

Buffalo City Metro - Is Bigger Better?
The Hierarchy of Urban Labels and Why They Matter

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Mildred Nakkungu, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation is based is my original work (except where references indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date: October 2022

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ABSTRACT

The post-apartheid era in South Africa demonstrated a grand shift in the country's legislation. Local government legislation was particularly affected, as it was at the municipal level that the policies of apartheid were visible. Part of addressing the legacy of spatial segregation included a suite of legislation aimed at addressing the legacy of apartheid and the deep socio-economic inequality present by ensuring that local government had high levels of autonomy. By forging the concept of "developmental local government", the legislation cemented local government as an active branch of state, able to address the post-apartheid goal of redistribution. My research focuses on one aspect of this legislation, the categorizing of municipalities. South African local government legislation is outlined in a way that provides greater autonomy to municipalities that are deemed "metros" whilst simultaneously describing the model of "cooperative governance" which describes all levels of government as being equally crucial and able to perform governance. The case of Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) forms the focus of my case study because it is an example of a small city that was promoted to 'metro status'. My research teases out the political and technical hopes, dreams and realities of 'metro status'. It relies on a narrative qualitative inquiry based on the input from 19 interviewees (including academics, national government ministers and municipal employees) and an analysis of the governmental, legislative and media archives focussed on the local government transformation in the country.

Being prompted by the work of Jennifer Robinson, who asks scholars to consider the trajectory of urban labels and the theories they are grounded in, I do not take for granted the jurisdictional/legislative label of "metro" and I seek to answer the question: Is bigger better? Further, the growing questions on the absence of scholarly research on smaller cities gives this research room to ask questions regarding a city caught between larger and smaller cities. BCM demonstrates a municipality whose hopes to be a big city may have been rooted more in appearances rather than in fact. Whilst the term metro speaks to a set of technical assumptions of the characteristics of a city, BCM demonstrates an example of how politics plays a large part in how local government policy is enacted. Where 'metro status' can be perceived simply as a change in jurisdictional status, BCM demonstrates that even for a small city the prestige of 'metro status' brings a slew of political and governmental infighting at local, regional and even national level.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	- Amathole District Municipality
ANC	- African National Congress
BCM	- Buffalo City Municipality
BCMM	- Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality
COGTA	- Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSP	- City Support Programme
DHS	- Department of Human Settlements
GTAC	- Government Technical Advisory Centre
GAWC	- Global and World Cities
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KZN	- Kwa-Zulu Natal
LGNF	- Local Government Negotiating Forum
LGTA	- Local Government Transition Act
MDB	- Municipal Demarcation Board
MEC	- Member of Executive Council
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	- National Party
NPC	- National Planning Commission
RDP	- Reconstruction and Development Programme
REC	- Regional Executive Committee
SACN	- South African Cities' Network
SACP	- South African Communist Party
SANCO	- South African National Civic Organisation

SDF - Spatial Development Framework

TLC - Transitional Local Council

Local Government Municipal Structures Act - Structures Act

Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act - Demarcation Act

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past century, South African cities have experienced a trajectory of urban growth and change that differs from most cities across the globe. The almost century-long era of segregation resulted in a sprawled urban landscape unique to the country. This landscape finds its roots in the policy of dissuading black urbanisation. Though many are familiar with the Group Areas Act of 1950 – the act that ushered in the era of apartheid – the beginning of legislated segregation dates back further in the country’s history. However, the Group Areas Act established “more convoluted, influx controls [which] became more extensive and stringent, and their implementation became increasingly coercive and draconian” (Turok, 2012:13). Nevertheless, the predecessors to the Group Areas Act are important as they provide a historical background and grounding to the escalated policies under apartheid (Mabin & Smit, 1997; Nel, 1990 & 1991; Ramutsindela, 2013; Robinson, 1990; Turok, 2012). The Native Land Act of 1913 demonstrates an initial push to restrict the land tenure of the indigenous black population. The black reserves were conceived as the domicile of the black people, limiting their opportunity to own property or live outside these areas. The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 was an extension of this policy, which acknowledged that despite segregation, there was a clear presence of black people in the cities and towns which required a similar exercise of restriction: separate locations within the urban area for the indigenous black population. As Ramutsindela (2013:295) puts it, “spaces constructed by means of land were inseparable from a vision of society.”

The intent to control not only the location but also the movements of the native population produced a fragmented spatial landscape at the local level (Jeeva & Cilliers, 2020; Mabin, 1989; Nel, 1990 & 1991; Ramutsindela, 2013; Robinson, 1990; van der Merwe, 1992). Scholars have demonstrated, however, that despite decades of legislated separation, the livelihoods of the black population were inextricably tied to these white cities and towns (Mabin, 1989; Nel, 1990; Robinson, 1990). Despite being politically conceived as belonging to the homelands (black reserves, Bantustans), the black population was economically and socially intertwined in the cities. This conception of black people belonging outside, but operating within white South African spaces, produced a “displaced urbanisation” (Mabin, 1989:1; van der Merwe, 1992:103).

Many colonized nations experienced similar limitations of movement and location (Bakker et al., 2008; Kooy & Bakker, 2008; de Boeck, 2020), which resulted in similar existence sprawled urbanisation. However, As Ballard and Steyn (2013: 1) write: “apartheid in South Africa tried to establish a particular moral order through spatial arrangements, the physical distance between races being largely understood to sanctify moral distances.” The reality of homelands was not segregation as conceived in many colonized nations. These homelands acted as “separate” nations, though they were not fully autonomous

from the national government. Rather the apartheid government enforced a system that alienated the indigenous population from the urban, “white” population. This is further complicated by the fact that some “South Africa” white towns and cities had close proximity to homelands. This created a complicated relationship within such locations, where the boundaries between “nations” were blurred because of the need for labour in the white cities, and the need for resources from the black homelands. Thus, heavy movement between these locations occurred, whilst the legislative and physical distance remained (Swilling, 1987; Nel, 1990). While a further analysis of this reality is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is mentioned as it caused such a fragmented spatiality of apartheid required a long-term (1993-2000) restructuring process to address the unintegrated, undemocratic government; a process which the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) initiated (Bekker et al., 1997; Cameron, 1999; Giraut, Maharaj & Moriconi-Ebrard, 2002; Local Government Transition Act, No. 209 of 1993, 1994; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002).

South Africa’s democratisation process concurred with the production of a new Constitution (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1993) aiming to guide the new nation. Deliberations between struggle stalwarts and the ruling apartheid party, the National Party (NP), were the key means to determining the future governance of the country. However, the Constitution (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1993) promulgated on 28 January 1994 as a result of these deliberations was not the final Constitution. Instead it acted as an interim Constitution for the yet inchoate democracy, setting the terms of the first democratic election on 27 April 1994 and leading to the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1993). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 – the final constitution - would only be promulgated on 8 May 1996, after continued deliberation in the democratic parliament. Notably, the timeline of the democratisation of local government lagged behind the process at the national level. While at the national level the government relied on the interim Constitution (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1993) to guide the transitioning government, the Local Government Transition Act (Local Government Transition Act, No. 209 of 1993, 1994) - LGTA - acted as the guiding document for the local government democratisation process. The LGTA (ibid.) described three phases that encompass the steps to democratisation (**Error! Reference source not found.**): the pre-interim, interim and final phase. The *pre-interim phase* began on 2 February 1994 with the promulgation of the LGTA and ended with the first democratic local government elections on 1 November 1995 across most of the country, and 29 May 1996 in the provinces of the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The *interim phase* began with the first democratic local government elections and ended with the second democratic local government elections. And the *final phase* began with the second democratic local government elections on 4 December 2000. The final set of local government legislation, which described the final structure

of local government, was written and promulgated during the interim phase (“1995–96 South African municipal elections - Wikiwand”, n.d.; “2000 South African municipal elections - Wikiwand”, n.d.; Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997).

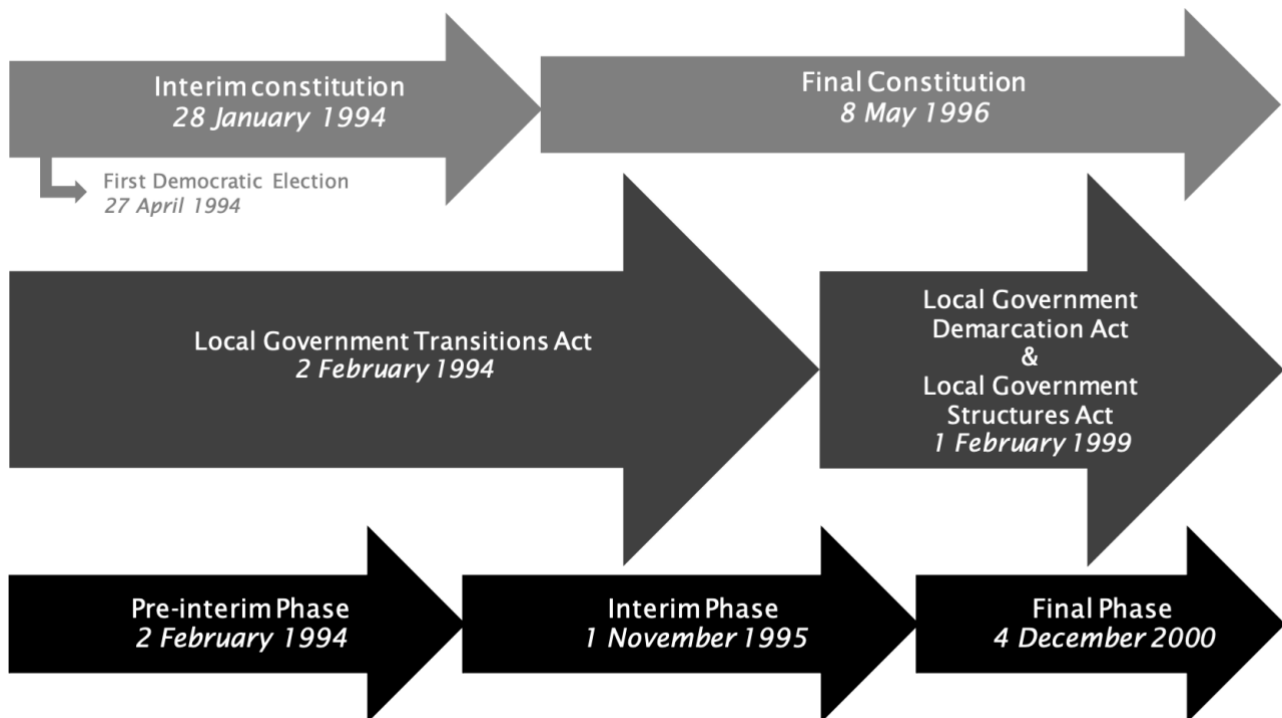


Figure 1. Phases of local government democratization

source: Nakkungu, 2022

Although some scholars (Maharaj, 2002; Ramutsindela, 2013) have questioned the transformative potential of the LGTA (*Local Government Transition Act, No. 209 of 1993, 1994*), this Act allowed for a more integrated South Africa by reducing the number of municipalities from about 1260 (under apartheid) to 843 (Maharaj, 2002). It allowed for the initial de-racialisation of local government, as well as establishing a greater form of representation for the previously excluded population.

This complete shift in dispensation required political and technical argumentation which Hall (1993:289) might describe as “powering and puzzling”. He understands “puzzling” as an act of working through policy to create new ideals and means of governance, and “powering” as an act of the political will to the electorate and leverage general consensus to influence policy and institutional outcomes (ibid.). Whilst there was a political body responsible for determining the democratic future of the country – referred to as the Convention for Democratic South Africa – the responsibility for deliberating on the local government structure was left to the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) (Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997). Bekker and colleagues (1997:39, 41) explain:

[At that time of the deliberations], the NP government initiated a process of local government negotiations designed to take place concurrent with, and parallel to, national negotiations. After a period of preliminary local level discussions in a large number of towns, this local government negotiation proposal was rejected by the ANC and its allies. Thereafter, the main negotiating parties agreed to postpone the establishment of a new system of local government until after the 1994 general elections [...] It was only after constitutional negotiations had been completed that this main body addressed the proposals of the LGNF: to establish a transitional local government framework and to translate it into legislation [...] The Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF), [was] a national bilateral forum comprising a 'statutory' - that is, public sector - and a SANCO delegation, equal in size.

In this quote, we see the political force of “powering”: where the NP hoped to keep some sense of power by refocusing their negotiations on local rather than national government, and the African National Congress (ANC) blocking this attempt; but we also see the work of “puzzling”: as signalled by the work of the LGNF who sought to determine a policy for transitional local government that met the requirements of establishing a democratic local government.

During the *pre-interim phase*, the LGNF was reproduced in local level forums across the country (Bekker et al., 1997; Cameron, 2006; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002). These forums were responsible for determining the boundaries and structure of their constituent local government as outlined by the LGTA (*Local Government Transition Act, No. 209 of 1993*, 1994). They also consisted of the 50/50 split described above (Bekker et al., 1997; Cameron, 1999 & 2006; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002). While the intent of the forums was to ensure the beginnings of a democratic and representative local government, in many cases they were susceptible to the political dynamics that denied the direct democratic process (Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002). Personal interest and political manipulations were evident in the oppositional relationship of the non-statutory and statutory members in some forums, explaining the delay in local government elections in the provinces of the Western Cape and KZN (Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002). However, the process of democratisation continued and the new local governments were established. The forums determined the structure of their constituent municipalities. It was, however, through the local government elections of 1995 that the leadership of the now integrated municipalities was introduced – producing new lines of conflicts between the incumbent and new municipal officials (Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002).

As noted above, the democratisation of local government was secondary to the democratisation of national government. Because the LGTA (*Local Government Transition Act, No. 209 of 1993*, 1994) was considered as a transitional measure only, a relook at the local government structure was necessary. This revision exercise fell under the mandate of the Department of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development who produced the new suite of local government legislations (Department of Provincial

Affairs and Constitutional Development [DPACD], 1998). The utopian, emancipatory vision of South Africa established by the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) continued in this set of legislation. As Schwember and Urabayen (2018:1) suggest, utopias are bred out of the “emancipatory desires of societies.” South Africa, as a nation, was seeking to escape the cloud of discriminatory and racialised history of dispossession that covered all aspects of society. To summarise the key terms expressing the image of the ‘new South Africa’ in terms of local government and spatial planning:

- “*integration*”: the integration of racially divided local governments;
- “*one city, one tax base*”: the assertion that these separated local governments did not benefit the full constituency whose work and consumption they benefitted from;
- “*functionally-linked*”: spaces that were segregated under apartheid but are technically and functionally connected;
- “*wall-to-wall demarcation*”: the imperative that all areas of the country fell under the jurisdiction of a municipality, none could be excluded, like in the apartheid past.

All these terms describe an aim to ensure the transformation of the spatial and governmental landscape through a local government reform framework (Cameron, 2006; DPACD, 1998; Goodenough, 2004; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002).

While these terms signify the emancipatory desire to bridge the racial divide, there is an additional mandate in legislation for local government. Local government as a means of spatial-social-political transformation also relies on a vision of “*developmental local government*”. The notion of developmental local government was built on an understanding that in order to bridge the racialised socio-economic divide, socio-economic development needed to occur (Boraine et al., 2006; Cameron, 1999 & 2006; Robinson, 2008; South Africa, 1998b; Turok & Parnell, 2009). The Local Government Municipal Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998, 1998). explains this concept as follows:

...[T]here is fundamental agreement in our country on a vision of democratic and developmental local government, in which municipalities fulfil their constitutional obligations to ensure sustainable, effective and efficient municipal services, promote social and economic development, encourage a safe and healthy environment by working with communities in creating environments and human settlements in which all our people can lead uplifted and dignified lives” (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998, 1998: 1).

To ensure that all municipalities reached the above aim, and with an understanding that South Africa had a range of municipalities with differing spatial, economic, and demographic realities, a categorisation

system was established. These categories were formulated to ensure that large cities (metros) would “have sufficient powers to fulfil their intended role;” whilst also maintaining, “flexibility in local government systems outside of metropolitan areas to accommodate the vastly different settlement types (ranging from large secondary cities to sparsely populated rural areas)” (DPACD, 1998:8). The municipal categories were established by Section 155 of the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) as follows:

Establishment of municipalities

155. (1) There are the following categories of municipality:

- (a) *Category A*: A municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.
- (b) *Category B*: A municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a Category C municipality within whose area it falls.
- (c) *Category C*: A municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality.

