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An investigation of the Organisational efficiencies required for the progression of City of Mbombela to a Metropolitan Municipality

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An investigation of the Organisational efficiencies required for the progression of City of Mbombela to a Metropolitan Municipality

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A research project submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I, Skhumbuzo Metiso, Student no: 1255546 declare that this Applied Research Project is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

_____

Signed at Mbombela

On 20 day of November 2023

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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Appendix 2: Cover Letter
Appendix 3: Ethics Clearance

† Including Executive Summary, References, etc.

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the organisational efficiencies necessary for the City of Mbombela to progress from secondary city to a metropolitan municipality. The City of Mbombela was formed in 2016 after the amalgamation of Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities. The City is also the capital of Mpumalanga Province. The study followed a generic qualitative research design. Purposive sampling, in the form of stakeholder sampling, was used in order to identify and select participants interviewed through semi-structured interviews, using an interview guide (see Appendix 1).

The primary data was thematically analysed to interpret the findings. The study found that, with organisational efficiencies, political will and desire for political autonomy and fiscal benefits exclusive to metros, the Metropolitanisation saw significant prospects of success. Being a first metro in the Mpumalanga Province may improve beneficiation from spill-over effects of higher economic growth of neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, and cities in the Gauteng region. However, the study also found that the City of Mbombela faces challenges inherent to local government, such as low revenue collection, technical skills shortage, political infighting, and interference.

The study concluded that, for a viable and sustainable City of Mbombela metro to be realised, a clear tone from the leadership is the starting point; followed by a depoliticised recruitment and procurement processes; followed by an investment drive and capital infrastructure project roll-out to enhance industrialisation; LED and PPP initiatives to promote economic inclusiveness, as well as adherence to performance culture and consequence management to improve institutional capacity.

Keywords: *Metropolitanisation, amalgamation, service delivery, Mbombela*

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Municipalities in South Africa are widely confronted with service delivery challenges, which have resulted in protracted violent protests, mainly for water and sanitation shortages, potholes-ridden roads, and electricity blackouts for local communities. Sadly, these protests have resulted in the vandalisation of property and the loss of life of local community members. In response, amalgamation or consolidation of small and big municipalities into metropolitan ones has recently gained in popularity (Sokopo, Masango, & Mfene, 2021). Metropolitan restructuring that merges cities with the greater area through geographic reorganisation to form one municipality, have been integral to the objective of mitigating socio-spatial apartheid in democratic dispensation (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022). This consolidation is in line with systems theory, which follows the adage that “the whole is better than the sum of its parts” (Nhema, 2015).

Indeed, the act of consolidation started over two centuries ago in the northern hemisphere countries like Austria, Germany, and United States (Leland & Thurmaier, 2005; Martin & Schiff, 2011). Literature suggests that consolidation in the northern hemisphere countries have mostly been successful (Leland & Thurmaier, 2005; Martin & Schiff, 2011).

In the Global South there also success cases, where for example, in 2001, there were only six metropolitan municipalities in the country (see Table 1 on page 15). Ekhurhuleni was a consolidation of a number of small towns and cities to form a much larger Metro. In the year 2011, two aspiring metros, Buffalo City and Mangaung, successfully progressed to the metro category (Mkhize, 2021).

Informed by this, consolidation is seen as a panacea to service delivery challenges inherent in South Africa’s municipal ecosystem. Political leaders, administrators, managers, and technocrats in the Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities in the Ehlanzeni District of the Mpumalanga Province certainly agree. The success of amalgamation into a metropolitan municipality hinges on

the financial, political, socio-economic, and demographics dynamics of the merging municipalities (Mkhize, 2021; & Pieterse, 2021). As a result, this study investigates these dynamics from the perspective of the role players participating in the consolidation, with the aim of transmogrifying the City of Mbombela into a Metropolitan municipality.

1.1 Background

In 2016, the Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities in the Ehlanzeni District of the Mpumalanga Province were amalgamated in line with the Municipal Demarcation Board process (SALGA Weekly Report, 2013). The reason behind this amalgamation was to pair a big (Mbombela) and smaller municipalities (Umjindi), with the view of achieving immediate goals such as:

- optimising financial viability of the resultant municipality;
- improving administrative capacity of the municipality to execute its mandate optimally and effectively; and
- sharing and re-distributing financial and administrative resources

In terms of Section 24 (a) – (d) of the Municipal Demarcation of Boundaries Act No. 27 of 1998, amalgamations are envisaged to realise high level gains by strengthening the objectives of local government institutions in South Africa, by:

- providing democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- ensuring the provision of basic services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- promoting social and economic development;
- promoting a safe and healthy environment; and
- encouraging the inclusion of local communities and community-based organisations in municipal matters.

In the case of Mbombela (the larger municipality) and Umjindi (the smaller municipality), the immediate secondary purpose was the acquisition of a metropolitan status for the new municipality, since the amalgamation leads to enhancement. This new entity would be called the Mbombela Metropolitan Municipality (Mbombela Local Municipality, 2015; SALGA Weekly Report, 2015).

The City is located in the north-eastern part of the country, being the Provincial Capital of the Mpumalanga Province, and the seat of Ehlanzeni District Municipality. The City constitutes a base, linking neigbouring states like Mozambique and eSwatini with the Gauteng City Region (GCR).

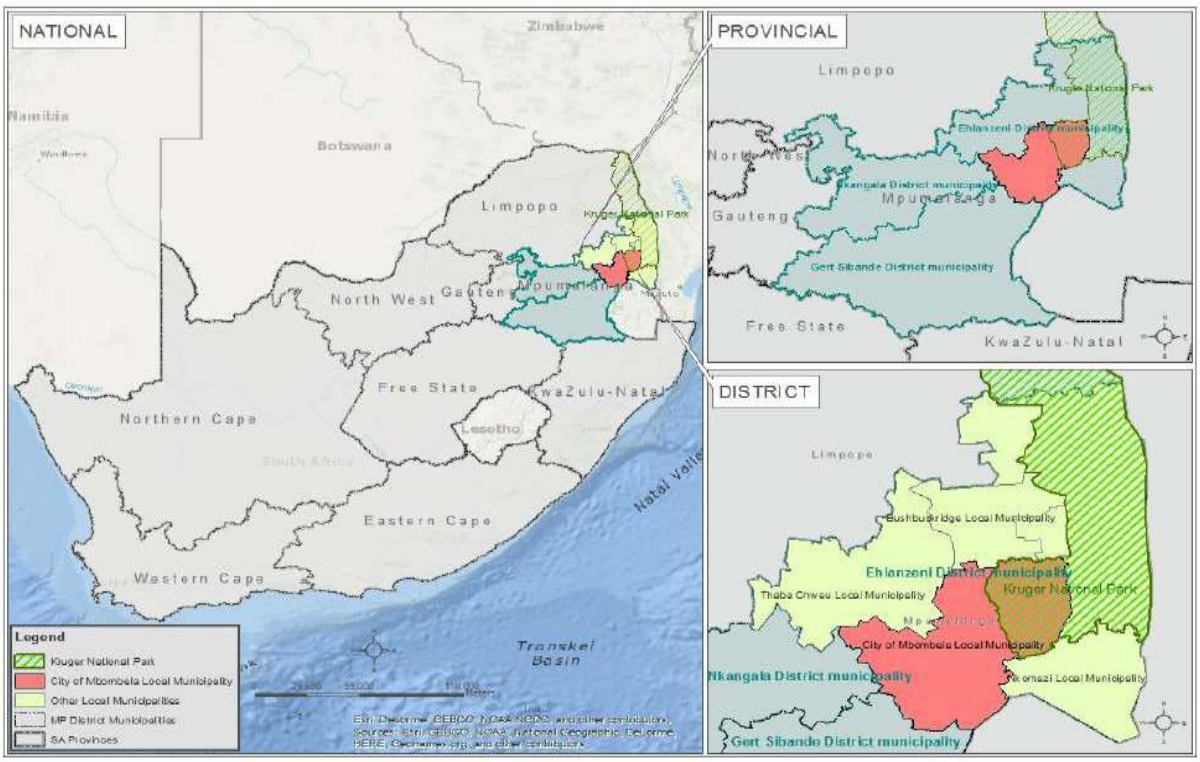

Figure 1: Geographical location: National, Provincial & District context: Source COM GIS, 2021

1.2 Relevance and Context of the study

Small municipalities, like the former Umjindi (Barberton) usually struggle to deliver basic services to their constituencies. Amalgamating a smaller municipality with a bigger municipalities like the Mbombela Local Municipality immediately addressed capacity issues and enhances its service delivery. This primary objective of strengthening smaller municipalities is to encourage the establishment of the newly amalgamated “bigger” municipalities into metros (Sokopo et al., 2021).

Metropolitanisation produces significant service delivery problems, particularly when the duty to coordinate administration across various nodes and conflicting demands growing and diverse metro is given to a dysfunctional municipality (Beall et al., 2015).

Despite the fact that metropolitanisation expands the jurisdiction of service and mandates, proper-managed aspiring metros (sister cities) under Category B system in the country are pursuing metropolitanisation (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022). Metropolitan municipalities are a catalyst for rapid development and urban governance. The City is a provincial capital of the Mpumalanga Province and it is strategically located in the North-east of the republic as part of the major trade corridor called the Maputo corridor. Metropolitan municipalities are generally better positioned to deliver better and quality services due to access to scare-skills and financial resources when compared to smaller and usually less viable municipalities.

The City’s Metro status study (2018) acknowledges the benefits of the progression to the metro category, but falls short on the required organisational efficiencies. The literature is also not conclusive enough about whether a large municipality is a better municipality, whether local government can decisively deal with suffering the consequences of failure by other spheres government (National and Provincial) as well as the overall spatial legacies of apartheid.

This study investigates the demographic, socio-economic, financial, and political dynamics, collectively referred to as organisational efficiencies, of establishing the newly founded City of Mbombela Municipality into a Metro.

1.3. Problem Statement

The applied research project addresses the unresolved question of the following problem statement:

Most secondary cities in South Africa are striving for metropolitanisation, due to exclusive political autonomy as well as financial and technical benefits; even though metropolitanisation is not a wonder-drug to challenges inherent to municipalities such as poor governance, cadre deployment, and bearing the brunt of National and provincial government failure.

