



Water and Sanitation Service Delivery in eThekweni: a Spatially Differentiated Model

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South African legislative and policy frameworks¹ for water services are some of the most progressive in the world. Water is considered to be a social good and fundamental to transformation and development in the country. The Constitution of South Africa (1997) provides everyone with the right to sufficient water within available resources and this is reflected in the country's Free Basic Water Policy. However free basic water and free basic sanitation are not provided equally or evenly across South Africa and provision does not always meet national standards². The rights based discourse which has been adopted for water and sanitation service provision, and which is enshrined in the South African Constitution, is tempered by the neo-liberal cost-recovery approach to service delivery. The commodification of services means that not everyone will be able to afford sufficient access to water and sanitation. This raises concerns

1 Legislation: The Constitution of South Africa Act 108 (1996) (Section 27, (1b)) and (Section 27 (2)); The National Water Act 36 of 1998; The Water Services Act 108 of 1997; The 1994 "Water Supply and Sanitation Policy White Paper"; The 1997 "White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa"; The 2001 "White Paper on Basic Household Sanitation"; The 2002 "Draft White Paper on Water Services".

Policy Frameworks: DWA's "Free Basic Water Implementation Strategy" (2002); DWA's "Strategic Framework for Water Services" (2003); The Free Basic Sanitation Implementation Strategy (2009); Strategy for Sanitation Services for Informal Settlements (2007); The DWA "Water Services Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy" (2012); Drinking Water Quality Framework (2005)

2 In eThekweni free basic water provision of 9kl per household per month was universally provided, however, since June 2012, free basic water is only provided to those living in households of value lower than R250 000 or who meet specific criteria.

as to whether the focus of service delivery is on cost-recovery or on social and environmental justice.

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, facing a persistent and by some measures widening gap in inequality (Pieterse, 2010; Seeking & Natrass, 2005). Both national and local government experience the tension of addressing both the pro-growth and pro-poor agenda, as reflected in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)³, and it is this tension which underpins the juxtaposition of a rights based discourse and neo-liberal cost-efficiency in service provision. Inequality has a strong spatial form, and the geography of apartheid, with its system of racial segregation across different geographical areas, is still evident in most South African cities, despite the continued efforts by the post-apartheid state to address these inequalities. This is both as a result of the legacy of apartheid and the inability of the post-apartheid state to adequately address poverty and inequality (Leibrandt, 2010). However, non-monetary well-being, which includes access to potable water, sanitation, electricity and housing, has continued to improve since 1994 (Census, 2011; Leibrandt, 2010).

eThekweni Municipality's⁴ Water and Sanitation Unit (EWS) faces significant challenges with regard to service provision. National government budget allocations to Water Services Authorities (WSA's), such as EWS, which are tasked

3 The RDP policy framework was implemented in 1994 to address socio-economic problems in post-apartheid South Africa, the GEAR policy framework was adopted in 1996 and is the macro-economic strategy designed to strengthen economic growth.

4 The eThekweni Municipality is the administrative name for the city of Durban.

with the provision of water and sanitation services, are not adequate to meet service demands and hence local governments have to make up for the shortfall using a cost recovery approach. Durban's population is growing as a result of natural increase and in-migration, with 150 000 people moving in to the city each year. Under the current funding conditions and with the current backlogs, it will take the city 29-37 years to address the water backlogs and 23-28 years to deal with the sanitation backlogs (eThekweni Municipality, 2012⁵). The city is also under pressure to reduce its water consumption as it is a water scarce city, which is currently only just meeting its water demands. Residents of the city aspire to having in-house, full pressure water supply and flushing toilets linked to waterborne sewerage and wastewater treatment (Gounden et al, 2006). EWS argues that the provision of this level of services across the city, including the rural periphery, is not feasible as a result of technological, financial, environmental and practical constraints. According to officials from EWS, peri-urban areas and the rural periphery raise the most significant challenges due to land ownership falling under the Traditional Authority, low housing densities, mobility of the population and the inaccessible and steep terrain (Gounden, et al, 2006).