Whilst the Constitution (*ibid.*) established these categories, the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (*Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998*, 1998) clarified them. The Structures Act (*ibid.*) designates the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) – an independent, government-funded, body of experts elected by the then Minister of the Department of Provincial and Local Government, and signed off by the President – as the arbitrator of the process of boundary demarcation and municipal categorisation (Goodenough, 2004; Maharaj, 2002; South Africa, 1998b; Sutcliffe & Zitha, 2000). We can find a further clarification of these categories in the Structures Act (*Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998* South Africa, 1998: part1 ss 2 & 3):

Areas which must have Category A municipalities

An area must have a single Category A municipality if that area can reasonably be regarded as-

- (a) a conurbation featuring-
 - (i) areas of high population density;
 - (ii) an intense movement of people, goods, and services;
 - (iii) extensive development; and
 - (iv) multiple business districts and industrial areas;
- (b) a centre of economic activity with a complex and diverse economy;
- (c) a single area for which integrated development planning is desirable; and
- (d) having strong interdependent social and economic linkages between its constituent units.

Areas which must have municipalities of both Category C and B

An area that does not comply with the criteria set out in Section 2 must have municipalities of both Category C and Category B.

These categories are the foundation of my research. Where the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) assigns the role of redistribution¹ to local government, as demonstrated above, the categories emphasize the importance of different roles for different municipalities. By accepting the different strengths and realities found in settlements across the country did not seek to exempt some from the aim of “developmental local government,” rather these differences were accommodated through the categorisation so that all municipalities have the tools to foster development. However, it is important not to take these categories for granted. They not only demonstrate a desire to rationalize government, they are also tied to the idea that a decentralised state is more economically productive. In an era when the idea of the entrepreneurial city permeates urban studies (Cameron, 1999 & 2014; Robinson, 2002) fuelled by such popular labels as *Global and World City* (Sassen, 1991), looking at South Africa presents an opportunity to think critically about the work of urban categories in urban governance. This is even more vital when not only cities in the Global South, but small- and medium-sized cities globally are ignored in the framing of these popular categories. With this thesis, I hope to bring light to this gap in the research, as I see it as an important step to creating an urban studies that reflects the range of cities across the globe more accurately. Moreover these categories affect how we manage our cities (Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Robinson, 2008).

Though the extract above from the Structures Act (*Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998*, 1998) does not specify a settlement type (town, city, village, etc.) for each category, it is clear from the White Paper on Local Government (DPACD, 1998) - which preceded the Structures Act - that, in the case of Category A, the writers of the Act had a particular type of settlement in mind. Category A is more specifically described in the “Definitions” section of the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998 South Africa, 1998:7):

‘metropolitan municipality’ means a municipality that has exclusive executive and legislative authority in its area, and which is described in Section 155 (1) of the Constitution as a Category A municipality;

¹ With regards to this thesis, I consider redistribution, as the redistribution of wealth and resources from the previously excluded (black) population.

This clear definition demonstrates a delineation of metropolitan municipalities (metro/Category A) and non-metropolitan municipalities (local municipalities/Category B).

When the six metropolitan municipalities were established in 2000 after the local government elections, there was a pushback from local municipalities that were not deemed metros (Goodenough, 2004; Sutcliffe & Zitha, 2000). As a product of this, the MDB established the concept of the “*aspirant metros*” – larger local municipalities that had the potential of becoming metropolitan municipalities (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001a & 2002a). Thus, as Marais and colleagues (2016 & 2019) write, the drive to be a metropolitan municipality results in secondary cities (local municipalities) looking to obtain “metro status.”

Those municipalities that fell under the arguably awkward label of “aspirant” were reassessed several times through reports commissioned by the MDB to determine if they should be metros (Cameron, 2008; MCA Planners & Oranje, 2005; Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001b, 2002b,c,d,e & 2008; Sutcliffe, 2002). So, to analyse the intents and implications of the municipal categories in this thesis I draw on the case of one of these municipalities, the Buffalo City Municipality (BCM).

BCM was established as a local (Category B) municipality in 2000 (Bwalya & Seethal, 2015; Giraut, Maharaj & Moriconi-Ebrard, 2002; Municipal Demarcation Board, 1999a & b; Sutcliffe & Zitha, 2000). In 2001, however, the MDB classified the municipality as an “aspirant metro” (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001a & 2002a). Whilst this term did not have any jurisdictional power, it pointed the city toward a path of gaining “metro status” – which eventually occurred in 2011: BCM became Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) (Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, 2010).

To go slightly further back in history, BCM was the result of the amalgamation of the former white towns East London (including Gonubie and Beacon Bay), King William’s Town, Ginsberg and Berlin; the former homeland townships and towns of Bisho, Mdantsane, Gompo and Zwelitsha; and the former Coloured and Indian town councils (Eastern Cape (South Africa), 1994a & b; Municipal Demarcation Board, 1999a). In a relatively unique way, the amalgamation of former homeland and former White settlements profoundly reifies the local government vision of integration and transformation (Bwalya & Seethal, 2015). In an editorial submitted to the local newspaper (the *Daily Dispatch*), the MDB described the (future) municipality as follows:

This municipality includes East London and King William’s Town, Dimbaza and Debe Nek, as well as a number of coastal resorts. Clearly this municipality is one of South Africa’s major secondary cities with great potential to be declared as a Metropolitan Municipality (Municipal Demarcation Board, 1999b).

The anticipatory wording of the quote above highlights the strong visionary exercise that was occurring at the time of the establishment of the local government structure. It demonstrates the hopes imbedded in the formation of the municipality. Understanding that the municipality was eventually declared a “metro” raises questions as to how it was able to finally reach its “great potential” and what negotiations were made to ensure that this vision of BCM was established.

Relying on the contextual grounding presented above, in the following chapter I continue to engage with questions of the meaning of ‘metro’ through existing scholarship. I look at how ‘metro’ is linked to the discourse that focuses on neoliberalisation and globalisation of urbanity and how this neoliberalisation affects policymaking and restricts the types of cities that are seen as sites of analysis. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of methodology with specific attention to the interconnectedness between my methodological approach and my research questions and frame of analysis. I follow this with a detailed discussion of my methods. I begin presenting my findings in Chapter 4 – with a focus on the greater national implications of urban categorisation. I follow with findings that detail the BCM-specific implications in Chapter 5. Together, these chapters demonstrate that urban research needs to “provincialise” homogenizing theories (Parnell & Robinson, 2017:593). The circulating knowledge on cities, although useful to some cities, can prove restrictive to others, especially when urban governance is influenced by these theories. Thus, in Chapter 6, I return to the reviewed literature and emphasize the importance of a greater understanding of all types of cities. Through continued research of lesser-known cities, we can better see the different trajectories of popular urban theories. Finally, my conclusion - Chapter 7 - summarises the work of the thesis and gives insight into further research opportunities, including research that considers the quantitative proof of my argument.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Having introduced the democratisation of South Africa it is evident that the ideal that fuelled local government transformation was redistribution as a product of development. Local government legislation sought to ensure that municipalities obtained the “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) necessary to enact this developmental agenda. The conception of local government needing greater powers to further the socio-economic prosperity of a country is not new, however, South Africa is unique in making this a legislated reality (Cameron, 1999 & 2014). Adding to the categorisation system that introduces metro as a jurisdiction, South Africa is a useful site of analysis for understanding urban labels and the corresponding theories they are founded on.

Beyond providing praise or recrimination for urban categories, and the structure that makes them possible, the impetus for this project is to demonstrate how these labels are formed, bent and stretched by normative values. In this review, I will highlight that despite the vast insights drawn from city research, urban studies fails to encompass the realities of all cities. When certain theories are allowed to dominate, they remain unquestioned. I, therefore, consider a set of literature on ideas and policy that encourages researchers to question dominant urban concepts. Furthermore, building scholarship that seeks to draw in alternative sites and tools of urban knowledge allows me to render research on urban governance as a means of producing a less parochial urban theory. Specifically, I rely on secondary city literature to provide a rationale for researching urban governance in small and medium cities. Where the aforementioned bodies of literature push scholars to think outside the dominant narratives and locations of cities research, secondary cities literature emphasises the importance of looking even further “off the map” (Robinson, 2002: 535) to cities that make up the majority of urban settlements. To conclude the chapter, I apply the challenge posed by this literature and ask what questions can a medium-sized city of the Global South like Buffalo City Metro help answer.

2.2 THINKING CITIES

These days, it seems all but necessary for urban scholars to rationalise their study of cities by introducing their writings with some statistic that emphasizes the colossal demographic shift to urban settlements (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Derickson, 2015; Pieterse, 2011; Ruhiiga, 2014; Smit, 2018). The understanding that cities are rich sites of inquiry has accordingly attracted academics beyond urban studies to look at their subject area in the context of cities. A multitude of studies on cities can be found,

from inquiries into the public health outcomes of low-income urban dwellers (Whittaker, Tran & Keene, 2020) to the analysis of the informal business sector of developing cities (Tafti, 2020). However, even after many decades of research, the limited understanding of cities remains an issue (Robinson, 2002 & 2006). Because of the emphasis on densely populated, economically-dominant cities that tend to be located in the Global North, many scholars note the lack of attention to cities “off the map” (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017; Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Robinson, 2002: 535, 2006 & 2008). Neglecting small and medium cities is presented as a failure of urban studies to investigate the cities that make up the majority of the urban settlements people live in (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017; Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019). The reality that the Global South holds the greater part of the world’s population and fastest urbanising economies illustrates that these cities also warrant research in their own right (Parnell & Robinson, 2012).

However, what Robinson (2002 & 2006) considers the failing of urban studies is not only the limited sites of urban inquiry (i.e., which cities are focused on as places relevant for study), but also the limited lenses that cities are viewed through. Even when cities “off the map” (Robinson, 2002: 535) are analysed, they are still looked at from the perspective of the cities in the Global North – those cities that are ‘self-evident’ and that no one questions whether or not they are cities (Robinson, 2006 & 2013). On the other hand, cities in the Global South, or ‘third world cities’, are assessed with a developmental lens, necessitating fixing so they might become more like their northern counterparts (Robinson, 2002, 2004, 2006 & 2013). For Robinson, the restrictiveness of this epistemological and ontological approach not only fails the robustness of city research, but fails city practitioners as well. Recognizing the influence of urban research on urban governance, Robinson (2002:532) asks scholars to consider “trajectories of their own practices and analyses”. She suggests that “widely circulating approaches to contemporary urbanization — global and world cities, together with the persistent use of the category ‘third-world city’ — impose substantial limitations on imagining or planning the futures of cities around the world (ibid:531).”

Herein Robinson (2002) speaks to the powerful flow of ideas: one’s (scholarly) idea of city-ness disseminates and thus fuels other ideas that affect “imagining or planning.” As such, her critique resonates with the works of scholars (Baumgartner, 2014; Hall, 1993; Lowndes, 2009; Painter, 2008; Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011) who establish “ideas as a central element of policy analysis” (Baumgartner, 2014:475). If policymaking is a core tool used by states to guide their nation’s progress (Hall, 1993; Ruhiiga, 2014) it is important to know where the ideas that drive policymaking come from (Baumgartner, 2014; Hall, 1993; Lowndes, 2009; Painter, 2008; Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Skogstad & Schmidt, 2011). The work of Hall (1993:293) reveals to us that we cannot take for granted the “framework of ideas” that policymakers rely on:

More precisely, policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a Gestalt², this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. I am going to call this interpretive framework a policy paradigm.

To construct this theory, Hall (1993:279) analysed the shift in economic policy from “Keynesian to monetarist modes of economic regulation” in Britain between 1970 and 1989. For Hall, this ‘third order change’ signified a shift in paradigm, resulting in not only a change in the instruments of regulation, but a change in the idea of what good regulation is. As Baumgartner (2014:476) clarifies: “[I]f ideas are everywhere related to policies and the reasons to support them, paradigms are ideas on steroids.” He (ibid:476) further explains that not all ideas that produce policies are as powerful and hegemonic as the policy paradigm proposed by Hall, thus the term policy paradigm needs to be reserved for those ideas that are, “[so] powerful [...] that they become unspoken.”

Returning here to Robinson’s indictment (2002) of popular urban labels and their limitation on urban imaginary, we can ask if she is simply concerned with ideas or a greater paradigm. I suggest that Robinson’s work speaks of the power of a greater paradigm. As Hall (1993:280) mentions: “[A policy paradigm is] embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work.” This parallels Robinson’s understanding that urban labels point to a greater framework that takes itself for granted. To reiterate, her argument proves that the force of urban labels emphasises certain characteristics - those that operate and benefit the globalising circulation of capital. Consequently, in the face of the imperative of cities to operate competitively, urban practitioners end up limiting their view of what a city should be based on these characteristics. Thus, while these labels, namely Global and World Cities, (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Sassen, 1991) might be useful for demonstrating the transcendent ways cities interact with the global market even undermining the state, they also have a parochial effect on envisioning our cities, as they are produced from the vantage point of neoliberal urbanism (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Rossi, 2016). As a way to shift this focus, Parnell and Robinson (2012) ask scholars to provincialise such theories so as to allow an exploration of other ways of urban knowledge generation. They (2012:611) write that: “policy outcomes are the result of multiple circuits

² Something that is made of many parts and yet is somehow more than or different from the combination of its parts (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

of knowledge, and attending to those which are not contributing to broader processes of neoliberalisation is critical if the concerns and practices of urban development in poorer cities are to be comprehended.” They continue to argue that “making a conscious effort to place experiences on the global urban theoretical agenda means that scholarship should better reflect practice-driven knowledge that too often falls off the radar screen of critical urban theory” (ibid:611).

2.3 GOVERNING CITIES

In line with Parnell and Robinson’s (2012) call cited above, this thesis asks urban scholars to take seriously the realities of policymaking, and execution in order to generate a more productive and insightful urban theory. I find Bolay and Rabinovich (2004:413) a useful resource in outlining this frame of thinking:

[Looking at urban governance] allows us to answer two key questions for the development of these cities: what rules guide decision-making processes? who are the players involved, what are the context and constraints within which they operate, their source of power or authority, and how do they relate to each other.

Bolay and Rabinovich’s framework (2004) questioning gets to grips with Robinson’s (2002, 2004, 2006 & 2013) assertion that scholars may need to consider the trajectory of their research, and consider in what way ideas generated and/or adopted in urban theory interact with the dominant policy paradigm and thereby shape urban governance processes too. A branch of political theory referred to as New Institutionalism provides a theoretical foundation to an exercise of looking at the role of ideas and institutions in urban governance. As defined by Lowndes (2009:91) New Institutionalism: “takes a critical look at the way in which institutions embody values and power relationships[...]While institutions constrain individual behaviour, they are also (paradoxically) human creations, which change and evolve through the agency of actors”.

By new institutionalists describing institutions as the ‘rules of the game’ (Lowndes, 2009:95), they contribute to an understanding of governance that clarifies what “rules, values and ideas” actors rely on, and how they are constrained by and interact within this “game” (ibid: 93). Thus the game and the players in the game “are seen as mutually constitutive” (Lowndes, 2009:100). This branch of theory reinforces Hall’s (1993) conception of the framework of understanding by taking it further and assigning a critical eye not only to the paradigm, but to the institutions established by these paradigms. Furthermore, it also makes room for Baumgartner’s (2014) critique of policy paradigms and allows for the reality that ideas have varying strengths and thus varying power by demonstrating that institutions affect how these ideas are realised. Thus, both the investigation of urban institutions and modes of urban governance can

highlight the strength of ideas and potentially shed light on Robinson's assertions on the power of urban theory.

In the case of South Africa, during the time of democratisation³ - an era marked by the imperative of redistribution (as demonstrated by such policies as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP of 1994⁴) - where the global consensus asserted a reduction of state expenditure (Parnell & Robinson, 2012:603; Smit, 2018), the idea of developmental local government was at the fore of the minds of government officials. As mentioned in Chapter 1, developmental local government sought the restitution of the spatial injustices left by apartheid by ensuring that local government had the powers and functions to operate autonomously. Robinson (2002:542), however, describes such ideas regarding autonomous local government in more critical terms:

Increasingly, policymakers suggest that cities which are well organized and managed can build on their own distinctive combinations of economic activities and broader assets to act as a competitive platform for attracting and directing economic investment and encouraging economic growth. This way of thinking about cities and their potential for development has much in common with other prominent approaches to local economic development which have been primarily based on the analysis of western cities' experiences in the context of globalization.