Sub-problem 1: to propose Organisational efficiencies centred approach to deal with the administrative implications of Metropolitanisation of the City of Mbombela.

Sub-problem 2: to recommend a better approach of managing and navigating the politics of progressing the City to metro category.

Sub-problem 3: to propose a beneficiation and economic inclusiveness approach from the business and economic prospects that metropolitanisation entails.

Sub-problem 4: to recommend ways to mitigate the setbacks and ramifications from the progressing to metro process.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents the literature reviewed on amalgamation of local municipalities in South Africa, and organisational efficiencies required for the progression of secondary cities to the category of metropolitan.

Broadly speaking, management theories can be divided into two distinct branches, with different schools of thought. These branches are the classical and neo-classical theories of public administration (Nhema, 2015), respectively. Each of these two branches consists of different schools of thought on public administration. The classical perspectives, often referred to as classical organisational theories, were popular in the 19th and 20th century. The classical perspective includes scientific management theory proposed by Frederick Winson Taylor (Taylor, 1911), and the principles of administration theory postulated by Henri Fayol (Fayol, 1949), as well as Max Weber's bureaucratic model (Weber, 1947).

The proponents of classical organisation theories assert that modern public bureaucracies such as municipalities have "proven remarkably stable in various conditions across the world however, they are now increasingly expected to adapt to new and unforeseen circumstance" (Nhema, 2015; p.177). Indeed, classical organisation theories have created guided public administration entities in their evolution up until this point. In contrast, the neo-classical perspective focused on the human aspects of organisations found to be lacking in classical schools of thought (Nhema, 2015; Olum, 2004).

These neo-classical perspectives include, but are not limited to, the behavioural school of thought by Mayo and colleagues, the management science school, management theory comprising of systems theory, contingency theory, chaos theory, and team building (Olum, 2004). A system can be understood as a collection of parts, aggregated to accomplish an overall aim and/or objective (Olum, 2004).

System theory or systems science refers to the interdisciplinary study of systems in which system thinking can be taught (Bevan, 2006). Systems theory is not merely the taxonomic description of the fundamental elements, nor an analysis of the dynamic interplay between the elements, but also focuses on the system as a whole that transcends any and all of its individual elements (Godfrey & Mahoney, 2014). Systems thinking refers to the capacity to perform problem-solving in difficult system (Bevan, 2006).

Systems thinking is a manner of looking at the world in which things are interconnected with one another (Olum, 2004). Systems theory is suited to the context of this study that aim to investigate the organisational efficiencies that can be accrued with the consolidation of two municipalities into a metro municipality. It can be paraphrased that systems theory place emphasis on harnessing synergies, 1 +1 = 3 thinking and approach. A worthwhile metro can be identified when the small municipalities produce more when combined than the sum total of individual municipalities might acheive.

Larger municipalities are able to gain economies of scale and space in providing services and also deriving value for money in administrative overheads, causing less costs per unit as the value of service delivered rises (Sokopo et al., 2021). **Figure 2 below indicates** the budget per municipal category, where it is very clear that the eight metros controls more 50% of the almost half a trillion strong municipal budget, which explains its persistent metropolitanisation ambitions, particularly from secondary cities like the City of Mbombela.

The expansion of this view is that larger municipalities will result in cost reduction, improve productivity, enhance the quantity and quality services, improve operations and technical knowledge and management, enable more optimal promoting with higher spheres of government, and improved financial sustainability (Sokopo et al., 2021).

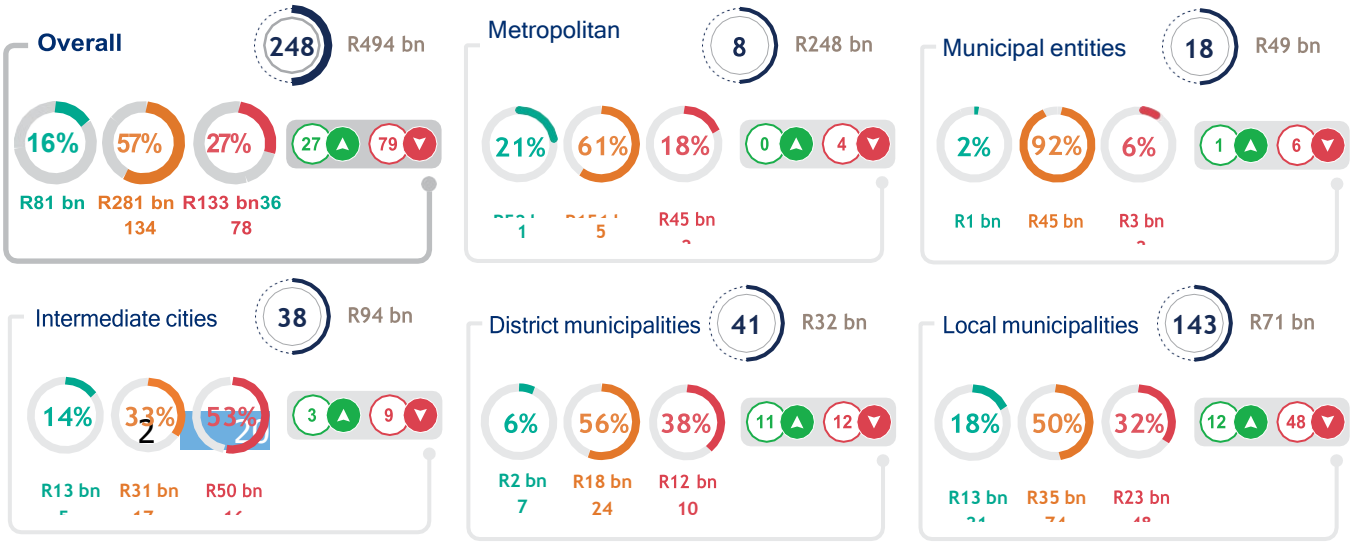

Figure 2 *Budget-Expenditure –per municipal category* Source: AG-MFMA *report 2021*

Sokopo et al. (2021) note regarding the debate about the advantages and disadvantages of large and small municipalities that the proponents of amalgamation have argued in favour of large municipalities. These supporters of merging municipalities argue that 'bigger is better', which leads to the inference that 'bigger is also cheaper'. Hypothetically, this means that bigger translates to improved services, is more efficient, and more recently, that it is more financially viable (Sokopo et al., 2021). On the other hand, the preference for small municipalities perceives small councils to be better equipped to respond to the demands of their citizens and to have transparent accountability structures (Sokopo et al., 2021).

As a result, this study investigates the systems theory that informs the amalgamation of two local municipalities, with the aim of establishing the argument for a bigger metropolitan one that fulfils the requisite organisational efficiencies.

2.2 ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

The State of Local Government Report of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) (2020) holds that only when a municipality can fulfil the objectives of section 152 of the Constitution dependably, within its financial and administrative ability, can it be defined as a functional, well-performing municipality. It is further noted in the report that merging two fragmented or strained municipalities does not necessarily produce a feasible and sustainable municipality.

The responsibility of municipalities is to ensure efficient and impactful distribution of basic and critical services to the public, such as water, electricity, human-settlement, and proper sanitation (Mabizela & Matsiliza, 2020). The impactful delivery of basic services means putting in place plans and programmes that will be executed by a government entity, such as municipality (Sefala, 2009). Service delivery problems across South Africa have become dire, leading to an increase in service delivery protests in several parts of the country (Ngcqoyiya, 2018). Regardless of the size of the municipality, the delivery of services proves to be a challenge in South Africa.

The responsibility of municipalities is to ensure efficient and impactful distribution of basic and critical services to the public, such as water, electricity, human-settlement, and proper sanitation (Mabizela & Matsiliza, 2020). The impactful delivery of basic services means instituting plans and programmes that will be executed in the government sphere, such as a municipality (Sefala, 2009). Service delivery faces dire problems across South Africa, with service delivery protests becoming increasingly common in several parts of the country (Ngcqoyiya, 2018). Regardless of the size of the municipality, the delivery of services prove to be a consistent challenge in South Africa, arguably the scale of the problem in South Africa is difficult to overstated due to historical / Apartheid imbalances compounded by the corruption and the entrenched culture of non-performance.

Currently, most institutions are confronted by an external environment dominated by dynamic international economy, evolving market needs, and extreme domestic and universal competition (Achua & Lussier, 2010). Globally, it is increasingly the case that government institutions enhance their service delivery and justify their impact on wicked problems, while taxpayers will necessarily expect a fair return on the levies that they pay to governments' organs (Sowa, Seldon & Sandfort, 2004). For all organisations (including municipalities), in order to enhance productivity and service delivery, it is necessary to improve their effectiveness. In this regard, (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002; P.267) note that "it is critical improve the efficacy and competence of government administration in order to edge other role players in local government."

Governments are globally confronting exceptional challenges (and opportunities) attendant to the developing knowledge economy and society, and as such, are starting to embrace new management practices, such as knowledge management (KM) from the private sector (Mishi, Mbaleki, & Mushonga, 2022). KM promises to empower municipalities to deliver the best possible services, function effectively, and operate in an atmosphere dominated by transparency and accountability (Mishi et al., 2022)

Risk management in government is influenced by several factors, including adaptation in a complicated and turbulent conditions, dependable risk intelligence and the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate threats and opportunities that may be detrimental to service delivery (Nel, 2019). There are support incentives implemented in line with the strategic, structural and systems elements of institutions in municipalities in South Africa; however, the institutional practice in terms of forming risk consciousness and support still require endorsement on the part of municipalities (Nel, 2019).

The figure below clearly indicates from a total of 79 municipalities, that about 68 (86%) had weak security controls, which means that there is high vulnerability to cyber-risk, due to digital inefficiencies. This paints a generally bleak picture regarding information securities in most municipalities in South Africa.