However, within these constraints and challenges, EWS commits itself to providing all citizens within the eThekweni Municipality with access to "appropriate, acceptable, safe and affordable basic water supply and sanitation services" (eThekweni Water and Sanitation Unit, n.d.). It argues that these services must be equitable, where adequate services are provided fairly to all people; affordable, to ensure that no one is excluded access to basic services because of cost; and efficient and effective, so that water and sanitation provision is socially, institutionally and financially sustainable (eThekweni eThekweni Water and Sanitation Unit, n.d.). So as to meet these aims, within the financial, physical and environmental context of the city, EWS has developed a spatially differentiated discourse around service provision. In eThekweni Municipality, residents in the urban core, the transition zone along the urban development line, and the peri-urban or rural periphery⁶ receive different levels of services (see Figure 1). Residents both within the urban core and the Urban Development Line⁷, unless they live in informal settlements or default on payments, receive full pressure water services and flushing toilets, linked to bulk

wastewater treatment. However those in the rural periphery receive a range of water services, including full pressure systems, ground tanks that supply 9Kl per household per month, and semi-pressure systems with restricted flow meters as a result of defaulting on water payments. Sanitation in rural areas consists of state provided Ventilated Pit Latrines (VIP toilets), which are de-sludged by the city; Urine Diversion (UD) Toilets, or dry toilets; and community built pit latrines. In informal settlements (unlimited) water is provided through communal taps and sanitation is either absent, where communities use open land around the settlement, or it is provided through state and community built Pit Latrines. The new Interim Services Programme⁸ which has been introduced by EWS provides flushing toilets and communal taps and showers in male and female communal container blocks in informal settlements.

Historical and current socio-economic and environmental factors underpin this spatial differentiation in service delivery. These factors include: the under-development of townships and ex-homeland⁹ areas during apartheid; the steep topography of the periphery; the lack of planning for bulk infrastructure; the high cost of providing services to the periphery; the limitation of water-borne sewerage to the urban edge; significant environmental constraints, such as a shortage of water in the city and the steep terrain; and fiscal constraints which have resulted in the city developing a spatially differentiated model of service provision.

The uneven spatial geography of the city (see Figure 1), with its material, physical and social reality, provides the rationale for the innovative and differentiated approach to service delivery in the city. The unequal provision of services across the city has therefore been "rendered technical" and is supported by scientific research (Murray Li, 2007). This discourse of spatially differentiated service delivery is well established in the Municipality and has become institutionalised. It emerges in different sectors and departments within the city and is contained in the latest Integrated Development Plan (2012/2013) and Spatial Development Framework (2012/2013)¹⁰ for the city. It has

5 This data represents the status quo in June 2012.

6 In 2000 under the municipal demarcation process eThekweni Municipality was increased in size by 67% and obtained an additional 75 000 rural households. The city is therefore now divided in to the urban core, the transitional zone along the urban development line and the rural periphery.

7 The Urban Development Line is a line that marks the outer edge of waterborne sewerage provision in the city. It is based on the level of service provision but has now become an important marker in spatial development planning in the city.

8 These interim services are provided to informal settlements which are waiting to be upgraded or relocated to new RDP housing projects.

9 In the case of eThekweni, the homeland of KwaZulu was located immediately adjacent to and on the periphery of the 'white' urban area of Durban.

10 The Municipal Systems Act (No.32) of 2000 (MSA) requires that local government structures prepare Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The IDP serves as a tool for transforming local governments towards facilitation and management of development within their areas of jurisdiction. Integrated Development Plan's guide development over a five year period. The IDP contains the vision and strategic priorities for the Municipality, including specific projects and their associated budgets and it is spatially represented in the Spatial Development Framework.

therefore become embedded in the development of the city.

This paper provides evidence of the strong contextual, technical and spatial rationale which provides justification for differentiated water and sanitation service provision in eThekweni Municipality. Despite EWS's focus on the technical and economic aspects of service delivery, they have also shown themselves to be socially responsive, through their initiation of policies and practices, such as their Free Basic Water system and their programmes for community engagement. EWS has therefore attempted to address social justice concerns through socially responsive actions, while

addressing technical and physical limitations. Research conducted for the Chance2Sustain project illuminates the response of both civil society and the state to this dominant discourse, reflecting on the extent to which it reveals a socially responsible and rights based approach, or a neo-liberal agenda, that increases inequality, with little concern for the poor. The detailed research reveals a complex story, that moves away from the binary of pro-poor and pro-growth, but which contains the multiple relations of committed actors, both within the state and civil society, that are shaping water governance in the city.