In South Africa, while the government demonstrates a drift from the predominant policy paradigm, we can see that developmental local government relies on the same dominant approaches. The disconnect between the language and intents of South African policy and its influences appears to be a gap in the literature, with the exception of a few scholars (see: Hart, 2014; Mayekiso, 1993; Selmeczi, 2015).

However, because my specific focus are the categorization as conceived by the Local Government Structures Act, I must acknowledge a similar history of categorizing is present in countries across the globe. China has a long history of categorisation of cities into "tiers" or "fronts" (xian). Jin and Zhao (2020) explain how the term conceived in 20th century has become popularly used to categorize cities in economic terms. They credit the trend to a Chinese business magazine called Yicai article in 2013. And

³ Referring to the transition to a democratic government.

⁴ The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was a socio-economic policy framework focused on establishing equity in South Africa by means of reconstruction and development (the Ministry in the Office of the President, 1994).

they further track the impacts on 3rd tier (sanxian) cities⁵ and how there is a clear shift in focus for cities to be more economically competitive to raise in the ranks.

In a process more closely resembling the South African case, India the central government launched an initiative, JNNURM, in December 2005, “aimed at pursuing urban reforms and putting the cities on the fast track to development”(Banerjee-Guha, 2009: 97). However, Banerjee-Guha describes these reforms as a move from the previous era of planning focussed on “liveable Indian cities” and notes the emphasis on pursuing “world class [Indian] cities.” Further this initiative relied on the classification of cities in two 3 categories: A – mega cities, B – metro cities, C – urban agglomerations; with governance requirements for each category focussed on the mission of JNNURM. Banerjee-Guha (2009) and Appadurai(2000) both note how this emphasis on world class cities results in a sanitation effort that sees the poor slum dwellers moved to the urban periphery.

With the cases in India and China demonstrating a concern for the influence that urban labels have on urban policy and governance, a further investigation of South Africa’s system on labelling seems warranted. The case in China demonstrates the sociological impacts of labels, showing how even the air of competition that these labels bring effect city planning. The case in India strongly mirrors that of South Africa, as it shows the effects of the legislative action of city labelling. Both these examples demonstrate the importance of not taking urban labels for granted, whether they are written in the law or not. The subjective interpretations of urbanity, influenced by the contemporaneous policy paradigm, create a tension worth studying. Thus, my research aims to take seriously the South African urban labels and focus on how they are operationalised in urban governance.

2.4 SMALL CITIES

While the previous sections provide a rationale for looking at cities in the Global South, and South Africa in particular, I rely on another set of literature to guide me to my focus on Buffalo City Metro. As a sort of pushback on the homogenizing nature of the aforementioned urban studies scholarship focused on large cities (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Sassen, 1991), scholars of secondary cities highlight the importance of looking at small and medium cities (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017; Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019; Smit, 2018; van der Merwe, 1992) . As Bolay and Rabinovich (2004:408) write:

⁵ Which they describe as medium sized cities.

[...] the overwhelming importance of metropolisation, which raises questions on a massive scale, and is characterised by problems that affect several million people, causes medium-sized cities to be studied too rarely.

To corroborate this assertion, Marais, Nel and Donaldson (2016) investigate the large discrepancy between the study of metropolitan cities and secondary cities by looking quantitatively at urban research. Using the case of South Africa, they analysed Google Scholar search hits to demonstrate the disparity across cities. They demonstrate a difference of 1 million search hits (350 times more hits) between the highest ranked (metropolitan) city and lowest ranked (secondary) city. This vast gap in the study of smaller cities is not cited here merely as an interesting piece of data from the field of the geography of knowledge production. Many scholars consider the high stakes at play if secondary cities continue to be largely ignored in scholarship. As Bolay and Rabinovich (2004:409) establish: “Worldwide, it is estimated that 54% of city dwellers live in centres of less than 500,000 inhabitants.” Further, they (2004: 408) mention that:

The ills that affect the metropolis [...] motivated us to examine smaller cities in the urban network for their strengths and weaknesses with regard to urban management and the environment—in a word, with regard to sustainable development.

Thus, to neglect secondary cities research is to neglect the global urban network. Scholars also note the richness of urban understanding that is lacking when concentrating only on a particular subset of cities:

Secondary and smaller cities might be more accessible to ethnographic research than large urban centres...If we overlook urban forms that emerge in secondary cities, the image of urbanity is incomplete (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017:6).

Without these statements of the shortcomings on an exceptionalizing framework that weighs some cities as heavier than others, the broadening of the scope of urban studies would not be possible. I appreciate the further clarifications that the work on secondary cities provides to understanding how cities interact. Although understanding how large cities are destabilizing the power and notion of the state is a useful finding in cities research (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Sassen, 1991), the value of secondary cities literature is that it looks at these relations (and others) outside of powerful cities.

As mentioned, Bolay and Rabinovich (2004) describe urbanity in terms of a network. Cities are part of a system, and they expound on the various functions of cities in this system. Beyond merely acknowledging the presence of small and medium cities with regards to the global economy, they demonstrate the intranational and regional role many of these cities play. While the term “medium sized” city implies a focus on population size or land area, secondary city scholars demonstrate the importance

of the intermediary relationships that secondary cities have with their rural hinterland (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019; van der Merwe, 1992). The secondary cities literature emphasizes a system or cycle of urban management and reality that accepts that some cities interact with each other and their rural hinterlands in ways worth noting and leveraging:

More than just a quibble about terms, the interest of such a reflection lies in that it is likely to generate a better understanding of the specificities of intermediate cities, and of their position relative to demographic, economic and political exchange in developing countries (Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004:408).

In this sense, secondary city scholars share the sentiments of Robinson (2002:535) in advocating for cities “off the map”. Invoking the work of Anthony King (1998; as cited in Robinson (2002: 533)) describes urban studies as being “deeply divided against itself” as it separates research on cities based on their location in the Global South or Global North. However this division also describes the gap in research between metropolitan cities and secondary cities as well: an urban studies that is removed from the majority (small- and medium-sized) cities, is divided against itself.

Even so, I find a gap in this literature in that it fails to explain the realities of cities like BCM. In the work of researching cities “off the map” (Robinson, 2002: 535) there still seems to be bypass over cities caught in between; in between the labels of metro and secondary cities, and those that are not the most well known as “third world cities.” Further, many scholars still categorise cities into comfortable research terms despite trying to widen the lens of city research. Bolay and Rabinovich (2004) advocate for a typology of secondary cities that further categorizes these cities within the larger group. Marais and colleagues (2019:124) assert that it is the lack of a “well-developed settlement hierarchy” that “results in the inadequate distribution of services and functions and limited urban-rural linkages” in the developing world. This ties in with the desire bred from a planning and governance tradition that seeks to describe and manage things in ‘rational’ terms (Painter, 2008). In this sense, the rationalist view operates: “[...] similar to [a] price of entry, where if one does not share the paradigm, one is not part of the conversation.” This quote from Baumgartner (2014:476) illustrates that we all need to be aware of how we theorise, even those of us advocating for the less studied fields. In the case of Buffalo City Metro, because it is officially a “metro,” it escapes analysis by the scholars of secondary cities, despite it being far removed economically, functionally and demographically from its larger counterparts. Marais, Nel and Donaldson (2016 & 2019) rely on legislation to determine which cities are secondary cities in South Africa, rather than acknowledging that legislation might also fail to adequately encompass cities like BCM. In fact, as the following section suggests, the municipality experiences the same lack of research focus, as well as the same pressure to meet the expectations of becoming a “true” metro, as the secondary cities Marais, Nel and Donaldson (2016 & 2019) analyse.

2.5 BUFFALO CITY

While I outlined the ways cities research has failed cities like BCM, there is a significant set of literature available on BCM's urban history (Bank & Sibanda, 2018; Buku, 2014; Bwalya & Seethal, 2015; Nel, 1990 & 1991; Robinson, 1990; Nel & Rogerson, 1996; Swilling, 1987). Much of this literature focuses on the long segregationist history of the city. Even before the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, like many other colonial cities, East London had a form of segregation (Nel, 1991)⁶. In 1875, a local act (the Municipal Amendment's Act) was passed, that restricted the land-use and location of the city's Asian population (Nel, 1991). This act worked alongside a sanction by the Cape Colonial government in 1877 that allowed the city to continue its practice of racial segregation which began when the city was annexed as part of the Frontier Wars⁷ (Nel, 1991). Understandably, in the contemporary era of the post-apartheid era, it remains difficult to upend this legacy of segregation (Buku, 2014; Bwalya & Seethal, 2015). Yet, the agenda of de-racialization and development carries a certain weight in a city that has such a long history of segregation.

While there is a literature that engages with post-apartheid local government transformational agendas and the corresponding legislation, policy practices, and implementation (Cameron, 2014; Freund, 2010; Maharaj, 2002; Robinson, 2008; Turok, 2012 & 2016; Turok & Parnell, 2009), it largely fails to incorporate the realities of cities outside of the big three: Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg. Surely, these are the economic powerhouses of the country, but this body of work falls into the trap of relying on these cities to draw overarching conclusions on the failures or successes of the post-apartheid era. For example, Cameron (2014) offers an analysis of the decentralisation of local government as a product of the post-apartheid legislation. His analysis notes that often it is difficult for governments in cities to use the full scope of their powers because their power is often undermined by the national government. But he uses the cases of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Both cities have a political administration operating in power that differs from the national administration. Cape Town is ruled by the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Johannesburg is ruled by a coalition of parties. This differs from the case of BCM which is ruled by the African National Congress (ANC) - the same party that rules nationally. As such, when Cameron (2014) makes conclusions regarding the effectiveness of decentralisation, he grounds it in the two cases that differ politically from BCM and many other municipalities in the country. Therefore,

⁶ East London is the largest, most central, and most influential of the cities/towns that were later amalgamated to form Buffalo City Municipality.

⁷ The Frontier Wars were a series of wars between the British colonialists and the AmaXhosa for power over the Eastern Cape region from 1779 to 1879.

analysing the dynamics in BCM can provide a wider frame of the effectiveness of the legislated decentralisation.

As explained earlier, while it seems clear that the local government legislation is rooted in the idea of developmental local government, there is limited literature that engages with the discourse of urban categories that shapes and is shaped by this idea. Yet, the operations of these categories seems to be fertile ground for tracing where urban practice aligns with urban studies. With this, and in light of the above discussion, one of the key considerations of the research grounding this thesis is how Buffalo City Metro, as a medium-sized city in South Africa, pushed and pulled between urban labels. Where South African literature (Cameron, 2014; Turok, 2012 & 2016; Turok & Parnell, 2009) has begun the work of considering the institutions established in the post-apartheid era, and acknowledges the work of categories in affecting local government management (Cameron, 2014; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019), a failure to consider the case of Buffalo City Metro, or other cities like it, limits the understanding of the multitude of realities experienced by South African, and African, municipalities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In defining the method of this research, I find it important to note my orientation when constructing the project. Because this is a personal project as well as an academic one, I am aware that the framing of my questions and methods I sought to answer them are personal. Buffalo City Metro is the city I grew up in and is the anchor of this thesis, hence the approach of a case study used in this thesis. Beyond my connection to the city, the merits of the case study approach allows for an in-depth, multi-faceted exploration of complex issues utilizing a real-life scenario (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). So in the case of understanding the utilisation of urban labels, focussing on a specific local government system, and city, allows for unique and nuanced findings.

While the city was used to orientated my research, it still required preliminary research on the subject of local government in South Africa to locate the city in the broader historical context. In turn, this historical inquiry proved to be a great influence on the types of questions I asked.

The approach to looking at history as a method is used by many of the authors I cite in my literature review. The work of Cameron (1999), Hall (1993), Nell (1991) and Robinson (1990) all demonstrate a consideration of the past legislation, the political discourse at the time, and in some cases a look at the media. Further, the work of Bekker and colleagues (1997) and Maharaj (1997 & 2002) shows the usefulness in seeking the insight of those involved in the work of local government to draw out a critical analysis of legislation and its outcomes. Further, Bolay and Rabinovich's (2004) analysis of secondary cities in Latin America demonstrates the importance of gaining insights from a range of urban practitioners to ensure a full picture of a city is drawn. The methods used by these authors were chosen in an effort to destabilise what is thought to be a "universal truth" (Goodwin, 2013:60) by bringing greater nuance to their subject area: emphasizing the importance of meaning making by engaging the subject with a high degree of specificity, or accepting the varied effects of human influence on establishing structures. To acknowledge that there is not a single universal truth led me to a post-modernist epistemological orientation for my research.

This post-modern approach entails my acknowledgement that my orientation as a researcher strongly influences the questions I ask and who I ask, how I ask them, and how I interpret the answers (Crang, 2013; Goodwin, 2013). Where some scholars might question the validity of my research due to my personal relationship with the case, a post-modernist orientation allows me to acknowledge this relationship and highlight the benefits of situated inquiry (Goodwin, 2013; Kitchin, 2013). My research

does not seek to be a perfect mirror of the realities of South African local government, but seeks to draw out the meanings that are absent from other interpretations of it, as well as tie it to larger debates on city labels that fail to consider a different orientation - the orientation of a medium-sized non-Western city.

Although a quantitative inquiry might draw out an interesting picture of the tangible changes and results of changing a city's category, I rely on a qualitative inquiry as the questions are more focused on the social influences that shape local government. Much of the work of forming local government, though described as technical, falls to people that have their own normative values and political orientation. While I acknowledge the importance of the structure that local government is, and looking at it as unit, I propose that restricting the view of local government to the state-citizen dichotomy (Appadurai, 2000) prevents a greater analysis of how parties in both the state or civic arenas experience local government. Even when limiting the view of my study on academics, non-state actors and state practitioners, I acknowledge the way that they interact with local government is not limited to their position in the state, but extends to their whole human experience.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Creswell and Creswell (2018:41) describe qualitative research as:

...[A] approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

Because my research was focused on the operation of a concept – metro – I consider a qualitative approach the most appropriate considering the influence on and use of concepts by people. Using Buffalo City Metro as a case study allowed me to tap not only into a specific period of local government reformation, but a specific site. Thus, I would more broadly describe the research as a narrative case study where I tried to draw out the stories around the formation of local government, the formation of Buffalo City Metro in this structure, and the ways officials operated in and reflected on this transition (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2.1 Document review

To orientate myself in the history of local government, I relied on reviewing a range of documents. Government documentation proved to be the bulk of my review. The South African Constitution was the starting point and allowed me to go down the pipeline of legislation to follow how the term Category A

was further defined and structured. In addition, government White and Green Papers acted as useful frameworks for understanding the intended goals of these acts (DPACD, 1997 & 1998).

Acknowledging their large role in demarcation and categorisation, the records of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) was an important set of data for understanding the more technical arguments of demarcation. These records were sourced from the MDB, as well as via a former MDB member. Due to the limitation of record keeping and the available time of the individuals providing me with the MDB documents, I must acknowledge that the documents I received do not represent the full scope of works of the MDB. What I failed to attain includes the various minutes from the workshops the MDB presented upon the establishment and following changes of the demarcation and categorisation of BCM. These documents might have proven useful for getting a sense of the community engagement and opinions of the demarcation process.

Public notices and gazettes formed a small, but useful, source of data, as they demonstrate the various changes of the municipality. I focused on notices from the establishment of the Greater East London Transitional Local Council (TLC) and King William's Town TLC (Eastern Cape (South Africa), 1994a & b) (to the transition of BCM to Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality BCMM (2011)). While these documents are merely announcements, they proved useful in determining how the boundaries shifted over this period. Other documents worth noting are the reports produced by various government departments and networks related to local government including the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the South African Cities Network (SACN) and The National Planning Committee (NPC). Although these other documents were not directly used for analysis, I found them useful, together with the aforementioned documents, in determining the structure of my interviews.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Because the focus of my research was the concept of 'metro', I thought it important to gain insight from those who interact with it every day – that is, government officials. The initial aim was to interview high-level local government officials, but due to a lack of interest, or perhaps concerns of confidentiality (as one interviewee implied), I found it difficult to get interviews with such officials, namely past and present BCM city managers.

It is, however, important to look at the key individuals in the demarcation process. Thus a large group of my interviewees were former members of the MDB. Complementing this group were interviews with a small number of academic consultants and researchers who generated some of the reports investigated in my document review. National government officials proved easier to contact and thus I was able to interview the past ministers of the Department of Provincial Affairs and Constitution Development – the

departmental predecessor to COGTA. This set of interviewees allowed for a greater understanding of the ways that the local government structure was conceived and what the intended outcomes were, and how BCM sits in this framework.