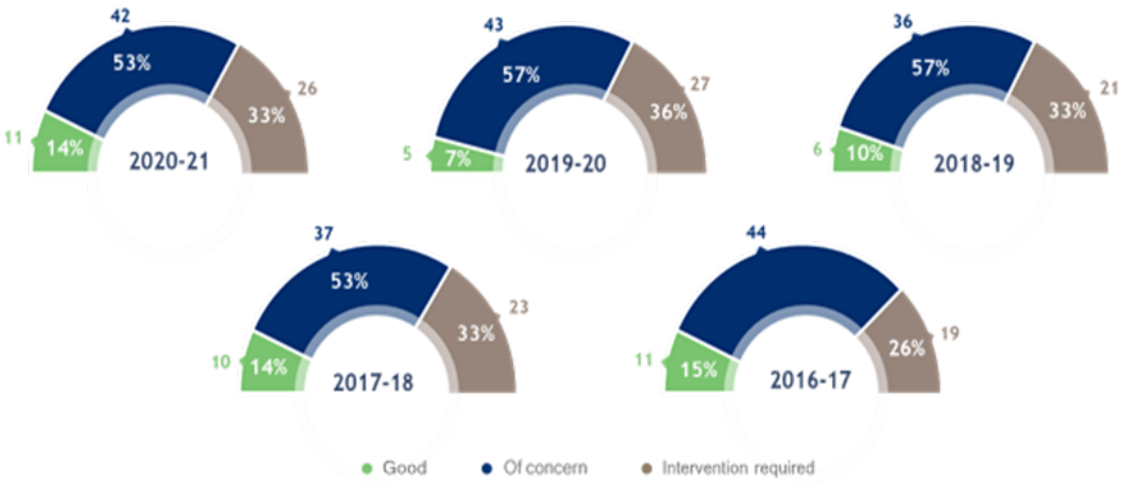

Figure 3 *Status of information security* Source AG- MFMA annual report 2020-2021

The technical, operational and political dynamics of municipal directorates and the impediments to efficient interface among the main stakeholders in developing an efficient ICT ecosystem has activated a desire for smart governance (Ranchod, 2020). The author is also of the view that "smart-governance aims at enhancing urban management via improved data-informed decision-making and the proportionate inclusion and participation of stakeholders in this process."

Facets of municipal performance vital for the optimal, effective, and economic functioning of a municipal entity, its growth and expansion are, among others: public involvement, strategy, leadership, productivity, monitoring and assessment of progress and failures, and the culture of performance management and measurement (Uys & Jessa, 2013). Organisational efficiencies such as smart governance, knowledge and change management, operational efficiencies (digitalisation and innovation), as well as performance management, are critical for the "metropolitanisation'' of secondary cities – *aspiring metros* over and above the common aspects such as good corporate governance, sound financial management, risk management, and internal controls.

2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

According to the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998), South Africa has three categories of municipality, divided as A, B, and C. A metropolitan municipality or Category A municipality executes all the functions of local government for a city or conurbation. Since Category A classifications house major cities in South Africa, metropolitan municipalities have the following key features as a result:

- areas of high population density;
- characterised by an intense movement of people, goods, and services;
- extensive socio-economic development;
- multiple business districts and industrial areas;
- leading to a centre of economic activity with a complex and diverse economy;
- a single area for which integrated development planning is the norm; and
- having strong interdependent social and economic linkages between its constituent units.

The White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (RSA 1998:27) outlines the obligation for municipalities, which is to ensure that they effectively deal with service distribution challenges like infrastructure development, the housing backlog, and many other services that citizens require. The financial position of most municipalities is dire, to the extent that most find themselves right up against the proverbial edge of proper functioning, which is a significant concern (RSA 2021:84-86). Political interference is another major cause of service delivery impediments in municipalities (Mabizela & Matsiliza, 2020).

2.3.2 Overview of the City of Mbombela: District and provincial context

In terms of local government, Mpumalanga Province is subdivided into three (3) district municipalities, which are: Gert Sibande, Nkangala, and Ehlanzeni. Of these three district municipalities, Ehlanzeni houses the City of Mbombela, which is the capital of Mpumalanga Province. Consequently, Ehlanzeni District is the highest contributor to the economy of Mpumalanga Province in terms of secondary and tertiary sectors, such as construction, community services, finance, and transportation (Mbombela Local Municipality, 2015).

The dominance of secondary and tertiary sectors signals a mature economy. In addition, the high volumes of community services suggest a large population. All these factors provide fertile ground for the amalgamation of the Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities, with the secondary aim of progressing into Metropolitan municipality. These demographic, socio-economic, and political dynamics favour the progression of City of Mbombela into a Metropolitan municipality.

This section discusses Table 1, which compares the status of the amalgamation between Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities, to ascertain its potential to become a metropolitan municipality when assessed against existing South African metropolitan municipalities listed in the previous section. Table 1 below clearly shows that the newly amalgamated Mbombela local municipality has similar characteristics to most of the Category A municipalities in South Africa, which include a large population, with secondary and tertiary economic services such as banking, finance, health, and education, as an economic growth node of the province.

Table 1: Comparison of the City of Mbombela with existing South African metropolitan municipalities

NAME OF METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE IN SOUTH AFRICA	SEAT	AREA (KM^2)	POPULATION (2022)	HOUSEHOLDS
Buffalo City	Eastern Cape	East London	2 752,6	975 255	268 438
City of Cape Town	Western Cape	Cape Town	2 440,6	4 772 846	1 452 845
City of Johannesburg	Gauteng	Johannesburg	1 642,6	4 803 262	1 841 917
City of Tshwane	Gauteng	Pretoria	6 297,8	4 040 315	1 322 252
City of Ekurhuleni	Gauteng	Germiston	1 975,7	4 066 691	1 421 003
City of eThekwini	KwaZulu-Natal	Durban	2 555,9	4 239 901	1 122 738

Mangaung Metro	Free State	Bloemfontein	9 886,3	811 431	229 426
Nelson Mandela Bay	Eastern Cape	Gheberha	1 957	1 190 496	307 931
City of Mbombela	Mpumalanga	Nelspruit	5 196	818 925	215 004

Source: Stats SA: Census (2022)

Research Question 1

What are the necessary organisational efficiencies to address administrative implications of metropolitanisation of the City of Mbombela?

2.4 POLITICS OF METROPOLITALISATION

In South Africa, there are strains as well as planning concerns that merging cities with their greater area create (Beall et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there has been minimal discussion of how the practices for consolidating city-regional governance, including geographical reclassification, differ in smaller and sister cities, which cater to 27% of the South African citizenry (SACN, 2021). It is clear that metropolitan municipalities have greater political influence than all the other municipal categories combined. Therefore, understanding how and why leaders in local governments seek metropolitan reforms can explain whether metropolitanisation is a feasible strategy for mitigating urban challenges across urban Africa (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022).

The Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) was created in 1998 as an independent institution to develop a just principles for demarcating municipal boundaries and classifying municipalities. MDB had to select among three means of demarcating municipal boundaries, namely: a functional approach based on service provision; a socio-economic approach based on daily commuting patterns; and an institutional approach based on the administrative and financial capabilities of a municipality (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022).

The demarcation of municipalities based on social and economic factors between interdependent urban-white and rural-black settlements such as employment, spending, and civil and travelling trends to enable integrated planning and the re-allocation of assets and funds (Cameron, 2006). This methodology created a manner of compromise between redressing socio-spatial apartheid and producing administratively viable government structures, which continue to impact municipal governance across all municipal levels (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022). The MBD has regularly been suspected of bowing to political pressure (Mkhize, 2021).

Research Question 2

What is a better approach to navigate the political implications of progressing the City of Mbombela to a metro?

2.5 BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Metropolitan municipalities are independent and strategic economic jurisdictions controlling large capital investment programmes, and together they are responsible for over half of South Africa's GDP, or over 38% of the country's population, and provide employment for 45% of the workforce (**CoGTA** 2020d). According to the AG annual report for 2020-2021 financial year, the total budget for municipalities amounted to R509 billion and the eight Metros were responsible for a budget of R247,48 Billion.

The National Treasury allocates the Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG) to metros due to larger concentration of the urban populace and employment (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022). Contrary to the Municipal infrastructure grants (MIGs) that non-metro municipalities receive, the USDG is not subjected provincial authorisation, which clearly demonstrates its degree of autonomy.

PROVINCE	LED STRATEGY
Eastern Cape	25
Free State	8
Gauteng	10
Kwa Zulu Natal	28
Limpopo	25
Mpumalanga	15
Northern Cape	22
North West	13
Western Cape	22
Total	**168**

Table 2 LED Strategies by province, Source: COGTA State of Local Government Report 2021

the State of Local Government Report (COGTA, 2020), further indicates that economic activities are mainly concentrated in Metropolitan areas, with 56% of GDP and other Secondary Cities with 24% of the GDP. These evolving economic trends create a significant challenge for municipalities, as they are required to adapt to new economic conditions and attempt to strengthen their local economies. The report further notes that even though metropolitan municipalities play a critical role in promoting local economic development (LED) strategies, most Category A municipalities, and have a higher Gini Index, meaning that there is a higher inequality gap in these municipalities, which proves consistent, and is a testament to or microcosm of the higher levels of inequality South Africa.

Research Question 3

How to ensure beneficiation and inclusiveness from the business and economic prospects of metropolitanisation of the City?

2.6 SETBACKS AND RAMIFICATIONS

Metropolitanisation usually involves reclassification of boundaries and as a result municipal workers salaries and councillors increase, yet it creates an array of unintended challenges, such as making other small towns (outside the metro) to be unviable as a stand-alone municipality (Gericke, 2011b). Other ramifications for a new metro included inheriting debt-stricken municipalities and tariffs-increase on municipal services (Gericke, 2011b). Other commentators bemoan the unjustifiable salary increase, without a commensurate or proportional increase in the revenue of the municipality which compound financial distress and non-viability of municipalities.

The above issues are consistent with the COGTA 2021 Report, which likewise notes that merging two fragmented or strained municipalities does not necessarily produce a viable municipality. The former Gauteng premier paraphrased this with the analogy that it is like adding -1 and -1 with the hope of reaching 2, which unfortunately only arrives at an undesirable -2. Political attempts at reforming intergovernmental relations in African cities through metropolitanisation have encountered opposition. Leaders of small municipalities have challenged metro restructurings to prevent ceding their political independence, influence and resources to any newly established metropolitan authority (Gore & Muwanga, 2014).

