that it takes also varies widely. In general ABM is intended to:

1. improve coordination between sectoral departments of the relevant levels of government and also, generally, between government and other agencies, possibly by simplifying bureaucracy and integrating funding streams;

2. enhance opportunities for participation in decision making by local stakeholders;

3. enable local government to identify local needs and priorities and develop appropriate responses, where necessary adapting service delivery to suit local conditions;

ABM may also be intended to assist in the mobilisation of resources and capacities external to government. Alternative approaches to ABM should, however, be seen as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy. It is however possible to identify two main forms of ABM internationally and a third expression of ABM that has emerged from the experience of EMA. The first purpose of ABM is to bring together the resources commanded by various agencies operating in an area, and often supplementing them, in order to tackle a set of serious interlinked problems. In South Africa the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) nodes, which include the Inanda, Ntuzuma, Kwa-Mashu (INK) node, are an example of this kind of ABM. This type of ABM is time limited and geographically selective. The unique, multi-agency intergovernmental challenges that present in the case of South Durban Basin (SDB) are typical of the
problems that have led to area-based interventions focussed on urban regeneration. The second purpose of ABM is bringing government closer to citizens to foster engagement, increase responsiveness and enhance accountability. In essence the original conception of the ABM and Development Program was to explore different institutional models for sub-metropolitan delivery and as a means of deepening democracy.

Ethekwini Municipal Authority’s (EMA) forty-year history of governance through Area-based initiatives (ABI), recently targeted integrated developmental action to enhance service delivery, deepen democracy and address the spatial and social inequalities that characterise post-apartheid South African cities. Assisted with a five-year budget-support grant from the European Commission (EC), EMA launched the Area Based Management and Development Programme (ABMDP) as a 5 year pilot program (2003 – 2008). The ABMDP is conceptualised as an institutional mechanism within the city, designed to enhance EMA’s capacity in delivering on its developmental mandate. This program has now been formally institutionalised in the city administration.

Map: Area-based spatial coverage in eThekwini Municipality (2003)
AREA PROFILE OF ABM LEARNING SITES

**iTrump:** is functionally the EMA’s inner city and includes quite disparate features such as high profile beach front areas, elitist yacht moles, up-market shopping precincts, high rise office blocks, tourist attractions as well as third world informal commercial nodes located in the nexus of transport systems, bus ranks, taxi terminals etc. It is estimated that roughly 400,000 people enter and leave the area daily while some 90 000 people are resident in the area. During tourist seasons and high profile events such as international conferences, these figures are multiplied by factors of up to 5. It is further estimated that the area provides jobs in the formal sector for 125 000 persons. The area is effectively the „portal” of entry for people from a wide spectrum of society ranging from those who are indigent and seeking jobs to those who eke an existence selling wares on street pavements; civil servants, business people and wealthy local and foreign tourists and visitors. It is a vibrant, colourful and typically African inner city.

**Cato Manor:** located close to iTrump, Cato Manor is an inner-city infill area. The Cato Manor Development Project was identified as a Presidential lead Project during the early post-1994 period and for the purpose of planning and implementing the CMDP, a social compact was created which eventually resulted in the establishment of a special purpose vehicle which was effectively an „out-of-government” ABM, i.e. the Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA). Historically Cato Manor was „cleared” during the apartheid years of so-called undesirable elements and largely left fallow except for some peripheral residential and commercial activities. This resulted in the CMDP effectively becoming a „greenfields” project” for large scale RDP housing development and which ultimately led to substantial donor funding being attracted for the provision of significant bulk infra-structure and other capital- and community development projects. The EC was the major donor. The residents currently totalling some 90 000 (during the early 1990”s it was about 25 000) resulted from land invasions and „illegal” occupations, informal townships (e.g. Cato Crest) and ex-apartheid townships (e.g. Chesterville). During the early years of the CMDP, the position in the area was extremely fluid, with high crime rates, desperate poverty and extremely high unemployment levels.

**Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu (INK):** located some 30 to 40 kilometres from the EMA inner city, these townships are typical apartheid satellite towns. Primarily residential with an estimated 650 000 citizens with about 54% living in informal settlements, these towns provided labour to the industries of the EMA. Spatially and socially fragmented and spatially, socially and economically marginalized from the core economy, the townships are characterised by inadequate physical infrastructure, physical degradation, social problems, high crime rates, unemployment and desperation. It also has a fluid population as the rural-urban drift accelerates. The area was declared an Urban Renewal Project in 2001.
The Southern Durban Basin (SDB) ABM: Located from the Bluff around the port with large-scale container handling facilities, transport nodes and oil refineries and stretching south to include industrial areas such as Clairwood, Jacobs, the international airport, Prospecton and Amanzimtoti with the motor industry featuring prominently.

South Durban is largely the formal sector industrial heartland of the EMA. It is in decline due to a combination of factors including the obsolescence of much of its industrial plant and infrastructure, log-jammed environment-development conflicts over industrial pollution and deteriorating city infrastructure and services. The main institutional need is to increase the capacity and skill composition of the area management structure.

Rural ABM: the footprint for the rural ABM constitutes more than 60% of the EMA and is located on the urban periphery. An estimated 669 000 persons (22% of EMA population) reside in the area. Land use is diverse, ranging from formal peri-urban townships and villages to large scale formal sector agriculture (especially sugar cane), informal settlements, survivalist agricultural activities such as livestock, vegetable gardens etc. as well as tourism projects, transport nodes and light industries, e.g. Cato Ridge. Land ownership is a complex array of private sector farms and fallow land, traditional lands owned by the Ingonyama Trust and public ownership. The key institutional challenge is to integrate traditional authorities, local government and civic organizations within an ABMD structure. The key development challenges are rural (both traditional and commercial) development, catchment conservation and economic integration.

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