Another group that sat outside of, but work with the municipality, were the set of consultants and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that collaborate with BCMM. Through the initiative of the both the National Treasury and the South African Cities Network (SACN), a focus on the socio-economic outcomes of Category A municipalities allowed for greater strategic support for the municipality. I relied on these consultants' insights to understand how BCM was adapting to the reality of being a metro. Because a number of the consultants had been working in or with the municipality before the transition they proved vital in understanding the manoeuvres within BCM that allowed for metro status. A final set of interviewees was planners in the municipality. This was the only set of interviewees who worked directly in the municipality; these few interviewees proved instrumental in establishing the technical argument for demarcation, while also highlighting the political realities.

In total I interviewed 19 people across a range of disciplines and professions. Gaining access to these interviewees happened through cold-emailing key figures based on my preceding document review. Additionally, snowball sampling was used in order to access interviewees whom I did not identify via the document review.

I relied on a preconceived set of questions to structure the interviews. I did, however, aim to allow the interviewees to guide the interviews: first, as a means to get a better understanding of local government and demarcation, and second to allow for a more narrative thread to emerge. Gaining greater information from interviewees and documents that were shared later in the process meant that my questions shifted slightly during the data collection phase, but remained focused on understanding the concept of metro. The bulk of my insights presented in the following chapters draw from these interviews.

Table 1. Distribution of interviewees

Distribution of interviewees								
	MDB	National Government	Consultants					Municipal officials
			Academic	National Treasury	SACN	NGOs	Other	
Number of interviewees	3	2	5	3	1	1	1	3

3.2.3 Newspaper review

Following the interviews, I collected news articles from the local newspaper of Buffalo City Metro, *The Daily Dispatch*. Because much of the archive is not digitised or available on the internet, I went to the newspaper's offices where the physical archive is located. I wanted to establish the media narrative around the transition to metro, so I focused on articles from 1994 – 2015. The archives are structured according to themes. The themes I chose to focus on were labelled as follows: Transitional Local Council (TLC); Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF); Metro. Additionally, some of the articles were digitised, but not accessible via the internet, rather I needed to access the archive's computer to access these articles. To obtain relevant articles I used the following Boolean search operator: ("Buffalo City" OR "East London") AND ("metro" OR "Category A" or "metro status" or "metropolitan"). I also searched the Sabinet Reference website⁸, using the same Boolean search operator. This website searches all newspapers in the country. In total I determined that 59 of the news articles were relevant to my research on the basis that they gave a direct reflection of the opinions of politicians, academics, and residents on metro status. I used NVivo 12 to code and analyse this data set. This data set was then used as a supplement to my other sources (documents and interviews) to help highlight or contradict my findings from the other sources.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were audio-recorded, except for one at the request of the interviewee. Additionally, I took notes during every interview. The audio-recordings were transcribed using the transcription web-based software Otter.ai⁹. By going over handwritten notes and reviewing the interviews, I was able to hand-code the data. This process included writing key concepts and insights onto coloured sticky notes and using these sticky notes as a means of mapping my findings on a large poster. As mentioned, the document review formed the basis of determining the types of questions I would ask my interviewees, but in the analysis stage of the research project, I used the key findings from the interviews as a framework for analysing the documents. The analysis process of the newspaper articles is as described in the paragraph above. Together these stages of data collection and analysis create an inductive-deductive-inductive approach to my research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

⁸ <https://discover-sabinet-co-za.ezproxy.uct.ac.za/search>

⁹ <https://otter.ai/home>

3.5 RESEARCH VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

A social constructivist methodological approach does not consider truth as universal; scholars question the terms validity and reliability when considering research done with this orientation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Validity and reliability are terms that are a product of positivist approach that sought to establish research that mimics the natural sciences in its ability to be replicated multiple times with the outcome (result) of the research remaining the same (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gregory et al., 2009). However, the social constructivist orientation would acknowledge that this is an unlikely probability. Acknowledging that the researcher has their own view of the subject that influences the research design and that the interviewees, as data sources, cannot not provide an account of events or process without these being filtered through their social and linguistic interpretations, is acknowledging that the research cannot be perfectly replicated. However, scholars have proposed the alternative concepts of determining the rigour of a project, namely the methodological: "...[R]elated to the application of method, and interpretive, related to judging outcomes, that is, 'Can our co-created constructions be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human interpretation?'" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:239).

In this sense, looking at my research project, it was important to ensure a high degree of methodological rigour, considering my close proximity to the case. To ensure that my personal bias as an inhabitant of Buffalo City, and South Africa, did not wield undue influence over my findings, I utilised multiple data sources that were triangulated to ensure the coherency of the data. The flexibilities of a semi-structured interviewing format ensured that while I as a researcher may have come with my own normative values in drafting and asking my questions, I allowed room for interviewees to guide the questions in a manner that made sense to their experience. This process of interviewing also works to bring interpretive rigour to the project. In my interviews I tried to foster a dynamic where I positioned interviewees as conversation partners who are helping me interpret and analyse my own questions and conclusions. Thus, my research was open to feedback from the interviewees, where they highlighted and reflected on the points they deemed important. Again, the fact that each data set was used to speak to each other ensured that my interpretations included as many voices as the data allowed.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND APPROVAL¹⁰

As the interviewees were in most cases high-level key informants or officials, questions of ethics were less relevant as they are not considered a vulnerable group. However, as many of them participate in the political arena, which can be contentious in nature, I made sure to explain the scope of my project via email before the interview as well as in person at the time of the interview. Additionally, I got written and verbal permission from each interviewee ensuring I could voice-record (or take notes) and transcribe the interviews. Further, the question of anonymisation was posed at the beginning of the interview. All interviewees were asked if they sought to be anonymised and how they would like to be anonymised (what term would they prefer in lieu of their name). I concluded the interviews by once again going over the terms of anonymisation and asking if they would like to make any changes. Though not all of my interviewees sought to be anonymised, for the sake of readability, I have anonymised all my interviewees.

¹⁰ This process of gaining permission was performed in line with the requirements of the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Science Research Ethics Committee and I sought the appropriate approvals.

CHAPTER 4: THE MEANING OF METRO¹¹

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The question of categories stretches a range of ideas, ideals, politics, and geographies. Though this thesis primarily focuses on an abstract concept, a central tenet of the presented research is that concepts like ‘metro’ assert themselves in reality in shaping borders, urban sprawl, development or under-development, and infrastructure. As I will soon note, the ways urban governance is understood varies across professions. But in many cases those that care about cities must work together despite this gap in comprehension or perception. Thus important in the work of governing cities is to articulate how we understand cities and what we deem the appropriate future of cities to be, with categories being an important tool in this process, for academics, professionals and governments alike.

In understanding that the need to name is a human characteristic, I turn to the term ‘metro’. Metro as a globally-understood, colloquial term is a way of thinking of cities that are large ‘agglomerations’ or ‘conurbations’ (Sutcliffe & Zitha, 2000:3,8). Though the term city by itself gives insight into the level of concentration - be it population, economic or built environment - metropolitan cities point to an elevation of the concept of city. These cities present a level of complexity that seem to supersede basic metrics. Understanding that metro is not a simple term for city, but rather a promotion of it, it becomes obvious why spectacular cities like New York or Tokyo are synonymous with the word. “A country within a country” as one interviewee (who was integral to the formation of local government in South Africa) put it - by their sheer structure, these cities allow for, and warrant, a level of self-governance, political power or influence, and forward thinking at the local government level to ensure their continued competitiveness.

South Africa has inserted itself into the discourse on metros by making them a legislated reality. As one of my interviewees noted, “Metros do not need to call themselves metros.” However, in South Africa’s case, they do. In contrast to other countries where metropolitan as a term might be used as a unit for census or a descriptor of a type of city and not a way of structuring one, ‘metro’ operates in South Africa

¹¹ Whilst I acknowledge that the etymology of metropolitan, and metropolis has its history dating back to the mid 14th century (“Metropolitan | Etymology, origin and meaning of metropolitan by etymonline”, n.d.) largely based on the predominant religious orders definition of an urban congregation, I prefer not to distract from the purpose of this chapter by delving into that long history. Rather, this research focuses solely on how ‘metro,’ as extrapolated from international discourse, is manifested in South African Legislation.

as a legislated and jurisdictional term. Having explored the historical roots of the relevant legislation in Chapter 1, I will now convey an understanding of the concept of metros as uncovered from my interviews. This chapter demonstrates that while the intents of the local government democratisation process were development and transformation, we cannot take for granted that these are unanimously understood terms. Further, regardless of the innovation involved in creating largely autonomous local government, this autonomy seems to be limited in many ways by the perception of the categories and the political nature of the process of gaining metro status that caters to possible manipulation by parties who hope to gain power for themselves.

4.2 HIERARCHY AND AUTONOMY

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the South African local government structure originates in the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) that gives us the first instance of municipal categories. Categories A, B and C are the designations given to every local municipality. Category B and C form a two-tier system where B is a local municipality, and C is a district municipality which governs two or more local municipalities (Category B). Category A is assigned to single-tier local municipalities – municipalities that are self-governing and do not have to defer to a district municipality (Category C). In this sense we begin to see what I consider a hierarchy: areas that can completely self-govern versus areas that share governance. However, regardless of their specific field or area of practice, most people I interviewed challenged this conclusion. Perhaps the term hierarchy is contentious in the historical context of South Africa, but as one of the former national ministers of provincial and local government noted: Hierarchy implies a level of interaction across categories, whereas our system operates as two different realities – Category A in one reality, and Category B and C in another. Another interviewee, one of the former MDB members, described the system as an either-or scenario, not an overlapping one: either a municipality is self-governing, or it is not.

I think these statements warrant a return to the legislation that describes the distinction among the categories. The Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) includes in its Addendum two schedules that outline the “powers and functions” of municipalities. Schedules 4 Part B and 5 Part B include long lists of municipal functions; in summary: environmental management; land-use and building regulation; provision of social, health, transport and security services; water and waste management; electricity provision; matters of tourism; maintenance of government properties; grant, tax and rates collection; and municipal planning. But these “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap, s155) are not necessarily allocated to all municipalities. Category A municipalities are able to yield the full scope of “powers and functions” (ibid.), but it is the role of further legislation, as shown below, to determine how Category B and C municipalities split the “powers

and functions” (ibid.) between them. This is a key difference because the need for heightened powers and functions is often cited by (Category B) municipalities that hope to be promoted to metro status. Section 155 of the Constitution (ibid.) clarifies:

(3) National legislation must—

(c) subject to section 229, make provision for an appropriate division of powers and functions between municipalities when an area has municipalities of both category B and category C. A division of powers and functions between a category B municipality and a category C municipality may differ from the division of powers and functions between another category B municipality and that category C municipality.

Chapter 5 of the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998: chap5) further sets out the division of power and functions between Category B and C municipalities, with the Category C municipalities being responsible for the more intensive functions (e.g. planning, service provision and rate collection) and smaller municipal management tasks being the mandate of Category B municipalities. However, as the extract from the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) above demonstrates, there is a flexibility in the system that allows for the appropriate shifting of functions between the two municipal levels. It is the responsibility of the National Minister or Provincial Member of Executive Council (MEC) of Local Government to gazette any changes after a consultation process with the relevant MECs in the province.

This clarification of the legislation is worth bearing in mind because, as mentioned, Category B municipalities vie for the powers and functions they lack and thus petition for Category A status. If the provisions in the legislation do not work to mitigate the constant petitions for metro status on the grounds of requiring more autonomy, one wonders how productive the provisions outlined above (in Section 155 of the Constitution) (ibid.) are. When reviewing the government gazettes (Department of Housing Local Government and Traditional Affairs, 2007; Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2000, 2003a,b & 2007), I saw few instances of BCM trying to amend their powers and functions via the provision outlined in Section 155. There were a few gazettes announcing that the Minister of Local Government had allowed for a shift in certain functions from the district - Amathole District Municipality (ADM) - to the local municipality (BCM), but these changes only occurred between 2000-2006. There was no further push to give the municipality greater powers whilst maintaining a Category B label. Without looking at other municipalities, I wonder if this is a forgotten provision in legislation, or if the prestige of metro status circumvents the presumed rationale of the need for greater “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155).

Because Category A municipalities do not require such provisions in legislation and are the sole guardians of these powers and functions in their jurisdiction, during interviews, I referred to them as autonomous local governments. One interviewee, a Professor of Public Law and well-established expert on South African local government corroborated my conclusion, explaining that:

[This] points to the inefficiency in the legal framework, because the legal framework equates metros as standalone, and full autonomy with being a metro. And we have lots of aspirants or secondary cities, who, as you say, they don't necessarily want to consider themselves a world city, but they want to get rid of the districts. And that's why they want to be a Category A, that's my take on it, it's more about being delivered from your big brother, then then it is about seeing yourself as a world, you know, a global city (Professor of Public Law, 7 May 2021).

Even in the media, an announcement of a promotion to metro status demonstrates how the gain of autonomy functions as a key feature of the aims to changing labels:

At the heart of the matter, according to Eastern Cape provincial insiders who are also government leaders, is the proposal to promote Buffalo City to a grade A municipality, also called a metropolitan council. This status gives a municipality more autonomy, a bigger budget and executive powers (Rossouw, 2011: 9.).

Similarly, the term “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) is operationalised by politicians consulted by the media to demonstrate the ways a municipality deserves to be a metro. Whether by describing the ways the municipality “already performs metro functions” (Matthewson, 2003: 4), or by illustrating the power metros have to negotiate with other parties, it is clear that the abilities of metros are inextricably linked with the label. Accordingly, I return to my earlier assertion that this structure does in fact create a hierarchy. While the “two systems” operate differently, there is a clear desire to jump ship in order to attain greater autonomy.

Perhaps said “inefficiencies” are built into the structure. By returning to the beginning of the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998), Category B and C municipalities are described as almost an afterthought – as municipalities that do not meet the criteria set out for Category A. This seems to further point to a division of systems, thought, and expression – perhaps confirming the earlier assertion of my interviewees that the South African local government structure is not a hierarchy, but rather a set of two different systems where first, we think of the Category As and then the rest.

When looking at the process of local government democratisation, the reality that Category A municipalities formed the starting point of demarcation is clear. The MDB began this process by

determining nodal points, areas of regional influence across the country and then determined how to form municipalities from these. As one interviewee said:

What we then did was we kind of looked at South Africa, we kind of looked at what the nodal points might be, the urban nodal points or let's call it the centres of production nodal points, the centres of settlement nodal points across the country, and tried to kind of conceptualise what we should do (former Chairman of the MDB, 23 March 2021).

A clarification on nodal points is also found in the report by the MDB, *An Integrated Framework of Nodal Points for Metropolitan and District Council Areas in South Africa: A Preliminary Framework* (1998):

Over the past few months the Municipal Demarcation Board has been involved in the development of policy in the following areas:

- Metropolitan Nodal Points: A strategic framework for assessing metropolitan and other urban conurbations has been developed in order to provide input to the Minister's process of determining nodal points.
- District Council Nodal Points: A strategic framework detailing the number and possible location of District Councils has been developed.

Even the White Paper on Local Government (DPACD, 1998) - the predecessor to the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998: chap5) which outlines the roles of the categories – emphasises looking at our metros first when determining the future of local government. From these sources I conclude that the focus in local government restructuring was on starting with the areas that were deemed to have greater capability to self-govern (i.e. the metros and the districts). also aligns with conversations with interviewees involved in the National Treasury City Support Programme. As one interviewee, who works with metros as part of the City Support Programme, said, National Treasury wants to get the most economic bang for their buck, by focussing on the Category As which allow for a certain broad-spectrum economic development. In many ways, though sometimes refuted, it seems like the system spotlights Category A municipalities.