Other key challenges that often lead to an unintended consequence of instability in the metropolitanisation of municipalities as noted in the COGTA report are: limited planning, change management, costing and provision of resources for the transitioning processes of such amalgamations. In 2021, COGTA indicated that 64 municipalities were dysfunctional. Testament to that was the AG MFMA report (2020-2021), which indicated that such incompetence is embedded in weak governance, poor institutional capacity, inadequate financial management, corruption and political instability. Amalgamating of municipalities (with the intention to become a metro) that harbour such challenges may create even greater crisis of dysfunctional metros.

Research Question 4

How to mitigate set-backs and ramifications of the metropolitanisation?

2.7 CONCLUSION

The literature review has shown that Metropolitan municipalities constitute strategic centres for urban governance and attract huge investments and capital projects, which justifies the appetite for most secondary cities or their so-called “aspiring metros” to contemplate metropolitanisation. The literature review also indicates that, for metropolitanisation to be successful and sustainable, there are organisational efficiencies required, such as smart governance, knowledge and change management, operational efficiencies (digitalisation and innovation), as well as performance management over and above the common aspects such as good corporate governance, sound financial management, risk management, and internal controls. Incoherent amalgamation of municipalities and haphazard geographical restructuring could lead to ramifications such as dysfunctional and fragmented municipalities and compromised service delivery.

CHAPTER 3 - DATA COLLECTIONS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, the data collection and analysis methods and techniques are presented. This begins by presenting the research design adopted, followed by the delineation of the study area, the identification of the research population and the sampling strategy to be used, the data collection instruments to be administered, and the data analysis techniques employed. In addition, the limitations in this study are accounted for. Lastly, the trustworthiness criterion is also presented, together with the ethical issues that were considered in this study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be described as the manner in which a research impression is transmuted into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in exercise by a researcher or research team. Nevertheless, research designs lie beyond just the collection of techniques or procedures to be used in assembling data for a certain study. Instead, the concept comprises decisions about how the research itself is hypothesised, the subsequent behaviour of a particular research venture, and ultimately the type of influence the research is purports to make to the development of understanding in a certain field. Critically, the method of developing a research design pools three largely interlinked and interdependent aspects: the theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations relevant to the particular project as shall be noted later (Romm & Otten, 2018; Given, 2008).

Informed by this background, this study follows a generic qualitative research design, as proposed by Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003), that explores the personal and professional accounts of stakeholders, and uncovers the accounts of the people on the grounds that will be affected by such decisions. Generic qualitative

research is defined as a form of research that is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known [or more established] qualitative methodologies (Caelli et al., 2003). Instead, the grassroots accounts included here were gathered from the staff and councillors, as well as other key stakeholders. In addition, a case study approach was chosen in order to allow the researcher to zoom in and focus on the City of Mbombela as a place of interest in this research.

3.3 STUDY AREA

Mbombela municipality houses the capital city of Mpumalanga Province in the Republic of South Africa. The city of Mbombela, in the Mbombela Municipality, is the economic hub of the Mpumalanga Province (City of Mbombela, Annual Report 2021/2022). Mpumalanga, which means “Place where the sun rises” is one of the nine (9) South African provinces. In terms of geographic area, Mpumalanga Province is the second smallest region in South Africa, only bigger than Gauteng, but it has the fourth (4th) largest economy in the country. It is bordered by Mozambique and Eswatini in the East, and Gauteng Province in the West. The province of Mpumalanga had a population of 5 143 324 people (Stats SA, Census, 2022).

Like most provinces in South Africa, Mpumalanga boosts a youthful population that is plagued by high unemployment, which hamper the prospects the region can draw from its demographic dividend. The natives of the province speak Siswati and isiZulu (South Africa Yearbook, 2020/21b). Mpumalanga Province is well known for its tourist attractions such as the Kruger National Park, which it shares with the province of Limpopo and the country of Mozambique (MERRP, 2022). The province also boosts the Blyde River Canyon, which is a 26-km-long gorge, which, as one of the nature wonders of Africa, is the third-largest canyon in the world (South Africa Yearbook, 2020/21a).

Agriculture remains the largest land user in Mpumalanga Province. Another notable feature of the Province is that it hosts most of the coal-fired power stations that produces the bulk of the electricity for the entire country and the SADC

region. As a result, the Witbank area produces excessive greenhouse gases emissions that causes climate change in the form of global warming. Eco-tourism and agriculture remain economic mainstays of the Province, and these sectors are extremely vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change (MERRP, 2022).



Figure: 4 City of Mbombela Aerial View Source: City of Mbombela GIS, 2021

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population in this study are the employees of the City of Mbombela municipality. The term “employees” includes both political office and non-political office bearers. Political office bearers include the Mayor, the Mayoral Council, and PR and Ward councillors. Non-political office bearers include the City Manager and employees in the various directorates of the Municipality. A non-probability sampling technique was used to select key informants for this study.

Two non-probability sampling techniques, used in combination, are envisaged as follows in this study:

a) Criterion sampling, a type of purposive sample, will be utilised to select employees that fit the criteria predetermined by the researcher (Given, 2008). These predetermined criteria qualify the employees as key informants in this study as they might possess specialised knowledge about the progression of the City of Mbombela into a Metropolitan municipality.
b) Stakeholder Sampling: Mainly suitable in the context of evaluation research and policy exploration, this approach encompasses categorising who the main stakeholders are who are integral in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the platform or service being evaluated, and who might otherwise be influenced by it (Given, 2008).

The transition to a metropolitan municipality has many political, financial, and technical implications. As a result, the researcher envisaged that role players and stakeholders from the various spheres must be interviewed in this study. As a result, a sample size of twenty-five (*n*=25) key informants were drawn for this study from the various departments, such as office of the mayor, office of the City manager, various directorates such as finance, and ward councillors etc.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

An interview schedule or an interview guide (see Appendix 1) was administered through semi-structured interviews (Given, 2008), where “interview guides summarise the content that researchers cover during interviews” (Given, 2008: 2). This content includes questions that the researcher poses to the respondent. In the context of this study, semi-structured interviews were used to administer the interview schedule. The semi-structured interview setting permitted the researcher to ask the respondents questions in a logical and sequential manner, but also allows for instances of probing. Probing involves the researcher identifying an interesting account or answer on the part of the research subject, who then follows it up with more lines of inquiry. Face-to-face interviews were conducted either in person or online via the Microsoft Teams and/or Zoom platforms.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Unlike in quantitative studies that analyse numbers and statistics, qualitative research analyses words, sentences, and their meaning (Salkind, 2010). In this regard, the data analysis guidelines in Saldaña (2021) were followed by manually transcribing the primary data (or field notes) from the semi-structured interviews. In this regard, thematic analysis was considered an appropriate data analysis technique for analysing primary data or field notes obtained from semi-structured interviews in a qualitative research design study (Given, 2008).

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). An inductive approach means that the themes identified are strongly linked to the field notes themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following an inductive approach as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher organised the field notes by means of themes and subthemes. The iterative (or back-and-forth) process of creating these themes and subthemes were repeated up until data saturation was reached. Saturation in primary data analysis involves the collection and analysis of field notes cannot yield any new insights. Once completed, these themes and subthemes were presented narratively in the data presentation sentences and paragraphs through thematic analysis.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the City of Mbombela only, and limit its collection of field notes to a mainly municipal officials and employees, where overall participants were interviewed on personal capacity, which created an open-ended risk. As a result, this limits the transferability of this research study.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN THIS QUALITATIVE STUDY

Guba (1981), cited in Shenton (2004: 73) suggests the four criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research to be: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These important criteria will be addressed as follows:

- Credibility

Credibility in this study was ensured by following the rules of academic research in choosing the appropriate design, selection of data collection and analysis methods, design of the data collection instrument, and following the ethical conventions. In addition, member checking, an important convention of academic research, was used to “check” the findings of this study by the research subjects. Member checking was important in this research because it involved a politically significant process, and powerful stakeholders (Given, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

- Transferability

Transferability was achieved by providing the audience with the background information and/or fieldnotes in order for them to establish the context of this study, and a detailed description of phenomenon under scrutiny so as to allow comparisons to be made (Shenton, 2004).

- Dependability

Shenton (2004: 73) notes that dependability can be assured by providing “in-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated.” Informed by this, the researcher has provided a description of the methodology in previous sections. Moreover, the researcher will provide further details in the Chapter 3, the Research Design and Methodology section of the dissertation.

- Confirmability

The researcher interviewed various participants involved in the process of consolidation in the two (2) municipalities. This will aid the triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias since the researcher is an employee in one of the municipalities. In addition, the researcher's assumptions, bias, and beliefs in favour of the amalgamation/consolidation as reflected in the choice of topic is clearly stated. A section on the 'limitations of this study' clearly recognises the shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects. An in-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research outcomes to be examined is provided in preceding sections (Given, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics considerations are important in social science research dealing with human subjects. As a result, this study will be guided by the following research ethics:

a) Anonymity and confidentiality

The researcher will use the principles of anonymity and confidentiality to ensure that the research subjects are protected, because the topic of this research study is politically significant. As such, the confidentiality and anonymity of the research subject will be guaranteed by using pseudonyms in the collection of the field noted and in the reporting of the results (Given, 2008).

b) Informed consent

The potential research subjects will be given information about the research and asked for their consent to participate in the study. The consent form will clearly state their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of the researcher during the study. The consent form will clearly state that their participation is voluntary and can withdraw their participation at any stage of the research without seeking the approval of the researcher or providing reasons as to why they are doing so (Given, 2008).

c) Protection from harm (or non-maleficence)

Non-maleficence, a basic code of voluminous ethics' programmes, constitutes a responsibility to avoid, prevent, or limit harm to others. In qualitative research, the model also contains harm or injury to feelings, privacy, confidentiality, or reputations of stakeholders (Given, 2008). The Wits Business School Ethics Committee granted approval of this research project, with the condition that stakeholders are guaranteed confidentiality under protocol number: **WBS/BA1255546/333** on 01 February 2023.