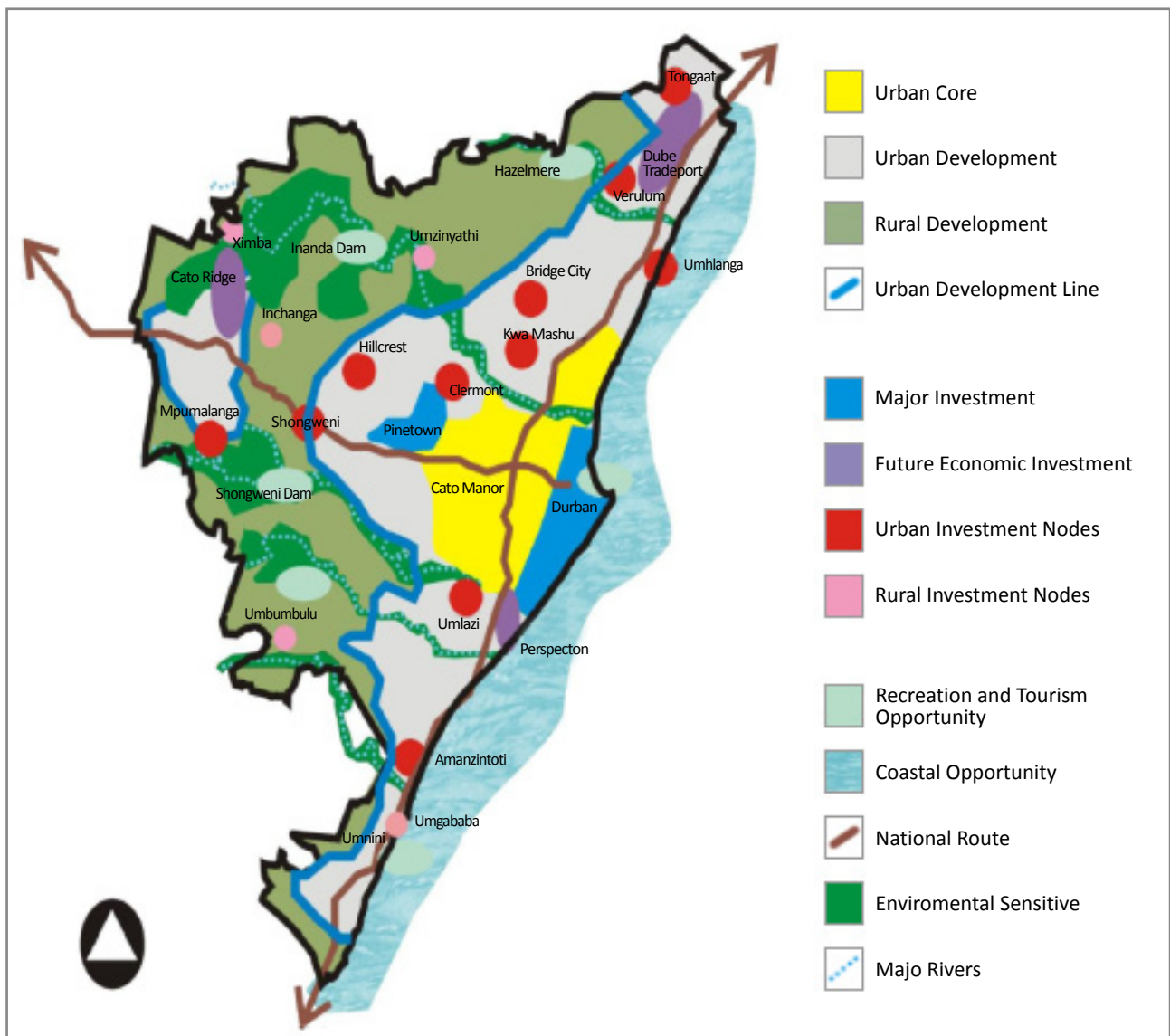


Figure 1: The spatial development concept for eThekweni (eThekweni Municipality, 2012)

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Chance2Sustain examines how governments and citizens in cities with differing patterns of economic growth and socio-spatial inequality make use of participatory (or integrated) spatial knowledge management to direct urban governance towards more sustainable development.

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