4.3 POLITICS AND PLACE

“We talk about a country we do not have and politicians we do not have.”
(former Consultant to the MDB and Professor in Town and Regional Planning, 4 April 2021)

Having outlined the clear emphasis placed on Category A municipalities in legislation, I will now shift focus to the manoeuvres and manipulations made around the meaning of this category of municipality. The quote above speaks to the disjuncture one interviewee found between the goals outlined in legislation and the resources that are present in reality. The previous section described the aspirational desires Category As present to municipalities, but in many ways these aspirations remain unmet in the so-called metros. By mentioning the criteria set out in the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998: chap5), I questioned many of my interviewees about the appropriateness of the most recent promotions of Category B municipalities to Category A. If we are to take seriously the criteria set out in the Structures Act (*ibid.*), there are many questions regarding said promotions. Further, the quote above demonstrates a second guessing of legislation as a whole. In many ways, even if the municipalities met certain criteria, the above asserts that we do not have the leadership capable of achieving the goals of the legislation, namely transformation and development.

To further this discussion on how much weight needs to be placed on the concepts developed in legislation, one interviewee sought to give more room to the concept of ‘metro’:

I mean, this, this is just a linguistic device. As I was saying to you, when you talk about the categorisation, Category A and so on, yeah, I found this other word, which is a better word to use for you, who is a researcher. It [the Structures Act] may describe what is the categorisation, but it can also serve as a heuristic (Former Minister of Provincial and Local Government, 8 May 2021).

By viewing metro status as a heuristic, this interviewee allows for it to be a guideline of how an autonomous local government should function. Rather than allowing our expectations of the label guide our thoughts on urban governance, this interviewee considers it important to allow for flexibility in the usage of this term, a flexibility that is important in the ever-changing socio-economic landscape. However, this interviewee still had some musings that tie to the quote in the epigraph, as they state:

The problem is that democracy does not always give you people who are equipped to undertake the tasks for which we have elected them (Former Minister of Provincial and Local Government, 8 May 2021).

Whilst they describe a metro in fluid terms, their expectations of leadership seem to be more firm: government leaders need to maintain their civic duty to the development of their cities, and where they lack expertise there should be the “capacity to learn” built into the institution.

Nonetheless, understanding the work of categories, and by extension legislation, is not limited to looking at the capabilities of governments and politicians to enact the goals of legislation. The local government

system in South Africa is seemingly built to be politically neutral – which is demonstrated by the fact that the arbitrator of the process, the MDB, is an independent body – but in fact operates as a political battlefield. As one interviewee, a consultant (30 April 2021) that works in the Government Technical Advisory Center,¹² put it, “the local sphere is so politicized.” Thus, I think it is important to zoom into this arena, which I will partly do here, and further outline in Chapter 5 that focuses on Buffalo City Metro.

The emphasis on the term “metro status” in my interviews and in the reports and news articles I read already serves as a marker of the politics in this space. “Status,” as it implies, connotes something that elevates – a city that becomes a metro is elevated. Apart from the “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) obtained, metros benefit from greater intergovernmental funding and officials in metros benefit from higher salaries. Thus, many interviewees emphasised the politics and self-interest ever present in politicians’ push for metro status. One interviewee, a planner in BCM, even called the notion of “metro” as being used and abused. In many ways, metro status operates as a tool to appease – to calm fractional politics and upend rivalries – and as a tool to enact power in a given region. Another interviewee, the former minister referred to earlier, questioned whether politicians that bid for metro status truly understood what this term meant. He questions their understanding in the sense that they may see it as a tool for gain in terms of perceived power, but these politicians fall short of understanding the possibilities for strategic planning and innovative governance that metro status provides, as well as the increased service responsibilities required of them. One interviewee, the Professor in Town and Regional Planning, even went so far as to say that promoting municipalities to metros turns officials into Prima Donnas, drawing them further away from their constituents. The officials are no longer merely officials of a local municipality, they are now officials of a metro, and with that comes a sense of grandeur that removes this politician from being relatable and accessible to their constituents.

While the above narrative already demonstrates how “metro status” is also used as a tool of self-interest, another finding from my research demonstrates how it is not limited to the internal dynamics of municipal operations. The political (and electoral) system interact(s) with this concept in equally self-serving ways. Within the ruling political party - the African National Congress - there is a structure referred to as Regional Executive Committees (RECs) that operate within regions whose areas are determined by the Provincial Executive Committee (African National Congress, 2017). These executive committees are

¹² Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) is a public entity under the National Treasury that works to advise the public sector. This interviewee works closely with people in BCM to improve their governance abilities.

responsible for implementing the ANC's agenda as outlined by their Constitution (African National Congress, 2017). The REC also convenes the regional councils, therefore being part of the REC allows one to have greater power within the party structure. Understanding the REC structure, an interviewee (an MDB executive) brought up this structure to demonstrate how politicians in the ruling party manipulate metro status to obtain greater power in the party. A mayor of a local (Category B) municipality might pursue metro status for their municipality to elevate themselves so they may obtain a position in, or a promotion within, the REC; perhaps even leveraging this status into a chairmanship of the REC.

By looking at all the ways government officials and politicians alike view metros as a tool for gaining power further demonstrates that the word "status" is not used innocuously. Although it is unclear to me how "metro status" as a term came into being in the South African context – as it is not present in any of the local government legislation referred to in this research – it demonstrates that becoming a metro is more than an acknowledgement of a need or an achievement, but is rather a "status" – a power move. The power of the word "metro", however flexible in the opinion of the interviewee introduced in the beginning of this section, operates with a presence that cannot be ignored. This word has weight, though its meaning may be unstable.

4.4. SPHERES AND PEERS

By zooming out of the local government sphere, we can, ironically, gain greater insight into the workings of metro status. The relationship between municipalities and their encompassing provinces forms a dynamic on its own that is fraught with contention. In the words of my interviewees (including those who were intimately involved in the formation of local government) and the news articles I reviewed, provinces hinder the process of robust and accountable local government. One opinion piece articulates the problem of provinces as follows:

The municipal government, especially of "The Big Nine" [municipalities] which together accommodate more than half our population, generate 70% of the national GDP [Gross Domestic Product], and have a per capita spending power nearly three times that of the rest of the country, is clearly second only to that of the central government in importance. They are more important by far than the nine provinces. They should be run by the best managers and politicians, but they are not. Our constitution ranks them in third place, so they are run by the C-Team. (Sparks, 2006: 14)

The notion that local government is "third place" is surprising considering the Constitution (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap3, s40) advocates for a model of cooperative

governance that at least implies equality, “In the Republic, government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated.”

The Constitution clarifies how all spheres should be capable of enacting their responsibilities as outlined in the document and should not undermine the powers of the other spheres of government. However, by the assertion of the opinion piece quoted above, and that of my interviewees, the structure of the Republic fails to adequately leverage the possibilities of local government, and metros specifically, to enact the socio-economic change for which the Constitution (1996) advocates. One interviewee further described how the very nature of the provincial structure disenfranchises metros. The City Support Programme official (5 May 2021) I interviewed described the issue as follows, “...I think that the way provinces are structured [politically], often means that the rural voice is actually heard stronger than the metro voice just because of numbers, sheer numbers.” The sheer numbers they refer to are the reality that only eight of the 278 municipalities are metros, thus the voice of the smaller towns and rural areas that form the 270 municipalities are louder in the ears of the provinces. Even on the district level, the voices of small cities in the region are lost, as the districts try to cope with the management on their more rural, struggling municipalities. One interviewee, who was largely responsible for the drafting of the local government legislation, described the true disfunction of the local government system as being in the district-local dynamic. And it is the desire to escape this disfunction that pushes some municipalities to bid to become a metro.

The comment on the rural bias in provincial government, is corroborated by the presence of the City Support Programme. As one of the GTAC^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} officials described, the City Support Programme is National Treasury’s attempt to bring the voice of the city forward. They described a dynamic where the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) – the department responsible for local and provincial government – puts the majority of its energy towards the more rural municipalities and the National Treasury is left to steward the urban (Category A) municipalities. Considering the support in the form of human resources and financial capital that National Treasury provides to Category A municipalities, there is further impetus for Category Bs, particularly those that are cities, to seek metro status..

Despite some national interest in metros (demonstrated by the presence of programmes such as the City Support Programme and the South African Cities Network (SACN)) stronger cities pose a political threat to the national government:

The politics is critical here because cities are a threat to the national government, and the ruling party in the national government. They are run either by opposition parties or by very fragile coalitions, so that's why national government has basically put brakes on devolution, they don't

like to assign more powers to cities, because it means a loss of budget and loss of power¹³. So, I think that's a political undercurrent here. I mean, there's very good reason for Lindiwe Sisulu¹⁴ to, to put a break on housing accreditation, because why would you give your entire budget to cities ruled by the opposition¹⁵? You know, that doesn't make any political sense. (Professor of Public Law, 7 May 2021)

The above reality of the central-local political power struggle, speaks to the fact that even within the structure of cooperative governance, and a clear mandate that no sphere should interfere in the affairs of another sphere of government, there is a lack of cooperation. What the quote above highlights is that it is easy for ministers in national departments to prevent the dispensation of funding necessary for the projects metros spearhead because of political agendas. This also creates a dynamic where certain metros are favoured by others. Even when determining the metros, the influence of this political dynamic that saw the national ruling party manipulating demarcation was evident. Two interviewees who were former MDB chairpersons mentioned that when establishing the initial suite of metros there were municipalities that were self-evident: Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. Even further, Ekurhuleni (the East Rand) and Tshwane (greater Pretoria) both demonstrated that they met most of the criteria to be considered a metro, and also benefitted from their proximity and linkages to Johannesburg which further pointed to metro status being appropriate. However, in the case of Port Elizabeth¹⁶ and its surrounding areas that form the Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB), less of a clear argument for metro status could be made (Municipal Demarcation Board, 1998, 2001b, 2002c, 2008; Cameron, 2008). Yet, as claimed by the aforementioned interviewees, what Port Elizabeth had, and East London did not have, was a stronger ANC base at the time of demarcation (2000). Although NMB was, and continues to be, a stronger municipality than Buffalo City Metro, the gap between these metros (in terms of the demarcation criteria) is far smaller than the gap between NMB and the other big three metros. So, although strong cities disturb the hierarchy of a strong central government, their place in the hierarchy of cities can also be manipulated by the central government.

¹³ This is noted by Cameron (2014) in his discussion on how decentralization is manipulated by national government who withholds funds from metros run by the opposition.

¹⁴ The national minister of Human Settlements and Water and Sanitation at the time of this interview.

¹⁵ Turok (2016) notes that this breakdown also happens due to the “upsurge in mega projects” due to the pressure from citizens for social housing. These mega projects put the focus on large scale social housing developments at the city periphery, rather than more centrally located social housing which would align with the metros spatial planning.

¹⁶ Renamed to Gqeberha.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced my findings on the category “metro” by focusing on nationally applicable themes that emerged from the research. On the one hand, I demonstrated that the mere presence of the establishment of metro as a legislative term creates a league of elite municipalities, and treats other municipalities as an afterthought - as non-metros. On the other hand, I highlighted how an almost oppositional force occurs where rural municipalities draw attention away from metros and secondary cities because there are more rural municipalities, and they often have weaker systems of governance that require greater support. The ways politics plays across spheres of governance, political institutions, and regions creates an even more dynamic understanding and use of the “metro” label. In the next chapter, I shift the focus to BCM. Where this chapter demonstrated some of the negotiations involved in claiming metro status, some of these conclusions have been previously drawn in the literature I cited (Cameron, 2006 & 2014; Goodenough, 2004;). But by focusing on a municipality that not only bids to become a metro, but was successful in gaining this status, I can elaborate on the points discussed as well as present new insights to the meaning of metro.

CHAPTER 5: THE MEANING OF BUFFALO CITY METRO

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite being described as a technical act, the previous chapter demonstrated how categorisation is also a social, political and often interpersonal act. Without a focus on a particular case we might, however, lose the more distinct ways that categorisation manifests. Since in its essence categorisation is a local performance of a national agenda, I find it highly important to look at it at the local government level. While there is literature that discusses many aspects of post-apartheid local government (Cameron, 1999, 2006 & 2014; Ramutsindela, 2013; Robinson, 2008;), and even the political turbulence that was the South African demarcation (Bekker et al., 1997; Maharaj, 1997, 2002; Giraut, Maharaj & Moriconi-Ebrard, 2002), authors do not look at these issues from the perspective of secondary cities, and the cities that form the lower rungs of the league of metros. This chapter will allow me to fill in some of these gaps by bringing focus to Buffalo City Metro.

5.2 INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Chapter 4 outlines the fraught dynamics within the intergovernmental¹⁷ structure of South Africa. When looking at the local-level, the relations between district municipalities (Category C) and local municipalities (Category B) provide a particular site of contention. In the case of BCM one of the reasons cited for the push to become a metro was the fact that the municipality performed many of the functions of a metro, thus it did not need to operate under a district – in fact districts hindered the city from reaching its full potential. The power imbalances between BCM and the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) resulted in a dynamic where, as a National Treasury consultant to the city described, BCM was bigger (in terms of staff, resources and facilities) than ADM. The chance for the municipality to gain the greater autonomy (from the district) and the governmental transfers (grants) that came with the status was paramount to one official's argument for metro status, as quoted in a news article, "We are already performing metro functions. If we become a metro we would become even better equipped to bring service delivery" (Matthewson, 2003: 4). As soon as 2001, a year into the final phase of local government

¹⁷ This refers to the relationship among the spheres (national, provincial and local) of government.

transition,¹⁸ the MDB was prompted to investigate the “aspirant metros”(Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001b). Further pressure on the MDB to reinvestigate metro status for BCM is clear in the following comment: “The Buffalo City municipality, which was named the country's best municipality last weekend, is hoping the [Vuma] award will boost its bid to become South Africa's seventh metropole” (Matthewson, 2003: 4) cities that form the lower rungs of the league of metros. This chapter will allow me to fill in some of these gaps by bringing focus to Buffalo City Metro.

5.2 INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Chapter 4 outlines the fraught dynamics within the intergovernmental¹⁹ structure of South Africa. When looking at the local-level, the relations between district municipalities (Category C) and local municipalities (Category B) provide a particular site of contention. In the case of BCM one of the reasons cited for the push to become a metro was the fact that the municipality performed many of the functions of a metro, thus it did not need to operate under a district – in fact districts hindered the city from reaching its full potential. The power imbalances between BCM and the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) resulted in a dynamic where, as a National Treasury consultant to the city described, BCM was bigger (in terms of staff, resources and facilities) than ADM. The chance for the municipality to gain the greater autonomy (from the district) and the governmental transfers (grants) that came with the status was paramount to one official’s argument for metro status, as quoted in a news article, “We are already performing metro functions. If we become a metro we would become even better equipped to bring service delivery” (Matthewson, 2003: 4). As soon as 2001, a year into the final phase of local government transition,²⁰ the MDB was prompted to investigate the “aspirant metros”(Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001b). Further pressure on the MDB to reinvestigate metro status for BCM is clear in the following comment: “The Buffalo City municipality, which was named the country's best municipality last weekend, is hoping the [Vuma] award will boost its bid to become South Africa's seventh metropole” (Matthewson, 2003: 4). The award highlights the municipality’s ability to practice good governance. The push to become a metro lasted until 2008, when the MDB confirmed that the municipality would become

¹⁸ As explained earlier in this thesis, the final phase refers to the third phase as described in the Local Government Transition Act.

¹⁹ This refers to the relationship among the spheres (national, provincial and local) of government.

²⁰ As explained earlier in this thesis, the final phase refers to the third phase as described in the Local Government Transition Act.

a metro after the local government elections of 2011 (Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, 2010).

However, the logic of the ADM being a hinderance to the municipality (BCM) did not go unchallenged. It is clear through looking at the news articles at the time that there was resistance from officials both in the district municipality and BCM to prevent the promotion of BCM. One of the pleas was to consider the ripple effect of BCM becoming a metro on the district municipality and the region. In a line drawn between the different political parties in the municipality, (opposition party) officials more concerned with the impact on the poor and rural population in BCM and ADM as a whole who used the *Daily Dispatch* to air their grievances. Because in the local government structure a Category B (local) municipality falls under the jurisdiction of a Category C (district), the powers and functions are split between the two, with many of the larger functions falling on the district. With this power comes the intergovernmental grant transfers associated with running the district. Whilst the BCM may have cited the fact that it does many of the functions of a metro, even as a Category B, ADM received the portion of the intergovernmental grant associated with running BCM. So, BCM leaving the district would remove this vital source of income, including other associated levies that the district collected from the municipality. The Professor of Town and Regional planning (4 April 2021) corroborated this point during the interview by citing the Sarah Baartman District as an example of a district that lost its big city, Nelson Mandela Bay, and fell on hard times as a result. The district thus failed to develop the rates base they needed to function, and some lost skilled workers due to the municipality becoming a metro. In a powerful comment to the local newspaper, the South African Communist Party's (SACP) provincial secretary at the time, Xolile Nqatha, said "All metros, particularly Nelson Mandela Metro, ended up marginalising people in the rural areas who contributed to their (metro) tax base" (Maqhina & James, 2008: n.p.). On the understanding that South African legislation was built in part to address the wealth disparity in the country, in another statement Nqatha argues that the promotion of BCM would:

mean we [BCM] will be aspiring to become part of that "first economy" that ex-President Thabo Mbeki has so often defined. The "second economy" will only be of secondary importance, but it happens to embrace the rural poor and the shack-dwellers – the most needy part of the population (Gazi, 2008: n.p.).