All interview responses have been kept confidential. The source of the data is not disclosed in the research report, and any information included in the report does not identify the respondent. Interview transcripts have also not been attached to the report. Informed consent was sought from respondents. The intention of the research project was described to the respondents and their willingness to participate in the interview was confirmed.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

The research design and data collection methods and techniques used to collate the primary data were presented in the previous chapter. This chapter presents the findings from the primary data collected during the field work phase. The following sections present the key ideas that emerged for each of the research questions organised under the different themes.

4.1 ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

This section derives from the question: What is your opinion regarding the organisational efficiencies required for the City of Mbombela to be upgraded to a Metropolitan municipality? Three sub-themes emerged: Smart governance, Knowledge and change management, and Operational efficiency (innovation and digitalisation) as integral to Organisational efficiency. Participants are cited verbatim.

Table 3: Organisational Efficiencies Analysis: Interview Extracts

Theme: Organisational efficiencies		
Respondent	Interview extract	Sub-theme
15	*The leadership and management of the institution should ensure that the vision and the mission of the institution is well communicated and understood by all parties more especially the employees. This will help improve productivity and service delivery.*	**Smart- Governance**
4	*In my opinion, subscribing to researched views and taking cue from personal experience, of essence, would be to value*	

	the connection between resources, people, and processes.	
10	*Political and administrative stability, the city must have stability on both political and administrative level of leadership. For an organisation to succeed under any circumstance, leadership is always paramount to make policy and give strategic direction on how the organisation go forward.*	
5	*Institutional arrangements: to establish coordination and cooperation between diverse participants, such as government, private sector, and civil society organisations, the municipal government needs effective institutional arrangements.*	
7	*A well-defined organisational culture with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure effective distribution of work and clear responsibilities. Due to the complex decision-making process involved at the municipality level because of the existence of multiple stakeholders, a streamlined and clear decision-making process should be defined containing timelines, roles, and responsibilities to ensure an effective and efficient decision-making process.*	
4	*A differentiator of an efficient organisation is the capacity to involve all organisational sections to participate and contribute in making the municipality the best it can be. Eventually, organisational efficiency needs*	**Change & Knowledge Management**

	to be measured, and there are different tools for that.	
15	*Working conditions – the current working conditions are not conducive, and this is one of the contributing factors to low staff morale and lack of commitment.*	
5	*To become a metropolitan municipality, the municipal government must possess the sufficient administrative capacity to handle knowledge and change management and subsequently key issues such as planning, budgeting, and service delivery.*	
4	*The balanced scorecard the usually is preferred one, which measures customer-facing internal organisational performance through learning and improvement and uses financial requirements in order to ascertain a comprehensive view that shows how effectively the municipality is operational.*	
2	*An assessment will have to be made on the additional responsibilities implied by becoming a metro and the current organisational structure, operational capacity, and current efficiencies. I do not know how well they are performing currently but will assume that in most cases they will be able to ramp up capacity and attract expertise for the new functions.*	**Operational Efficiency**
4	*Continuous Improvement will be crucial, to achieve organisational effectiveness, City of*	

	Mbombela must demonstrate a willingness to continuously improve its processes. This will require feedback techniques, internal and external communication channels, and that suggestions for improvement are taken seriously.	
10	*The City must create a conducive environment which will retain and attract scares skills which is critical for achieving operational efficiencies in any organisation.*	
11	*The Municipality is not prepared for the Category A municipality and is ineffective at using its own resource (i.e. spending in line with the annual budget, available skills internal and human resources) to achieve its municipal goals.*	
4	*It would be important for management to identify which of the process chains are supportive and which ones are core processes. In addition, each department will have their own set of core processes that define their ultimate purpose and contribution to the whole of the municipality. Assimilating this process information will help to ensure that there is alignment between departments and that each department executes effectively as a cog in the whole of the Municipality.*	

4.1.1. Smart Governance

Respondents indicated that smart-governance is an important aspect in urban digital transformation processes. Smart-governance seeks to improve urban management, based on enhanced ICT-based pronouncements and the respective involvement of stakeholders in this process.

For organisational efficiencies to be meaningful, smart governance constitutes a cornerstone in this digital era of 4IR. Many respondents emphasised the complicated impediments that hinder the optimal instilling of innovation practices in the City of Mbombela at technical, institutional, and political levels of the municipal administration, and the impediments to effective interrelation among influential stakeholders in developing an efficient ICT ecosystem at a municipal level.

The concept of a ‘smart city’ also received mention from the respondents and emphasised that for City of Mbombela to be upgraded to a Metropolitan municipality, governance will have to improve to a ‘smart’ level to set a clear tone to the other levels and structures of the municipality. It further emerged that for the City of Mbombela to transform and evolve from the elements of apartheid city (due to historical reasons), smart governance is the most important pillar for such a turnaround plan, beginning with the social formation of settler-colonial and segregation or racial zoning particular the marginalisation of black Africans.

Modern programmes to promote social cohesion, such as human settlement and reconciliations initiatives, are better delivered and managed through smart-governance programmes such as Section 79 committees and MPAC that hold executive accountable and ensure value for money and enhanced service delivery, which overall contribute to the organisational efficiency of the City. Most respondents also disclosed that smart governance constitutes an important tool to enhance internal controls and to enforce accountability and to change the culture of non-performance and non-compliance with legislation and laws that are

inherent to local government and which improve audit outcomes and the overall outlook of the City.

4.1.2 Knowledge and change management

The concepts of knowledge (KM) and change management (CM) emerged strongly from the respondents as critical and necessary to enhance service delivery in the City. Respondents indicated that knowledge and change management can enable the municipality to deliver quality services, function efficiently in an atmosphere characterised by transparency and accountability. Respondents expanded to say the successful implementation of KM initiatives is a required long-term commitment and dedication from all organisational structures to avoid functional silos and fragmentation.

Knowledge management enablers such as organisational culture, information communication and technology (ICT), where organisational strategy and leadership must be developed and implemented in order to achieve organisational efficiencies and effectiveness.

Likewise, when it comes to change management, the respondents indicated CM is important and relevant in the municipal structure and transitional process to ensure continuity and to avoid service delivery disruptions and regression. It was further indicated that change management seeks to guarantee that key participants are aware about the change occurring and the use of different strategies to manage any risks and impediments to the required change.

In this rapid and highly digitalised era, efficient organisation ought to be able to better manage change and knowledge as ever-present elements and are critical to the very survival of the organisation. Change management cannot be attained without knowledge; put differently, better change management depends on proper knowledge management.

4.1.3 Operational Efficiency

Some respondents replied that operational efficiency is critical to organisational efficiency of the City, by integrating core organisational functions to enhance behavioural changes, and the transformation agenda, where the behaviours of individuals and groups within the organisation must be transformed to realise the impact of organisational change and development. Other respondents had a view that the objective of operational efficiency is optimising individual and collective efforts to fulfil organisational goals i.e., service delivery to the community.

A systematic approach needs to be employed by the municipality to ensure both politicians and administrators are effectively utilised to fulfil their functions through among others the use of organisational development (OD) to enhance the efficiency of council oversight and administrator's productivity. It also emerged that operational efficiency focuses on modifying processes and structures of the municipality in a systematic, logical, and methodological manner, so as to deliver services both productively and efficient.

4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF PROGRESSING THE CITY OF MBOMBELA TO A METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

The following question is posed in this section: What are the administrative implications of upgrading the City of Mbombela to a Metropolitan municipality? Two sub-themes emerged, namely streamlining of organisational structure and reconfiguration of the District.

Table 4: Administrative Implications: Interview extracts

Theme: Administrative Implications		
Respondent	Interview extract	Sub-theme
2	*Will have to ramp up its staff complement, and skills sets on the functions it now has to perform fully. It will have to consider more satellite offices and depots, and especially review its governance structures to accommodate the different areas and also it supply-chain mechanisms.*	**Streamlining organisational structure**
11	*Organogram and operations may need a complete overhaul and with more regions created and so on and both positive and negative consequences may arise as a result.*	
4	*Central to a functional efficient and effective system, is a delegation regime that expedites operational decision-making.*	
8	*The City will have an Executive Committee as opposed to a Mayoral Committee.*	

	Checks and balances on the administration will be increased meaning there is likely going to be a sharp rise of political interest and control of administration processes.	
5	*The City of Mbombela would likely undergo a change in its governance structure, with the possibility of a larger and more complex administrative system.*	
13	*The municipality will need to be redesigned. Other functions such as Public Transport among others will need to be executed by the municipality.*	**Reconfiguration of the district**
7	*Admin complexity: Metros are larger and more complex than small municipalities. Thus, managing and coordinating services across large geographic areas can be difficult and require significant investment in infrastructure, personnel, and technology.*	
14	*The city will have a new administration structure which will include additional departments due to the added service delivery functions*	
8	*Checks and balances on the administration will be increased meaning there is likely going to be a sharp rise of political interest and control of administration processes.*	

4.2.1 Streamlining Organisational Structure

Most respondents indicated that the municipal council and administration must achieve or reach the required developmental state, through, as authorised by the Municipal Structures Act of 2000, as well as the Municipal Systems Act of 1998 and local governments, planning, management and leadership, enhance service delivery, value for money, efficiency, accountability and democracy. Development of a new organisational structure and alignment of the required staff complement and creation of new department is a necessity over and merging of departments and also disbanding some old departments and proper placement of existing staff.

Some respondents further replied there is a serious challenges of the interface in South African municipalities between politicians and officials, through so-called political interference. Undue political interference in administrative issues create an unconducive climate for municipality; and the City of Mbombela is no exception. The conflation of legislative and executive authority is critical, but not always straightforward, and the dichotomy is sometimes elusive and delicate.

Importantly, it also emerged that the leadership (political and administrative) of municipality ought to maintain mutual relations for the better functioning of City and service delivery enhancement, where if it does not, the City will experience change in its governance structures and have to manage a much larger and more complex administratively and proper separation of powers. The implementation of a performance management system (PMS) was also flagged as other important tool to enhancing organisational efficiency in the administrative context of the City.

4.2.2 Reconfiguration of the District

Respondents conceded that, although municipalities pursue metropolitan restructurings for different technical-administrative and political purposes, which entail reforms for restructuring of borders, the grading of municipal categories and the creation of one metropolitan government, service delivery is not always improved. If the City of Mbombela is classified as a Category A municipality, by implication Ehlanzeni District Municipality will be reconfigured to exclude the City from its jurisdiction, where the City will have to execute all local government functions.

Resistance from the District municipality will be encountered, due to the negative impact of metropolitanisation, which technically means less resources, jurisdiction, and budget. On the other hand and positively, the remaining fewer local municipalities may get more support and resources from the District. It was also indicated that if the Metropolitanisation is not done properly, which may result in an unfair dismantling of the District municipality without necessary improving efficiency and effectiveness. Some respondents also indicated that Metropolitanisation of the City of Mbombela has a potential to change the administrative and economic landscape of the District and to some extent the Province by spurring growth and investment attraction. The provincial administration may have minor impact of the metropolitanisation particular on areas like land use planning, housing, transport and healthcare.

The figure below indicate the current landscape of Ehlanzeni District Municipality, which will have to be reconfigured as a result of metropolitanisation of the City of Mbombela. Metros are independent large municipalities (Category A) does not belong to district municipalities (Category B), leading the unavoidable reconfiguration and reclassification of the District.

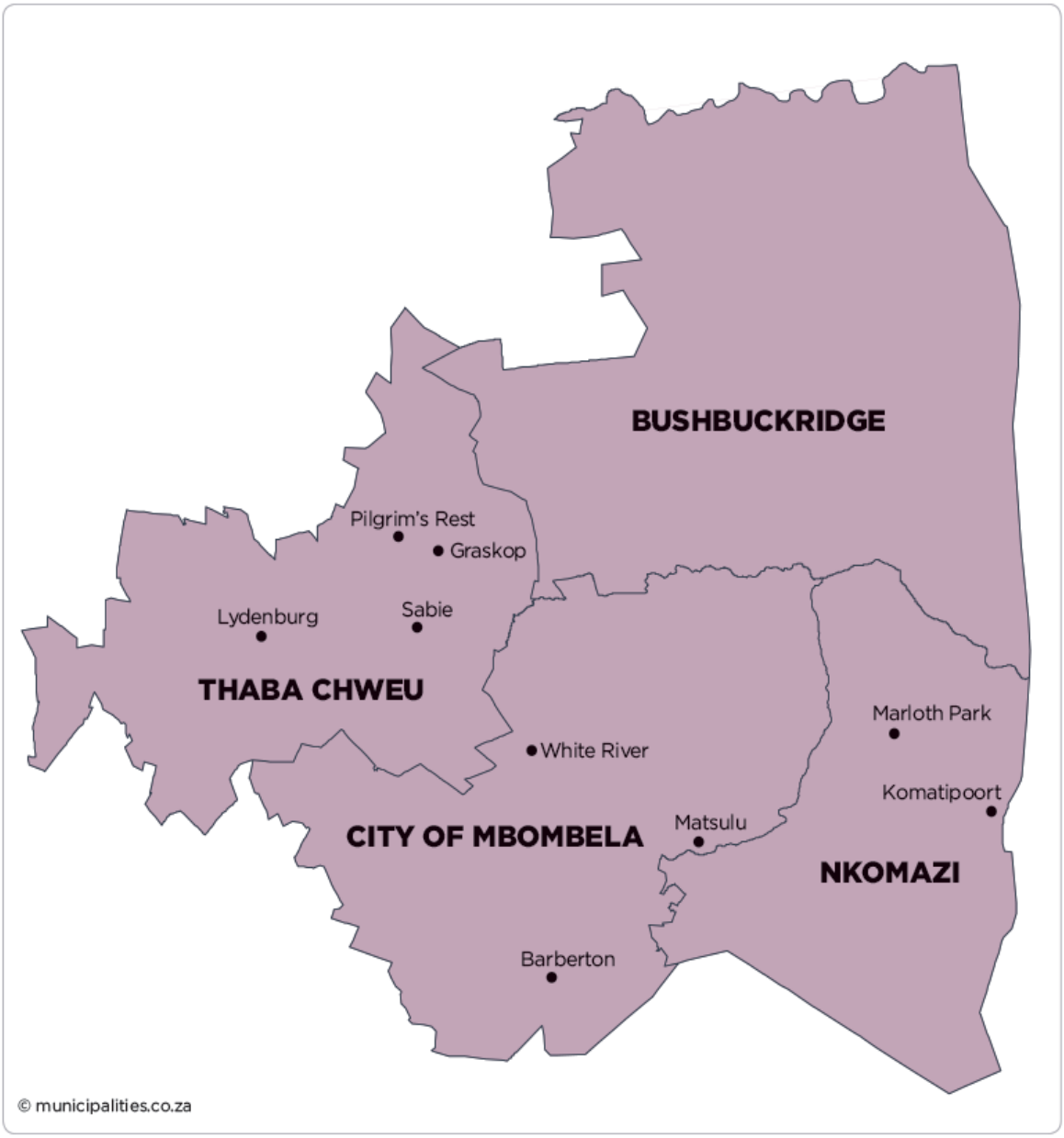

Figure 5: *Ehlanzeni District Map* source: EDM GIS (2022)

The restructuring of the District may create resistance to the metropolitanisation in particular from the current office bearers of the District due to the fact that they may be substantial budget cuts and little political influence.

4.3 POLITICS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF PROGRESSING THE CITY OF MBOMBELA TO A METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

Here, the researcher posed the question: What are the politics involved in the process of establishing the City of Mbombela as a metropolitan municipality? Two sub-themes emerged, namely: socio-economic impact, and demarcation dynamics.

Table 5: Politics of Metropolitanisation: Interview Extracts

Theme: Politics of Metropolitanisation		
Respondent	Interview extract	Sub-theme
5	*While it may be worth considering, urbanisation should not be a priority for the City at the moment, given the number of communities that are living below the poverty line.*	**Socio-Economic impact**
3	*The City is predominately rural, people residing in the townships and rural villages are the consumers of the municipal services, yet they are not contributing to the fiscals of the municipality*	
7	*Political power dynamics: Establishing it requires consolidation of power and resources across multiple jurisdictions, which can create political tensions and competition among officials and political parties.*	

5	*I think a City's transformation into a Metropolitan should occur naturally, rather than being artificially engineered, as this could widen the existing social, infrastructural, and developmental divide between communities within and surrounding the city,*	
14	*The current population density of the city requires it to be merged with other municipalities to be able to receive a metropolitan status and this process will require political will in all political parties involved as well as the demarcation board.*	
16	*The demarcation is also a political process because all political parties must be engaged so the demarcation process is not favoring addressing interests of only one political party.*	**Demarcation Dynamics**
11	*Demarcation and rearrangement of the municipal borders and departments within the Municipality, such as establishing police department and reconfiguration of the District Municipality.*	
3	*The establishment of the Metropolitan Municipality will dictate that a political structure of Ehlanzeni Municipality will cease to exist. In essence, this implies that the processes might be sabotaged, and political inspiration might develop.*	

4.3.1 Socio-Economic Impact

Most respondents indicated that metropolitan municipalities has higher population, where the City of Mbombela will be no exception, meaning that a significant concentration of people and economic activities will increase, mostly from neighbouring countries like Mozambique and Eswatini, as well as from neighbouring small towns and rural areas. Organisational efficiencies will be critical in balancing the population growth and the required economic growth to avoid incremental unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Some respondents raised the fact that the challenge of growing unemployment particularly due to fast-growing and young population, exacerbates poverty and creates more indigents or the inability pay for municipal services and subsequently worsens other wicked problems like crime and corruption. It also emerged from the respondents that for the City of Mbombela to redress the imbalances of the past through inclusive economy and advancement of pro-poor agenda, stable and sustained economic growth is very critical and to also promote social cohesion the economy should benefit all or at least be seen to be accommodating all community members at a fairly proportional manner. The higher population growth compounded by high in-migration and inefficiencies in the City without infrastructure roll-out and Investment in LED and industrialisation, may create unwanted conditions like xenophobia and tribalism.

Basically the City of Mbombela as a new metro and modern city will have to take the smart-city route, characterised Innovation and digitalisation initiatives to optimise deployment of available resources and to position the City as the best place to live, work, and play. The opposite is also true, where if there no efficiencies in the organisational structures (both political and administrative), service delivery may be compromised and the socio-economic challenges will spread far and wide.

4.3.2 Demarcation Dynamics

Most respondents were firm on the view that even though the Municipal Demarcation Board (MBD) is entrusted with the legislative mandate to determinations and re-determinations of municipal boundaries and borders, there has been a fallout in certain decisions, with criticism being levelled against the board for succumbing to political pressure. It has been said from time to time that the ruling African National Congress (ANC) manipulates the MDB to befit its political aspirations through the merger and de-merger of certain municipalities and the City of Mbombela is subjected to the same politics of demarcation.

It also emerged that the communities in particular the former Umjindi local municipality (Barberton) has opposed the MBD decision to amalgamate with Mbombela local Municipality expressed dissent by protesting under the *buya – Mjindi* campaign. Proper public participation and consultation is critical to get buy in and support from relevant stakeholders and to avoid challenges associated with demarcations. Some respondents raised the point that the demarcation process should be free of political interference but be based on financial viability and enhancement of service delivery and efficiency.

Other respondents conceded that local government matters by its very nature are political and the environment is political, therefore, such decision will be informed by politics one way or another. Politicians were more worried about their terrain as opposed to beneficiation of the merger, where concentration was placed more on the on demographic spread and formation of wards, and ‘politics of the stomach’. On the other hand, politicians were driven by higher office bearers’ allowances, which underpinned the possibilities of having more political constituencies. Factional interest had a huge influence on the process of condition the suggested merger.