He goes further to say: "Any benefit to the people of the Metro [sic] will only be incidental. The rural poor will become more neglected than they are at present as the urban sector grows" (Gazi, 2008: n.p.).

The atrophying of capacity in the region is an important concern when considering the work of demarcation and categorisation, especially since the Local Government Demarcation Act (which outlines the functions of the MDB) notes that:

the Board must, when determining a municipal boundary, take into account...

(k) the administrative consequences of its boundary determination on-

(i) municipal creditworthiness;

(ii) existing municipalities, their council members and staff; and

(iii) any other relevant matter; (Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998, 1998: part 2 ss25)

This points to the push and pull of the urban-rural nexus of South Africa. The reality is that BCM as a city sits in a largely rural province. Ironically, two interviewees (a former BCM official and former MDB chairperson) even went to far as to describe the municipality itself as a “rural metro.” Even moreso than other metros, BCM may then demonstrate a case where the radiating regional consequences should have been acknowledged in the transition to being a metro. The MDB reports I was able to access (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2001b, 2002a, b, c, d, c, e & 2008) that investigated the categorisation of the municipality do not describe any such consideration, which is interesting given the emphasis in legislation on the interconnectedness of municipalities.

Another way of looking at the regional dynamics is how they manifest in the political struggles in the region. I can trace this in the newspaper articles, and corroborated by my interviewees, how the push for metro status created a dynamic that saw officials leaving the ADM and moving to BCM. In the structure of the province, being an official in a metro ranked more highly than being one in a district. So not only did the district lose out on money, which would have helped retain some skilled workers, it also lost out on the institutional knowledge and expertise when these officials left as they sought greater power or security. This is exacerbated by the fact that the ruling party’s (ANC) political party structure influenced and was influenced by the municipal structure. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the Regional Executive Committee structure incentivised politicians to move the district municipality to the soon-to-be metro as an opportunity to gain power in the party itself. While categorisation was legislated to work independently of the political structure, the MDB being independent from government being one demonstration of this, it was hardly immune to the push and pull of party dynamics. One of my interviewees described this scenario as “political jostling.”

But to assume that the dynamic of party politics in the lead up to metro status was uniform would be incorrect; political infighting within the ANC was present and violent:

An attempt to establish South Africa's seventh metropolitan city is causing infighting in the Eastern Cape ANC. Party leaders have vandalised ANC headquarters in King William's Town and provincial leaders have been attacked [...] At the heart of the matter, according to Eastern Cape provincial insiders who are also government leaders, is the proposal to promote Buffalo City to a grade A municipality, also called a metropolitan council [...] The establishment of a

metro will entail the creation of a new ANC region that would split in two the current in Amathole region, in which East London is situated. Everyone is battling to get a spot in the new, well-resourced metro . "It's a fight for economic and political control of Buffalo City," Qoboshiyane told the M&G. "The establishment of the Buffalo City metro breaks up the networks and systems that were in place, and this angers some people. It is also a way to attack the provincial leadership, which some of them never recognised anyway." Adding to the tension is the fact that some ANC regional leaders stand to lose their positions and they are already blaming the provincial leadership for this. (Rossouw, 2011: 9)

This state of play may seem strange if one considers the provincial level as a higher level of government. But in the structure of governance in South Africa, the levels of government (national, provincial and local) are conceived as spheres not tiers. This is intended to ensure that all spheres of government operate with equal powers, but it manifests asymmetrically. In the instances above, the provincial government operates at the will of the metro, but as previously mentioned, the provincial government has been described as an unnecessary level of government (Daily Dispatch, 2005: n.p.; Sparks, 2006: 14) . Even those that consider the role of the district useful in the case of BCM, many consider the provincial government as unnecessary. Questions of duplication of functions as well as undermining of the power of local government are brought up.

The interaction of local municipality/metro, district and province, demonstrates another failure of the model of "cooperative governance." (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap3) As demonstrated above, the structure of governance works directly against the ability to collaborate and, in other instances, hinders the local government from being able to enact the goals of development.

5.3 CAPACITY

While the failure of intergovernmental and regional collaboration can negatively affect the socio-economic health of the region, the internal dynamics within the municipality pose an equally strong threat. What is clear from the news articles over this period (from the dawn of the democracy to the transition to metro status), these dynamics had a huge impact on the municipality's ability to present a stable consistent government. As my interviewees point out:

I think perhaps the one thing you're not accounting for is the politics in these spaces. And I must say, I think in the time [mid-2013 to mid-2020] that I engaged with Buffalo City they had gone through some serious leadership changes and ups and downs. One of the things we used to say is, apart from the leadership, we [SACN] also worked with senior and middle management, because at the end of the day, those are the people are actually doing the work, right? Those are the people who are actually implementing and Buffalo City actually lost a lot of really good public servants. And I think that that's because of the politics of the region. Because it's the ability to retain good public servants, is an important thing. (a former South African Cities Network executive, 3 May 2021).

What I understand of Buffalo City is that there's definitely been a hollowing out of capacity over time within that metro. And part of it seems to have been driven by sort of the way factional politics is played out in the province and within the space, and the fact that almost sort of parallel delivery systems have been set up in the Metro to overcome sort of capacitation challenges within the structure. So, it is a difficult environment. And understanding in terms of delivery, there's not really a clear sort of roles and responsibilities and mandates, and there's a lot of institutional uncertainty about who really needs to do what. So, within that environment, within that complex institutional environment that sort of evolved over time, that really debilitates the functioning. So, you might see a Metro like BCM now really developing quite positive plans that their strategies, their plans been of a relatively high quality, but translating it into implementation becomes a real challenge because of the institutional challenges (City Support Programme official, 5 May 2021).

The above demonstrates the double-barrelled attrition that occurred in the municipality on an executive and bureaucratic level. In the executive (political) level, there was rapid change of leadership due to political infighting and corruption allegations that made it difficult to sustain strategic consistency. This fuelled a loss of public servants who may have been disheartened by the instability. A planner (20 May 2021) in BCM who I interviewed, noted that in many instances these workers did not stop working for the municipality, but instead opted to work as independent consultants to the municipality. Though helping, in part, to retain skills, these moves weakened the organisational strength of the municipality.

Understanding that this phenomenon predated the metro status, some questioned how the promotion was rationalized, as one citizen wrote in a letter to the editor:

How did BCM get metro status? I attended the council meeting where councillors were acting like school kids demanding money to be paid into their accounts in 24 hours (“No right to be a metro,” 2012: n.p.)(“A Lack of Leadership,” 2009: 8.)

This quote speaks to two things, the presumption that a “small city” barely made the cut to be a metro, but that the political will to become a metro won against the political push not to become one. If the MDB were consistent in their determinations, the evidence for becoming a metro hinged on the city fitting into the criteria of the Structures Act (*Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998: chap5*). However, there were still questions, even in the province, on how BCM qualified:

When the Minister for Local Government decides on conferring metro status, he is not obliged to consider the rather glaring issues. Section 2 of the Municipal Structures Act simply calls for attention to whether the area: Has a high population density? Has an intense movement of people, goods and services? Has extensive development and multiple business districts/ industrial areas? Has a centre of economic activity with a complex and diverse economy? Constitutes a single area for which integrated development planning is desirable? Has strong interdependent social and economic linkages between its constituent units?

Allowing that these criteria make no call for an assessment of the institutional, political and financial capability of the aspirant metro, it nonetheless remains arguable whether BCM satisfies all or most of these criteria. Does Buffalo City really fit the economic and financial profile of metropolitan municipality? (Hollands, 2011: n.p.)

One of former chairpersons of the MDB (interview, 23 March 2021) explained that one of the reasons BCM could adopt the Category A label was because of a relaxation of the interpretation of the Structures Act (*Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998, 1998*) criteria and external and internal pushes to look at the “intermediate” cities. Though they did not elaborate on what criteria relaxed, it is clear in the MDB reports, that across most the metrics they used to analyse the city, it fell far behind most of the already established metros.²¹ In this sense the aspirant metros were in a holding pattern until the MDB determined they warranted recategorization. Another former chairperson (26 March 2021) said that:

²¹ The major metrics of analysis were: population density, population size, number of urban cores, complexity and diversity of economy, government budget, number of municipal staff, and size of rates base.

[The MDB was] not yet ready to begin to proceed by massifying the country with a number of metros until we see the functionality of existing metros themselves and determine whether we can proceed to declare other secondary cities as metros [...] So the waiting period allowed us to study the growth patterns of what was then the secondary cities, and to see whether over the few years [...] were they now actually qualifying what are now supposed to be the metros.

This push and pull of whether or not BCM could meet the criteria was evident in the articles published at the time. Even my own impetus for doing this research, as a BCM native, was based on my presumptions that the city did not qualify. Beyond questions of economy, the capacity for the municipality to fulfil the mandate of local government as described in legislation was called into question. Accusations of corruption, inability to spend their allocated budgets, the reality of failing infrastructure, the inability to adequately collect rates, the huge service backlogs, and the growing unemployment rate were all thrown at the municipality as disqualifiers. On the other hand there is clearly a group who considered metro status essential to the productivity, functioning and progress of the metro. The metro would gain the intergovernmental transfers that would enable it to run better. For example one official noted:

The city says its poverty alleviation and development programmes are on the scale of metropolitan councils such as Durban and Johannesburg, but without the financial support those cities enjoy (Matthewson, 2003: 4)

Another said, “It [metro status] is actually a massive vote of confidence in the city. With growth comes better service delivery for communities” (James, 2008: n.p.). So becoming a metro was framed as allowing for the possibility of a better run city, instead of (as implied by the Structures Act) the city meeting the criteria of being a well-run municipality. This is where arguments of intent vs criteria come in. Whilst some frame the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998) as a set of criteria that need to be strongly followed, others focus on the intent of the Act. In this way, a municipality that may not sit as comfortably as a Category A can treat the criteria as a goal/aim for their progress. By promoting them, the MDB and Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) were demonstrating that the municipality can use the “powers and functions” afforded to them by the Structures Act (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, 1998: part 2 ss60) as a Category A municipality, to become a Category A municipality in truth.

Even those in the business sector saw a similar possibility for municipality based on its status:

Baron said, Buffalo City was already moving towards becoming a major centre of development, and investor confidence would grow (James, 2008: n.p.).

Mayoral adviser Matthew Moonieya said investor confidence was its biggest aspiration, and metro status would give it a major boost (“Metropole status ‘would boost BC investment,’” n.d.: n.p.).

In articles where the opposition parties and stakeholders would contest the capabilities of the municipality to sustain metro status, those in the business sector would cite the awards the municipality had won as evidence that it was functioning:

It has won a number of awards, including Vuma Awards. You don’t win awards if you do not perform,” he said (Maqhina, 2008: n.p.).

However, some councillors found the fact that the municipality won any award laughable:

“Who the hell can make a decision like that? If that is true, then I’m worried for the rest of the province,” said the DA’s Jan Smit. PAC councillor Jerome Mdyolo said: “They must have been joking. Something must have happened because that is not the BCM we’ve come to know”(Skiti, 2011: n.p.).

Questions of capacity are tied to this argument of criteria, but many of my interviewees urged to separate the notions of capacity from the questions around obtaining metro status. For many, capacity is something that is built, and requires time; to hold a municipality to its present capacity seems ill thought out. One interviewee saw the powers and functions that allow for long-term planning essential in establishing a strong local government, and this was only possible for Category A and Category C municipalities.

However, even in 2012, a year after the metro gained metro status, there were still articles calling into question the status:

Despite qualifying for grade six status in terms of the basic criteria of population and income, the more holistic rationale for becoming a metro remains questionable. In its 2011 audited financial statements, the municipality concedes that “Buffalo City’s Metropolitan’s over all financial profile is considered to be under severe pressure” (Hollands, 2012: n.p.)

The perspective of the planners in the metro who I interviewed seems to align with this opinion. Though there was a hope for change in the way the city was governed, now that long-term strategic planning was a requirement of the metro, as one planner notes:

And we were hoping obviously as planners that there would be a bit more of developmental focus. Well, you didn’t find that for the metro. Did you see any more houses getting built - No? Do you see job creation? You see, for me, Metro was also about using that status to try and create

partnerships with the private sector etc - Did you see any of that... Nothing. And so, we didn't take our gap. (Planner in BCM, 20 May 2021)

In this sense, despite the assertion (from the various GTAC and CSP advisors I interviewed) that the focus on strategic planning allowed a certain competitiveness for cities, it seems that having the capabilities and enacting them are practically distinct.

However, I should note the rationale used by the MDB for the label. As per the tables in the Addendum of this document (which were extracted from an 2008 MDB report rationalising the recategorization of BCM), there were various ways of quantifying BCMs appropriateness as a metro. Despite the interpretations given in the MDB report, the tables demonstrate a large gap between BCM and the pre-existing metros. However, interestingly, the report notes BCMs high performance with regards to service delivery. Remembering the assertion outlined in Chapter 4, that greater powers and functions are needed to provide greater service delivery, this report seems to contradict this, and actually demonstrates that even as a category B, service delivery was not an issue.

5.4 PLANNING

The previous chapter, and the previous sections in this chapter, have demonstrated that the work of becoming a metro is political in a multitude of ways. As will become clear, municipal workers were also not immune to “political jostling”. Notably, the onset of a metro status instigated the production of a new organogram. This process included clarifying department roles and establishing projects and human resources that were needed, or as one interviewee (Director of a Development NGO in BCM, 28 April 2021) said – “to clean house”. But another interviewee described it as an exercise of “empire building”:

You see the game to play when you do an organogram is if you've got posts under you, the more posts you got under you, the more important you are. Whether you are ever going to fill those posts is irrelevant. You are playing the game to have as many posts as possible. (Planner in BCM, 20 May 2021)

Thus, despite the illusions of power, as noted by a news article in 2015, “Staff vacancies are crippling operations at Buffalo City Metro, a problem which is adversely affecting staff morale”(George, 2015: n.p.). High-level officials are thus stuck in a dynamic of generating more posts to boost the importance of their department, whilst acknowledging that there is no money to fill the posts that are needed.

As noted above, these open posts negatively affect the capacity of the municipality. But the history of hollowing out of municipal capacity extends further back. The planner (20 May 2021) I interviewed has worked for the municipality since before the dawn of democracy and mentioned that the municipality

has long been understaffed. He said that when the municipality was amalgamated (during the interim phase) his department did not change in size. This ultimately makes it difficult for planners to produce and enact their plans. Thus, whilst Buffalo City Metro is lauded for its strategic planning abilities, the ability to enact these plans seems to be a shortcoming of the municipalities. The planner further clarifies as follows:

It's not a secret, it's a national debate, lack of skills at a local level - you're asking people who have no skill at all, to do a massive thing: development. I think I've I said it before to other people, and I still stay with that: development is one of the most tricky things you can do. You might think heart surgery is difficult, you might think, you know, flying to the moon is difficult. But to do development successfully... it's one of the most complicated things you can do. Just because you studied Town Planning doesn't mean you know how to do the SDF22 and it doesn't mean it's going to result in development. Which it doesn't, because I've done documents that don't result in anything. And why do my SDFs not get implemented - it's because, top management is poor, and the next level of management [below] isn't any better, and people just don't have the skills and ability, at all, to do it. Even with all the skills in the world it's still a difficult job. It's damn difficult, cities don't get it right around the world, it's not easy. It's not an easy subject. But I think the skills shortage and the hiring decisions that are made have been counterproductive.(Planner in BCM, 20 May 2021).

With this harsh indictment, there seems to be conflicting narratives between various abilities. Questions of who should be responsible for what, if those responsibilities are helpful, and how to ensure that results are produced create a dynamic where some in the government appear hopeful about the strengths of local government and others are disillusioned.