4.4 BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PROGRESSING MBOMBELA TO A METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

This section attempts to answer the question: What are the business and economic benefits of establishing the City of Mbombela as a Metropolitan Municipality? Three sub-themes emerged: Investment and Capital Attraction, Local Economic Development (LED) and Specialised Skills Attraction

Table 6: Business & Economic benefits of Metropolitanisation: Interview Extracts

Theme: Business and Economic benefits of Metropolitanisation		
Respondent	Interview extract	Sub-theme
4	*Improved ability to access borrowing markets: - whilst the liquidity ratio has not enabled the municipality to access private borrowing market, it has over the years been able to access the public borrowing market in particular from Development Bank of Southern Africa. (DBSA)*	**Investment and Capital Attraction**
7	*Fiscal challenges: Metros can require significant investment in infrastructure and services, which can strain the local budget and result in higher municipal taxes for residents.*	
11	*Depending on the pace or rate of industrialisation and good governance, the City's revenue may grow rapidly.*	

8	*The City will have to rapidly construct the necessary networking of either roads of areas of business in and outside the City parameters laying within its jurisdiction.*	
14	*There will not be financial consequences for the city, instead more equitable share will be allocated by National Treasury in line with government regulations on budget allocations per municipal category.*	
2	*Possible attraction of more industries and economic activities and additional employment creation.*	**LED**
4	*The metro municipality will aspire to build strong public private partnership for the implementation of local economic development initiatives as well as socio-economic infrastructure development programmers.*	
3	*Positive -The per capita income of individual household might improve due to job opportunities opened implementing LED strategies.*	
10	*More revenue in the form of additional grants such as rapid public transport and metro police establishment on the other hand more employee costs due to employing specialists who are paid above ordinary employees.*	

14	*The City will be able to realize economic growth which will further lead to improved service delivery.*	
10	*If properly implemented with strong corporate governance and internal controls, service delivery will be enhanced and the City will have access to more specialised skills in the labour market.*	**Specialised Skills Attraction**
15	*There will be adequate human resources and service delivery will move with speed and the budget and grant allocation will have a positive impact on service delivery.*	
11	*"Organogram and operations may need a complete overhaul and with more regions created and so on and both positive and negative consequences may arise as a result.*	
3	*The same strategy with be able to generate employment and skills transfer to upcoming entrepreneurs' especially young people.*	
12	*Uncertainty regarding employment prospects for employees. Many employees will be uncertain about their employment status, not knowing what the future hold for them due to the de-establishment of the local municipality.*	

4.4.1 Investment and Capital Attraction

Most respondents indicated that metropolitan municipalities are the hub of the country's economic activities. They noted that the City of Mbombela by joining the 'elite' category of metros will by implication attract significant investment and capital inflow provided that a conducive environment for investment in infrastructure development and other related sectors such as services and ease of doing business. Put differently, the City will benefit from metropolitanisation on condition that support systems that makes business friendly environment and the strategies to reduce red-tape are in place. It is clear that effective governance structures and institutional mechanisms, such as investor incentives and advisory units, will be integral in enhancing organisational efficiencies to position the city as an investment destination and a regional hub for the South-East Africa. The Maputo corridor, gas extraction from Mozambique and Umsebe Accord were cited as classical example of initiatives that vastly benefits the City and could be enhanced by the metropolitanisation of the City.

Capital investment in the municipal infrastructure and mega projects, inclusive planning, strategic partnership with key stakeholders like MEGA and Provincial government, as well as attraction and retention of specialised scarce skills are cited as imperative to deal with inefficiencies, such as red-tape or unease of doing business, fraud and corruption in order make meaningfully investments attraction and subsequently minimise the wicked problems of unemployment poverty and inequality that are persistent in the South African economy. Amongst the eight (8) metro accounts for more than half of the South African (GDP), which makes them a clear investment and capital choice, the City of Mbombela will certainly be no exception however, it is also worth mentioning that other large Municipalities like Emfuleni (Vanderbijlpark) and Mangaung metro are currently experiencing divestitures due to collapse of governance and organisational efficiencies and the City will also be no exception either. Everything ultimately depends in leadership, governance, and organisational efficiencies.

4.4.2 Local Economic Development (LED)

A majority of the respondents replied that a cross-cutting inclusionary process involves the private and public sector within the City. This means that the LED strategy of the municipality ought to ensure that no sector of society is alienated in the economy of the City. It also raises that the City, through LED initiatives, ought to enhance social and inclusive economic growth to benefit the community at large and by implication promote social cohesion. What is apparent is that without sound LED strategy development and implementation, most people particularly the poor, will remain marginalised, which further entrenches inequality in one of the already unequal society in the world.

Other respondents indicated that, even though metropolitanisation brings higher economic prospects, over and above, there is still a need for area-specific and partnership-based programmes and projects, such as sub-contracting, joint-venture agreements for local micro-medium enterprises, with multinationals companies and overall conducive local business environment ought to be enforced through LED initiatives so as to ensure that metropolitanisation does not only benefit the elite and the connected, but that it is an inclusive process that will uplift the local community out of poverty.

What becomes clear is that the City must design and roll-out LED programmes that are consistent with the National Development Plan (NDP) as a development framework of the country as well as the IDP of the City to ensure that the developmental state and goals are realised. Other identified drivers of a successful LED included specialised skills attraction and retention, Integrated planning across all levels of the City, knowledge of local market and resources strategic partnerships among stakeholders and needless to say all of the identified factors may not yield the desired outcomes with credible and efficient leadership at the helm of the City.

4.4.3 Specialised Skills Attraction

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the municipal environment is characterised by a high vacancy rate for key and specialised positions appointment of incompetent officials (pejoratively referred to as ‘cadre deployment’) and the City of Mbombela must put systems in place to address this challenge. It also emerged that for the City to duly perform all municipal functions optimally and to deal with capacity constraints, institutional efficiencies including competent personnel and specialists are critical. Some respondents went further to say the metropolitanisation opens a window of opportunity for the City of Mbombela to have the capacity to attract and retain specialised and professional skills such as chartered accountants, engineers, planners and so on, which would ordinarily be impractical for small municipalities with limited resources.

It also emerged from respondents that specialised and strategic skills comes at a price, meaning the salary bill of the City will increase in order to attract and retains specialists, where without proportional increase in revenue and cost-saving from consultants, the overall financial state of the City may become distressed. Governance efficiency is a pillar of ensuring institutional effectiveness in the City, and with the required staff complement and skills, it is possible to improve systems and enforce controls and by-laws. The opposite is also true, where, without a competent workforce and institutional efficiencies it will be difficult to fulfil the municipal mandate optimally, where subsequently service delivery may be compromised to complete collapse.

4.5 SETBACKS AND RAMIFICATIONS OF PROGRESSING THE CITY OF MBOMBELA TO A METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

A question posed in this section is: What are the setbacks and ramifications of establishing the City of Mbombela as a Metropolitan Municipality? Two sub-themes emerged: Incoherent amalgamation and mergers, dysfunctional metros, and de-mergers.

Table 7: Setbacks & Ramifications Metro: interview Extracts

Theme: Setbacks and Ramifications		
Respondent	Interview extract	Sub-theme
5	*The City may face challenges in managing the increased demand for services, budgeting, and planning.*	**Incoherent Amalgamations & Mergers**
1	*This will have added functions, which will be a burden to the City. Will worsen the situation, meaning the City will be expected to generate more revenue and fund most of its services.*	
2	*One consequence may be a further strengthening of the political divide between the City and the District.*	
15	*The organisational structure layers/hierarchy will become too long, Information dissemination will be negatively impacted, red-tape may develop, salary bill may increase heavily, and mismanagement of funds may arise.*	

12	*The decline in allocation for equitable share raised nationally that a local municipality is entitled to.*	
4	*Amongst plethora of setbacks that can be cited, a possible high cost living especially for those moving to the City.*	**Dysfunctional Metros and De-mergers**
3	*In essence, a large administration does not unfortunately translate to better service delivery will be improved. Political infighting will always derail service delivery.*	
11	*Among the primary causes of the inadequate achievement of local government objectives, which leads to subpar financial management, is frequently cited as the absence of skills, including both terms of ability and expertise in municipalities.*	
9	*The Municipality will be big and complex to run and may be difficult to manage.*	
7	*Establishing a metro will require significant changes in existing administrative structures and governance systems, which can be met with resistance from officials and residents, making it difficult to implement reforms and changes.*	

4.5.1 Incoherent Amalgamation and Mergers

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the main ramification from Metropolitanisation of the City of Mbombela may arise from the process of amalgamation with other small municipality (e.g. Umjindi), which may not be done credible or done in a coherent manner, where instead it may influence by political pressures and mandates. The situation is compounded by the turbulent environment created by coalition governments, which further makes the already instable local government sector even more hostile and political.

Simply put, merger and amalgamation may not result in the envisaged results due to haphazard process followed and weakness of key stakeholders like MDB, which overall may not yield a stable and viable municipality. Another issue that emerged from some respondents was the resistance from the District Municipality (Ehlanzeni), which by implication will be weakened by the metropolitanisation and would be reconfigured to smaller municipalities if not absorbed by the Metro.

What becomes clear is that amalgamating for political purposes without clear synergy benefits and enhancement of service delivery may breed more financially distressed and incoherent metros characterised by financial mismanagement, and poor or weak governance, accompanied by a lack accountability. Subsequent calls for de-merger and reversal of amalgamation will follow which may further create a hostile and unstable scenario for the already precarious local government sector, where it is therefore critical that the process of amalgamating and merger of municipalities ought to be beyond reproach, so as to avoid creating dysfunctional metros like Mangaung. Financially sound amalgamation like Ekurhuleni presents a good example of merging towns and small cities to create better metros or conurbations with clear synergy benefits.

4.5.2 Dysfunctional Metros and De-mergers

Respondents in their numbers indicated that (as a build up from the previous theme) incoherent mergers and amalgamations can only lead to dysfunctional metros due to the fact that large area of jurisdiction creates competition for resources and without the proportional and commensurate benefits arising from the merger, organisational efficiencies such as good corporate governance and sound financial management, service delivery will certainly be compromised in the short-term, and lead to complete collapse in the long-term.

It also emerged from respondents that mergers and amalgamations should be duly justified, with evidence of proportionate cost-savings and improvement in service delivery and revenue generation-collection subsequent to amalgamation and metropolitanisation, in order to avoid the ramification of creating dysfunctional metros that are prone to financial mismanagement and maladministration, and weak governance and oversight and overreliance on grants. Some respondents were firm on the point that the amalgamating municipalities ought to be thoroughly assessed individually to get a clear picture of the ability of the new entity. Put differently, the merging municipalities should be assessed in terms of viability and sustainability in order to gain a clear picture of whether amalgamation improves rather than detract from the situation in which these municipalities find themselves.