While the above speaks of the questions of developmental local government that I outlined earlier as the cornerstone of the drafting of local government legislation in South Africa, the question of the transformational, integrationist agenda also came up with regards to BCMM's ability to redress apartheid spatial planning. One interviewee said:

So whilst we say that the transition was important, the transition [to metro status] was important for status and the transition was important for compliance – as you know, they did meet the legal criteria. But the character of the city has not changed, the spatial character of the city has not

²² SDF refers to the Spatial Development Framework, a document that each category A municipality must produce to outline their strategic land use planning agenda.

changed. If you look at Buffalo City today, you will notice that poor people have been continually pushed to the periphery (former BCM official, 8 May 2021).

So while metro status was cited by officials as enabling the local government to deal with the issue of poverty - one method of which was spatial integration - the reality is that the municipality has displayed limited capability in doing so. Whereas plans to densify the city, to bring people closer to job opportunities, are outlined in the strategic plans of the city, some note how these efforts are undermined by the lack of finances, which causes the local government to prioritise building houses on land that is cheaper, i.e. in the urban periphery. Also undermining efforts is the lack of coordination amongst spheres of government that results in national and provincial departments like the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) creating large-scale housing projects in the urban periphery, as their mandate for housing provision fails to consider the concerns of the local government regarding urban concentration. This is an issue that is not unique to BCM, as it is the experience in metros across the country (Turok, 2016), and demonstrates an issue of intergovernmental relations that makes strategic planning difficult.

However, even intragovernmental relations seem to suffer from the same lack of coordination. One interviewee (an independent GTAC contractor to BCM, 5 May 2021) describes BCMM as still “thinking” like a Category B municipality in the sense that many of the departments operate in “siloes”, rather than ensuring their projects coordinate. He sees intragovernmental coordination as a marker of big cities with their ability to ensure their work integrates with the city’s planning as a whole. Another interviewee considers these siloes as the reason why the municipality lacks innovative thinking. This resonates with earlier comments on the nature of human resources in the municipality and the competitive nature that many departments fall into. Thus, it seems the concept of cooperative governance has failed on all levels of government.

However, as a sort of attempt to redeem the municipality, the same interviewee noted that:

That [thinking like a Category A] is a transitional thing for Buffalo City. You might have some thinking there, but behaviour lags thinking maybe five years, maybe 10 years or so. That’s a change management thing. You can get the thinking there into leadership, but leadership comes and goes as well. But you need to build governance, you need to build leadership, you need to get thinking and ideas so that at least people are on the same page in terms of vision and priorities. But then your capacity and your systems are going to lag that. And that has to catch up over time. So that's, that's your classic sort of change management thing. You don't build institutions in a day (an independent GTAC contractor to BCM, 5 May 2021).

Thus, those that support the “planning instruments” that metro status provides agree with the above sentiment: capacity and change are built and take time but this should not limit the municipality from adopting the ability to think beyond being a secondary city.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The sections in this chapter have clarified how the meaning of “metro status” moved across Buffalo City. From demonstrating that the intergovernmental relations mentioned in the previous chapter manifest similarly on the local level, to emphasizing the importance of leadership in creating coherent, action-orientated local government, this chapter allows us to conclude that much of the work of “metro status” is political. And that politics can be found in all spaces in government, amongst technocrats and politicians alike. The next chapter will allow me to link the findings from this and the previous chapter to the literature reviewed before.

CHAPTER 6: BETWEEN THEORIES AND PRACTISE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa's Constitution has the profound honour of being considered "the best in the world" (Fisher, 2017). At the dawn of the democracy the focus of a de-racialized spatial and economic landscape motivated the development of this new Constitution and the accompanying set of legislations and governmental structure. As Hall (1993) notes, such a large-scale shift in paradigm is difficult, and often come on the heels of tumultuous battles for power or justice. However, rather than focusing on the shift in paradigm at large, my research focuses on the specific change in the institution of local government as established by the change in paradigm from apartheid to democracy (DPACD, 1998; Lowndes, 2009). Local government was the arena where much of the apartheid ideology was enacted; locating this research in the paradigm shift that produced a set of legislation to amend the spatial injustice proves to be a productive research area.

As outlined in the previous chapters, autonomous local government as a driver for transformation and development resulted in an uncommon set of "powers and functions" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) available to municipalities. The inclusion of categories in this system complicates this notion of autonomous local government, where "powers and functions" (ibid.) are assigned based on categorization. As noted, the metropolitan municipality holds the greatest level of autonomy. The rationale for this form of government is based on the reality that a "functionally-linked" (DPACD, 1998) area of complex economic and social dynamics needs to be managed by one government. Additionally, the metropolitan government needs these heightened "powers and functions" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) to coordinate planning and development in the metropolitan area (Cameron, 1999 & 2014; DPACD, 1998; Maharaj, 2002). Whilst this technical argument for metropolitan governance is valid, my research demonstrates that normative and political values interrupt the administrative exercise of urban categorisation. The case of Buffalo City Metro thus proved to be a rich research ground for answering the question whether bigger is better (Robinson, 2006; Lowndes, 2009). Returning now to the literature that urged me to not take for granted the metropolitan label, I expound on how looking at smaller cities highlights the importance of specificity in urban studies (Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Parnell & Robinson, 2017; Robinson, 2002 & 2006).

6.2 BETWEEN TRANSFORMATION AND DECENTRALISATION

In my literature review I presented the idea of a "policy paradigm" – a framework of ideas that often stands unmentioned, but has great influence on the process of policy-making (Baumgartner, 2014; Hall,

1993). The notion of developmental local government as described in South African legislation might be read as one idea in the framework of a transformed, equitable, and democratic South Africa. So if we are to take the earlier statement from Baumgartner (2014:475) of: “ideas as a central element of policy analysis,” we cannot take for granted the concept of *developmental* local government.

Robinson (2002 & 2006) does not take the term for granted, and makes the astute argument that the developmentalist lens that is used to analyse cities in the Global South, finds its roots in viewing cities in the Global North as the focus of urban studies, and cities in the Global South as sites of development. This draws one to look more critically at the concept of developmental local government, particularly when tied to an African country. The concept of strong local governance, which favour a shift of powers from the national level to the local level (decentralisation), was conceived before the democratisation process in South Africa. So considering that developmental local government relies heavily on these concepts, it is worth looking at how international discourse might have influenced this country’s idea of development.

Decentralisation as a means of development is presented by its proponents as a means to a greater engagement with the urban economy and thus improve urban productivity (Robinson, 2002). South Africa’s Constitution, as outlined in previous chapters, takes this assertion and ties it to the transformational agenda of local government. The predominant global policy paradigm that makes cities strive to be entrepreneurial seems contrary to South Africa’s focus on redistribution; and yet South Africa’s legislation relies on the same tools and terminology as those that advocate for a more entrepreneurial, neoliberal view of the city. Even despite the many instances cited by my interviewees where autonomous local government seems to fail the transformational agenda, they all concluded that greater local government powers are necessary.

However, as mentioned, the South African case does diverge from the logics of neoliberalism because through various grants and programmes more national government investment, rather than less, is present. But as will be noted later in this chapter, these intergovernmental transfers complicate the relationship across spheres. While the Constitution considers the national sphere to be equal to the local, these intergovernmental transfers tip the power balance in favour of the national government. In this way, the case of South Africa may not accurately depict an example of true decentralisation as theorised by scholars, but rather a consolatory version.

6.3 BETWEEN REGIONAL AND LOCAL

Although not synonymous with decentralisation, metropolitan government as it is defined in South Africa, has strong ties to the concept. It is in the Category A municipalities that we see the greatest level

of potential autonomy. However, returning to the definition of metropolitan government and the purported benefits, cited in literature and policy alike (Cameron, 1999 & 2014; DPCAD, 1998; Maharaj, 2002), my findings on BCM reveal that politics make said benefits difficult to achieve. Considering coordinated planning is used as a point in favour of metropolitan governance and that legislation advocates for coordinated planning in all categories of municipalities (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act of 117 of 1998, 1998; The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). District municipalities (Category C) are tasked with coordinating this planning among constituent local municipalities (Category B), similarly to how metropolitan governments coordinate planning across their jurisdiction. And secondary city scholars (Bolay & Rabinovich, 2004; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019) have advocated for planning on the regional level as a means to better take advantage of these cities' intermediary role and regional function. Unfortunately, in the case of BCM it seems there are realities that pose interference.

As noted in Chapter 5, BCM operated (when it was a Category B municipality) as an urban area in a rural district (Category C) municipality. This reality seemed to underscore the argument, made by some of my interviewees, that the municipality needed to become a metro. The urban-rural dichotomy often plays out in a hyper focus of the struggles of the rural municipalities - which, as my interviewees argued, resulted in hindered planning capabilities for BCM (when it was a Category B). From this standpoint the push for "metro status" is understandable - to simply be able to transcend the district so more efficient planning can occur. However, a conflicting narrative is present in the fact that BCM was described as a "rural metro" by some of my interviewees. The conflict between how urban is BCM, versus other South African municipalities, corresponds with Robinson's (2004, 2006 & 2013) argument regarding the Western influence on conceptualisations of urbanity. Where BCM is compared to Cape Town or Johannesburg, the sprawled spatial landscape and depressed economy points to something less glamorous than these metros. But it is inarguable that BCM does have elements of urbanity (e.g. density, infrastructure) that set it apart from its deeply rural hinterlands and neighbouring regions.

Perhaps the arguments consistently made by South African scholars (Mabin, 1989; Maharaj, 2002) that the urban nexus transcends clear boundaries of rural versus urban proves useful for future planning. This logic is not far removed from the work of planetary urbanists (Brenner & Schmid, 2015), but engages differently with the lengths of urbanisation. Rather than looking solely at globalisation's effect on the urban scales, the work of South African scholars looks at demographic patterns of work and living that tie together the urban and rural. And while the concept of functional linkage in legislation attempts to bridge this gap, it seems like the internalised normative understandings of city still prevent government officials and planners from accepting the concept of an urban nexus.

6.4 BETWEEN POLITICS AND PEOPLE

Beyond the differing definitions of urbanity that make the concept of metro a difficult site of analysis, my findings demonstrate the corresponding politics contingent on the label. Rather than merely influencing policy-making and planning, the concept of metro complicates the relationships among spheres of government, government officials, and bureaucrats alike. Scholars (Appadurai, 2000; Robinson, 2002 & 2006) have appropriately argued that the narrative of the entrepreneurial city pushes urban practitioners to focus on the competitiveness of cities within the restricted framework of a globalised economy. To increase their city's competitiveness, practitioners operationalise urban labels to pursue development projects to the detriment of the lower-income individuals in the city (Appadurai, 2000). However, my research demonstrates that aside from the pursuit for economic competitiveness, there is a political play for power that is present in the way urban labels are operationalised.

If we are to look at local government as an institution, metro status is a tool used by myriad of actors operating from differing and multiple rationales (Lowndes, 2009). Extrinsic and intrinsic values make BCM's pursuit and achievement of metro status a complex political exercise. A branch of South African scholarship demonstrates how inter-party dynamics makes it difficult for local government to truly manoeuvre autonomously (Cameron, 2014; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002;). But because the focus is on the larger metropolises, what escapes this literature is the intra-party dynamics that my research illuminated. Though "merely a label," metro status poses as a key tool in the institution of the ruling party (ANC), which governs on the national, provincial and local level in the case of BCM.

Where the technical argument for a promotion of metro status is required by the MDB, the reality that much of the push for BCM to become a metro was politically motivated is clear from my findings. The interaction of the ruling party's hierarchical regional and national structure, with the equitable structure of the spheres of governance, allowed for politically motivated officials to use metro status to promote their standing in the party. Additionally, my research demonstrates that flows of power and pressure up and down the hierarchy of the ruling party allowed for a pressure on the upper levels to make BCM a metro, and a corresponding appeasement of the lower levels demands.

These party relations operate outside of the structure of the municipality, as it applies to the political party structure not the government structure. However, as my findings noted, even the technocrats are caught in similar pushes and pulls for power. The tendency of different departments within the municipality to try and create "empires" reiterates how cooperative governance is undermined, even internally. As Lowndes (2009:92) writes, "in robust institutional arrangements, regulative, normative and cognitive mechanisms work together to shape behaviour." The case of BCM thus demonstrates an institution where the normative and cognitive mechanisms often outcompete the regulative mechanisms.

Thus, having compared via the literature and my findings how the institutional arrangement differs in BCM from those of larger metros, another statement from Lowndes (2009:97) rings true:

Local governance is embedded in locally specific [sic] institutional frameworks of both a political nature (e.g. patterns of party organisation or municipal traditions) and a non-political nature (e.g. the structures and conventions of local business life and of community activity). Although the degree of embeddedness may vary from place to place (and over time), local institutional environments create opportunities in local governance ‘to do not only different things but also the same things differently’

Thus the advocacy for looking at small and medium cities, and cities “off the map” (Robinson, 2002: 535), as sites of inquiry is validated (Ammann & Sanogo, 2017; Marais, Nel & Donaldson, 2016 & 2019; Robinson, 2002 & 2006). Despite the presence of similar inquiries into metropolitan governments (Cameron, 2014; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002), BCM demonstrates a reality of the city caught in-between cities not previously acknowledged.

6.5 BETWEEN COOPERATION AND CONFLICT

As noted, the equitable relationship among spheres of government is set out by the Constitution through the notion of “cooperative governance” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap3). However, one instance where “cooperative governance” (ibid.) is undermined is where departments at the national or provincial level fund projects that go against the spatial development planning at the local level (Turok, 2016). As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of my interviewees described this exact phenomenon in the case of the allocation of social housing by the Department of Human Settlement (DHS). They created mass housing located at the furthest boundaries of the municipalities, a move that contradicted calls for a dense, integrated city found in BCM’s integrated development plan. Thus, although “under the new Constitution, local government is a sphere of government in its own right, and not a function of national or provincial government” (DPACD, 1998:9), in reality, this is not the case.

Furthermore, by returning to the relationship between district (Category C) municipalities and local (Category B) municipalities, we can see a similar lack of cooperation. The failure of urban municipalities to adequately plan when operating under a district, and the power struggles that see urban municipalities seek to relieve themselves of their districts show how cooperation is difficult in systems that still require a hierarchy to operate. Further, the control of revenue is ultimately in the hands of national government:

214. (1) An Act of Parliament must provide for—

(a) the equitable division of revenue raised nationally among the national, provincial and local spheres of government (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap13 s214).

This share is dispensed in a cascading manner from province to district municipality (or metro) and finally to local municipality. Due to the fact that finances are disbursed “downwards” there is an imbalance in the “equitable” relationship among the spheres of government. And in the case of a municipality like BCM, where opportunities exist to gain funds via leaving their district, the appeal of metro status becomes ever stronger. This flies in the face of the aim of local government: “to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:74).

Accordingly, the suggestions that metropolitan governance offer greater democratic accountability (Cameron, 1999 & 2014), need to consider the full political system in order to ensure these benefits are achieved. Also, if we are to look at cooperative governance as a form of decentralisation – “powers and functions” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: chap7, s155) redistributed from central government to local government – then the difficulties in this “cooperation” prove advocates of decentralisation right (Cameron, 1999 & 2014). In turn, if the way national revenue is distributed undermines the tenets of decentralisation, perhaps a greater focus on a more equitable financial system is required. While the legislation does allow municipalities to garner rates and taxes within their jurisdiction, BCM still lacks the rates base needed to allow the municipality to rely less on the intergovernmental transfers. This is a failure of governance (Bakker et al., 2008) because it disincentivises a focus on productive governing in order to serve the community and incentivises the pursuit of funds.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Returning to the relationship of regional territory and governance: where in a previous chapter I focused a desire to disassociate with the district as a rationale for pursuing metro status, my findings here also outlined the negative effects this transition would have on the region. As mentioned, both academia and legislation acknowledge that settlements within South Africa are connected in vast regional territories (Bekker et al., 1997; Mabin, 1989; Maharaj, 1997 & 2002; The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). From my research, BCM, as it stood in the Amathole District Municipality (ADM), was a key municipality that contributed the largest share to the district’s rates base. The removal of the municipality thus had a negative impact on the finances of the district. This was an argument presented at the time by the opposition party council members (Gazi, 2008: n.p. ; Maqhina & James, 2008: n.p.) but, based on my research, remained largely ignored. The reasoning that local government should act as a redistributing agent of resources from rich to poor seems to fall short in this instance. Ironically, another rationale of metropolitan governance in the literature is its ability to redistribute funds and resources equitably (Cameron, 1999 & 2014). In a scenario where metropolitan governments are formed by

amalgamating settlements into one jurisdiction this rationale makes sense. But the case of BCM where “metro status” signified a change in category that necessitated removal from its poorer district clearly demonstrates the opposite of redistribution.

Whether viewed as an adjective, as a technical exercise in rationalizing a city, or as a jurisdiction, the metro label is complicated by the individual assumptions and perspectives that make up our government institutions. In the case of South Africa, I have demonstrated that multiple definitions of metro proliferate, and even more importantly multiple manoeuvres are triggered by the mere mention of the word. While the legislation, through the categories, sought to establish a structure that met the aims of redistribution whilst accommodating the spatial complexities of the *Rainbow Nation*, the institutional reality where this legislation is being enacted matters.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This research began as a nagging question about the city I grew up in: How did East London become a metro?²³ With limited understanding of the legislation and politicking that took place to change East London's label, I undertook this research to get to grips with my discomfort with this label being associated with a city so small and unimportant.

Beginning with a deep investigation of the legislation and other governmental documents, I was able to establish this change in label and its position in the greater local government structure. Because of the history of South Africa, this required that I looked back to the beginning of the country's democracy to see how the politicians at the time conceived of the municipal categorisation. This led me to discover the key figures in South Africa's local government transformation, many of whom later became my interviewees.

Because Buffalo City Metro was my site of analysis, I needed a greater understanding of the work of categorisation as it relates to the municipality. I gained insights on the process from interviewees who worked closely with the municipality. Additionally, the MDB reports published over the years allowed me to track the argument for the recategorisation. Finally, the newspaper review provided a key insight into the manoeuvres that were crucial in Buffalo City's bid to becoming a metro.

It was the combination of these data sets that allowed me to construct my argument of the consequences of the differing normative understandings of metro status on the everyday governing of the city. I was able to demonstrate that a "simple" label had far-reaching effects in how officials and politicians interacted with each other and on their work. Having summarised my findings, I now seek to open up my thesis to a discussion on the policy implications and potential for further research.

My thesis demonstrates that the metropolitan city, metropolitan governance, and their roots in decentralisation, need to be researched and understood within each context they are implemented in. While these concepts (i.e. decentralisation, amalgamation) are used as a universal means to govern city, we need to take seriously Robinson and Parnell's (2017) call to provincialise certain concepts. Where normative values and political interest align my research clarifies that it is difficult to simply ensure that these concepts are enacted as envisioned. Thus, academics and practitioners alike need to consider the value of these concepts when researching and planning cities. A lack of understanding of the institutions

²³ East London is used in this instance to refer to the Buffalo City as a whole. I fall back on this name, as it is how I refer to the city in my everyday conversations.

inherent in one's locality can produce unintended consequences, and limiting understandings of settlements can block one from more appropriate structures that accommodate the realities of the institutions.

As mentioned, I wanted to understand how the label of metro – a label I perceived to come from elsewhere – was applied to a city that I thought was a poor fit. And whilst my research has established the cracks and crevices of metro status, I think further research needs to get to grips with the institutional opportunities present in cities like BCM. The reality remains that the metro status cannot be reserved without great political pushback. Thus, a greater concern for measures to help BCM become a better-functioning municipality within this structure needs to be considered. Approaches made by the South African Cities' Network (SACN) and CSP rather than “parachuting” solutions into the BCM, need to have a greater concern for institutional development.

However, further research should be done to understand if there were other benefits or losses in obtaining metro status. While my research demonstrated that metro status was not a purely technical pursuit, I think understanding the affects as they apply to residents, can prove more useful when analysing the city from a governance standpoint. One example of a future research exercise could be to track the changes in land-use across the municipality, showing if there is a difference before and after metro status. Questions of improved density, connectivity, business and such can be answered by such an analysis.

Additionally, a gap in my research can be found in the understanding of how governance differs from governing/governments. One of my interviewees noted that good governance is needed to ensure a functioning city. And governance does not rely solely on the public sector, but also the civic, private, and academic sectors. Any research that can clarify BCM's governance capacity, before and after metro status, might prove useful. Did the transition bring in the human, economic, and social resources promised by the news articles?

Regardless, my thesis demonstrates that deep consideration into the local government structure of South Africa as it pertains to the agenda of developmental local government is needed. The reality that there is room for improvement is clear. Legislation is not set in stone; this is clear from the interviews, as well as the fact that the Structure's Act continues to be amended, even as recently as 2021 (Local Government: Municipal Structures Amendment Act, No. 3 of 2021, 2021). Beyond subtle changes in titles and roles, there may need to be an exercise of restructuring that ensures all municipalities - urban and rural - can get the support they need.

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ADDENDUM

Table i. Metropolitan/Urban Areas: Rankings

Municipality	Population (2007)	Population density (persons/square km)	Opex Budget 2006/07	Capex Budget 2006/07	Number of staff 2007	Overall
Johannesburg	1	1	1	1	2	1.2
Cape Town	2	3	2	3	1	2.2
Ethekewini	3	2	3	2	3	2.6
Ekurhuleni	4	4	4	5	4	4.2
Tshwane	5	5	5	4	5	4.8
Nelson Mandela	6	7	6	6	6	6.5
Buffalo City	8	10	7	10	8	8.6
Msunduzi	9	6	8	12	9	8.8
Mangaung	7	14	9	8	7	9
Umhlathuze	13	8	12	7	11	10.2
Polokwane	10	11	11	9	15	11.2
Mbombela	11	12	14	11	14	12.4
Rustenburg	12	15	10	13	13	12.6
Mogale City	14	9	13	15	12	12.6
Sol Plaatjie	15	13	15	14	10	13.4

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table ii. Urban/Rural Households

Municipality	No. of rural households	Percentage of rural households	No. of urban households	Percentage of urban households
Ethekwini	363866	11.78	2726257	88.22
Ekurhuleni	28887	1.17	2449241	98.83
Nelson Mandela	28821	2.87	976957	97.13
Tshwane	203313	10.23	1783844	89.77
Cape Town	20399	0.71	2871844	99.29
Johannesburg	32698	1.01	3193114	98.99
Buffalo City	41 413	21.68	149 631	78.32
Mangaung	8 844	4.78	176 175	95.22
Msunduzi	27467	21.06	102930	78.94
Polokwane	79574	63.67	45406	36.33
Rustenburg	62299	53.44	54278	46.56
Mbombela	78240	69.97	33586	30.03
Mogale City	9304	12.28	66465	87.72
Umhlathuze	42109	62.73	25020	37.27
Sol Plaatjie	1422	2.83	48828	97.17

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table iii. Population Density

Municipality	Population 2007	Geographical Area (square km)	Population density (persons/square km)
Ethekwini	3468086	2291.9	1513
Ekurhuleni Metro	2724229	1924.4	1416
Nelson Mandela	1050930	1958.9	536
Tshwane	2345908	2174.6	1079
Cape Town	3497097	2454.7	1425
Johannesburg	3888180	1645.0	2364
Buffalo City	724 312	2527.8	287
Mangaung	752 906	6284.0	120
Msunduzi	616730	633.8	973
Mbombela	561772	3411.8	165
Polokwane	449776	3766.0	119
Rustenburg	527203	3423.2	154
Mogale City	319641	1099.3	291
Umhlathuze	332156	793.2	419
Sol Plaatjie	243018	1877.1	129

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table iv. Type of Dwelling

Municipality	House or brick structure on a separate stand or yard		Traditional dwelling/hut/ structure made of traditional materials		Flat in block of flats		Town/cluster/semi-detached house		Higher density total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	%
Ethekwini	438 563	52.59	53 587	6.43	86 565	10.38	39 754	4.77	15.15
Ekurhuleni Metro	466 210	54.89	1 035	0.12	44 128	5.2	31 434	3.7	8.9
Nelson Mandela	204 049	73.7	1 882	0.68	17 099	6.18	11 399	4.12	10.3
Tshwane	369 347	53.79	3 480	0.51	55 080	8.02	33 994	4.95	8.02
Cape Town	594 429	65.88	3 511	0.39	82 519	9.15	57 501	6.37	15.52
Johannesburg	611588	52.49	4 158	0.36	109 071	9.36	73 583	6.31	15.67
Buffalo City	122563	58.81	9363	4.5	12715	6.1	3511	1.7	7.8
Mangaung	139 022	68.56	6 412	3.16	6 322	3.12	4 483	2.21	5.33
Msunduzi	81 746	60.83	26 775	19.92	13 960	10.39	3 030	2.25	12.64
Mbombela	108 942	79.32	4 757	3.46	5 370	3.91	1 505	1.1	5.01
Polokwane	97 043	74.44	3 292	2.53	4 735	3.63	1 358	1.04	4.67
Rustenburg	61 478	41.95	1 382	0.94	2 919	1.99	874	0.6	2.6
Mogale City	54 115	57.39	0	0	2 055	2.18	3 853	4.09	6.27
Nokeng tsa Taemane	7 821	52.72	232	1.56	291	1.96	844	5.69	7.65
Kungwini	18 877	59.61	1 067	3.37	636	2.01	170	0.54	2.55
Umhlathuze	53 749	66.35	12 319	15.21	7 398	9.13	1 547	1.91	11.04
Sol Plaatjie	43 660	83.77	77	0.15	557	1.06	1 513	2.9	3.96

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table v. Urban Centres/ Nodes

Municipality	Total Centres	1 Big Centres		2 Smaller Centres	
		Number	Names	Number	Names
Ethekwini	9	2	Durban Pinetown	7	Umkomaas Amanzimtoti Isipingo/ Prospecton Tongaat Verulam Westville Hillcrest
Ekurhuleni	9	4	Alberton Benoni Germiston Kempton Park		Boksburg Brakpan Edenvale/ Modderfontein Nigel Springs
Nelson Mandela	6	1	Port Elizabeth	5	Uitenhage Despatch Blue Horizon Seaview Motherwell
Tshwane	6	2	Pretoria Centurion	4	Rosslyn Soshanguve Hammanskraal Winterveldt
Cape Town	7	3	Cape Town Belville Claremont	4	Tygerburg Hout Bay Lansdowne Milnerton
Johannesburg	11	2	Johannesburg Midrand	9	Roodepoort Randburg Diepsloot Sandton Rosebank Killarney Melrose Arch Sunninghill Soweto
Buffalo City	4	2	East London King Williams Town	2	Bisho Mdantsane
Mangaung	4	1	Bloemfontein	3	Thaba Nchu Mangaung Botshabelo
Msunduzi	8	2	Pietermaritzburg Ashburton	6	Claridge Elandskop Kanzakane Sweet Waters Taylors Halt Thornville (Howick) (Hilton)
Mbombela	4	1	Nelspruit	3	Rocky's Drift White River Hazyview

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table vi. Urban Areas Contribution to National Economy

Municipality	GVA total	Percentage of National GVA
Ethekwini	122116536,40	10,00
Ekurhuleni	86392597,19	7,08
Nelson Mandela	35920783,70	2,94
Tshwane	112293408,88	9,20
Cape Town	137148900,43	11,23
Johannesburg	221376293,10	18,13
Buffalo City	14730296,29	1,21
Mangaung	26168496,21	2,14
Msunduzi	9023335,53	0,74
Mbombela	6317488,75	0,52
Rustenburg	8448529,30	0,69
Mogale City	6747314,96	0,55
Umhlathuze	6045538,32	0,50
Kimberley/Sol Plaatjie	4713530,19	0,39

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table vii. Number of councillors and wards.

Municipality	Number of wards	Number of councillors
Ethekwini	100	200
Ekurhuleni	88	175
Nelson Mandela	60	120
Tshwane	76	152
Cape Town	105	210
Johannesburg	109	217
Buffalo City	45	89
Mangaung	45	89
Msunduzi	37	73
Mbombela	37	71
Polokwane	36	73
Rustenburg	36	72
Mogale City	24	64
Umhlathuze	30	60
Kimberley/Sol Plaatjie	28	55

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table viii. Access to Services

Municipality	Water			Sanitation			Electricity			Refuse Removal		
	RDP Water service levels (actual)	RDP Water backlog (%) within municipality	RDP Water backlog as % of district	RDP Sanitation service levels (actual)	RDP Sanitation backlog (%)	RDP Sanitation backlog as % of district	RDP Electricity service levels (actual)	RDP Electricity backlog (%)	RDP Electricity backlog as % of district	RDP Refuse Removal service levels (actual)	RDP Refuse Removal backlog (%)	RDP Refuse Removal backlog as % of district
Buffalo City	182356	6.23	9.35	129564	33.38	24.39	122966	36.77	37.25	141265	27.36	21.62
Mangaung	180908	4.22	91.3	94140	50.16	88.27	160369	15.09	84.51	117455	37.81	90.51
Msunduzi	127090	6.09	23.4	76646	43.36	47.21	116113	14.2	31.25	82213	39.25	41.49
Mbombela	106366	13.14	27.73	31547	74.24	32.95	87294	28.72	31.62	32044	73.83	32.94
Polokwane	112279	17.22	35.57	47370	65.08	39.6	87662	35.37	41.25	47659	64.86	38.99
Rustenburg	97205	16.68	37.5	48575	58.36	27.64	83344	28.56	38.92	51799	55.6	26.34
Mogale City	87600	2.32	51.53	69165	22.88	45.71	71359	20.43	40.13	65383	27.1	51.54
Umlathuze	65506	10.63	9.94	35199	51.98	28.14	63549	13.3	11.47	33658	54.08	27.98
Sol Plaatjie	50774	0.64	13.3	43275	15.31	32.44	42164	17.49	47.27	46819	8.38	20.17

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table ix. Migrancy

Municipality	Pop. 1996	Pop. 2001	Pop. 2007	Pop Growth 1996 - 2001	Pop Growth 2001 - 2007	Total Growth 1996-2007
Ethekwini	2751193	3090121	3468086	12.32	12.23	24.55
Ekurhuleni	2026807	2480277	2724229	22.37	9.84	32.21
Nelson Mandela	969771	1005778	1050930	3.71	4.49	8.2
Tshwane	1682701	1983983	2345908	17.9	18.24	36.14
Cape Town	2563612	2893246	3497097	12.86	20.87	33.73
Johannesburg	2639110	3225812	3888180	22.23	20.53	42.76
Buffalo City	682287	701980	724 312	2.89	3.18	6.07
Mangaung	603704	645441	752 906	6.91	15.05	23.45
Msunduzi	521805	552835	616730	5.95	11.56	17.51
Polokwane	424976	508277	561772	19.6	10.52	30.12
Rustenburg	311326	395540	449776	27.05	13.71	40.76
Mbombela	425663	474806	527203	11.55	11.04	22.59
Mogale City	223657	289724	319641	29.54	10.33	39.87
Umlathuze	196183	289190	332156	47.41	14.86	62.27
Sol Plaatjie	204263	201464	243018	-1.37	20.63	19.26

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas

Table x. Employment Levels

Municipality	Employed		Unemployed		Not economically active	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ethekwini	1 010 599	43.21	506 112	21.64	822 289	35.16
Ekurhuleni Metro	950 345	50.88	420 600	22.52	496 824	26.60
Nelson Mandela	270 296	38.13	179 920	25.38	258 599	36.48
City of Tshwane	865 420	54.72	284 639	18.00	431 364	27.28
City of Cape Town	1 250 731	53.60	405 377	17.37	677 389	29.03
City of Johannesburg	1 417 464	53.68	596 420	22.59	626 770	23.74
Buffalo City	177 033	37.27	112 294	23.64	185 671	39.09
Mangaung	221 232	44.69	94 313	19.05	179 529	36.26
Msunduzi	156 564	40.74	97 816	25.46	129 887	33.80
Mbombela	165 594	50.19	52 292	15.85	112 072	33.97
Polokwane	117 804	36.75	69 684	21.74	133 076	41.51
Rustenburg	161 753	53.85	63 536	21.15	75 101	25.00
Mogale City	115 822	54.63	40 025	18.88	56 172	26.49
Umlathuze	84 386	40.63	46 231	22.26	77 082	37.11
Kimberley/Sol Plaatjie	62 150	39.07	30 163	18.96	66 780	41.98

Source: MDB Report - Investigation Into Possible Demarcation Of More Metropolitan Authorities And The Extension Of The Municipal Areas Of Existing Metropolitan Areas