It is therefore imperative that key stakeholders like MDB, COGTA, National Treasury as well as amalgamating municipalities strive for a justified and credible amalgamation and mergers of municipalities, which will respond better to service delivery needs of the community, instead of succumbing to political pressure and narrow and selfish reasons from other stakeholders such as unions, who advocate for metropolitanisation for salary increase and completely disregard the financial health implications and sustainability of the new entity and its ability to fulfil its mandate of rendering municipal services.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The interview findings emphasise that any metropolitanisation of a secondary city, there so-called aspiring – metros should be done on condition that the necessary organisational efficiencies for a viable and sustainable metro exists or at least probable. Clear synergies and economics of scale should be identified by stakeholders free from narrow political interest so as to ensure enhancement of service delivery post metropolitanisation. The households decline divestitures in other metros like Mangaung and Nelson Mandela Bay is a clear indication that metropolitanisation is not a silver bullet, consistent political will and leadership is critical to ensure sustainability.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the findings and offered an account of the responses to the questions posed to the respondents by the researcher. In this chapter, the researcher paraphrases the findings from the primary data presented in the previous chapter. The discussion in this chapter will be informed by the answers from the respondents that are organised under the important themes derived from the research questions. In addition, the discussion will be supported by the complementary and/or contradictory scientific literature on the matter of the amalgamation and metropolitanisation of municipalities across the world.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

5.2.1 Organizational efficiencies

The findings indicated that the City of Mbombela is unable to deliver services to its civil and corporate citizens efficiently and effectively. The inefficiencies are attributed to the operational incapacity, lack of smart governance, insufficient funds due to poor revenue collection, and an overreliance on government grants. Consistent with what the literature review indicated, namely that service delivery problems in South Africa have become dire characterised by the increase in service delivery protests.

A thorough assessment must be conducted with the aim to improve organisational efficiency and capacity and to improve change and knowledge management in order to effectively absorb the added responsibilities of the population growth, which might lead to squalor conditions; to increased economic activity that creates employment; development of infrastructure such as transportation networks, water and sanitation services, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions; and administrative and fiscal capacity such as revenue collection consistent with Sandfort’s view that there is an increase in demand for

public sector organisation to improve performance and efficiencies to solve complex social problems.

The interviews also revealed that operational efficiencies characterised by innovation and digitalisation constitutes a basic aspect of this 4IR age consistent with the literature (Ranhcod), namely that smart governance can enhance data-informed decision-making in order to execute municipal services optimally and productively. In addition, the organisational culture of ill-discipline among political officials and staff members is brought up as a challenge to the efficient and effective running of the municipality. Compliance helps to set regulations, proper planning, timeous reporting, and effective monitoring and evaluation, and consequence management.

The progression of the City of Mbombela to a metropolitan municipality presents a golden opportunity for the Mpumalanga Province, and for this reason, it may even open a room for other secondary cities in the province such as Emalahleni (Witbank) and Govan Mbeki (Secunda) to follow suite. An emphasis on organisational efficiencies proves critical, as findings from the interview indicates smart governance, operational efficiencies as well as knowledge and change management are imperative, which is consistent with the view by Achua and Lussier that “rapid technological changes and global dynamics creates a need for continuous and consist improvement in particular for a metropolitan municipality or an aspiring metro like the City of Mbombela.’’

5.2.2 Administrative Implications

It was clear from the findings that there should be a complete overhaul and streamlining of administrative structures to render all municipal functions in line with the requirements of the policy on local government (White Paper;1998) and the Municipal structures act of 1998 by:

- merging and disbanding of existing departments and the creation of new organisational structure; and
- creating regions or service centres to improve footprint and accessibility.

Some respondents further indicated that there will be a need to rationalise the work distribution to avoid adverse effects on administrative functions, otherwise, the City of Mbombela would likely undergo a change in its governance structure, with the possibility of a larger and more complex administrative system, which is consistent with the literature review by Subramanyam and Marais (2022) on whether Metropolitanisation is a viable approach for urban problems for municipalities.

The findings made it clear that the District Municipality will have to be reconfigured, which may create resistance to the metropolitanisation, especially from the district municipality, due to reducing power and resources from the district since metros renders all municipal services. This is consistent to what the Beall et al. (2015) have indicated, namely that tensions and planning challenges are involved in integrating cities. There is certain administrative complexity due to the metropolitan municipalities being larger and more complex than small municipalities, and this creates inherent challenge for administration and governance.

Thus, managing and coordinating services across large geographic areas can be difficult, and may require significant investment in infrastructure, personnel, and technology. This is noted by Subramanyam and Marais (2022), who observe that a functional approach based on socio-economic approach and institutional approach, based on administrative and financial capabilities. The City of Mbombela will have a new administration structure that will include additional departments, such as Public Transport and Metropolitan police occasioned by the added service delivery requirements and the added mandate requires more resources, which may not be adequately provided for. As noted by Government,

“the financial condition of most municipalities is dismal such that majority of them will quickly find it difficult to function properly” (RSA 2021: 84 – 86).

5.2.3 The politics involved in the metropolitanisation of City the of Mbombela

The interview indicated that, for the metropolitan municipality to become a reality, political support and political will is crucial at all levels and structures from local, regional, provincial, and national governments otherwise service delivery may be compromised, which resonates with the assertion by Mabizela and Matsiliza that “political meddling [constitutes] another major factor to service delivery constrains in municipalities.’’ The establishment of the Metropolitan municipality will dictate that a political structure of Ehlanzeni municipality will cease to exist, or will at least be reconfigured. In essence, this implies that the processes might be sabotaged, particularly from the District municipality, due to imminent budget cuts and resource reduction, and political infighting might develop, which is consistent with the assertion by Mkhize (2021) that the Municipal Demarcation Board easily bows to political pressures and protests.

The findings also indicated that there is an inherent risk of politicians seeking unjustifiably higher salaries, and greed for more power, due to possibly larger municipal jurisdictions, which could spill over to political office bearers supporting metropolitanisation for narrow personal interest with little to no emphasis on service delivery and efficiencies and infighting and tensions over positions is inevitable. This is consistent with view of Beall (2015) that there will be strains and planning problems when merging cities with greater regions.

Political power and the consolidation across multiple jurisdictions and structures will be required, which can prove to be a complex and daunting task and requires negotiation and compromise among multiple stakeholders. Public support will be needed, which will be influenced by economic and political interests as well as dynamics and existing rivalries, which resonates with views from Camron (2006)

on socio-economic links for unified planning and reallocation of resources, as well as Subramanyam and Marais (2022) on compromises in mitigating socio-spatial apartheid and producing administratively viable government systems to impact authority across all municipal classifications.

5.2.4 Business and economic benefits of metropolitanisation

From the findings, it is evident that there are a number of benefits from metropolitanisation, which among others are coordinated and consolidated planning to reduce red-tape in execution of all local government functions; and significant investment and capital attraction, which will subsequently translate into an increase in revenue generation and enhancement, due to larger areas and population under the jurisdiction of the City. This is consistent with the literature review from the **CoGTA** 2020d report indicating that more than 56% of the country GDP is accounted for by only eight metros.

Some respondents stated an increase in existing grants and access to additional expanded grants such as metro police and human settlement. Another respondent indicated that staff morale will improve, due to possible higher salaries, and more scare skills attraction due to better offers, which resonates with the Auditor General MFMA report (2020-2021) showing that the eight metros accounts for R247 Billion of the total Budget of R509 billion for all municipalities. More investment attraction has been indicated by respondents to result in LED, which will subsequently result and more revenue collection, or a higher revenue base for the municipality, which will lead to better service delivery and social welfare and cohesion.

Rollout of larger capital and infrastructure development will be enhanced due to attraction of highly skilled personnel and specialists, which make for better project management and subsequently improved service delivery; and employee morale and labour unrest will be minimal, which in turn reduces economic disruptions and inefficiencies and possible reduction of social ills and wicked-problems such as crime, substance abuse and so on. The literature indicates in this regard that

although metros have better LED strategies, they are still characterised by worse Gini indices, meaning that there is a substantial inequality gap in these metros which is consistent with the reality that South Africa has the highest inequality level in the world.

5.2.5 Setbacks and Ramifications of Progressing the City of Mbombela to a Metropolitan Municipality

From the findings, a setback that emerged as a predominately rural municipality, was the transition to sustainable urbanisation due to a number of challenges and glitches, such as resistance to paying of services from the usually indigent customers. Simply put, the adjustment to a high cost of living and urban life may not appeal to a number of usually rural and indigent communities that resonate with a view from Gericke (2006), namely that metropolitanisation has the unintended challenge of making other small towns less viable. The COGTA (2021) Annual Report raises the fact that combining two dysfunctional municipalities will lead to an unviable municipality.

Incoherent amalgamation for metropolitanisation means that there will be added functions, which require more revenue raising, increased administrative capacity, and political and high possibility of inheriting ghost towns and unviable small municipalities, as well as inadequate project management and implementation due to a lack of more specialist and qualified engineers and managers, and the appointment of incompetent contractors, due poor procurement processes and compound erosion of good governance and animosity with among stakeholders consistent with assertions of Gericke (2011b).

Dysfunctional metros are prone to delays in completion of projects (particularly large capital and infrastructure projects such as bulk water, mass electrification and high way constructions), which will contribute to fiscal challenges, due to variation orders and cost overrun, which leads to more unwanted expenditure (i.e. unauthorised, irregular and fruitless expenditure). This in turn eventually leads to financial distress, and non-compliance with regulations. De-mergers

such as *buya Mjindi* becomes the order of the day, consistent with the views from literature of Goodfellow (2010), Gore and Muwanga (2014) that municipal reforms and restructuring are contested by certain political leaders to avoid ceding power to newly created metropolitan authority.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapter discussed the findings solicited from the responses of the participants in this study juxtaposes with literature review. This section presents the recommendations derived from an analysis of the findings and subsequent conclusion.

5.3.1. Organisational efficiencies

It is recommended that the City of Mbombela adopt a smart city model in this age of 4IR, characterised by smart governance and operational efficiency, as well as Knowledge and Change management, as a contemporary phenomenon's as it emerged from the themes. Mere amalgamation of municipalities solely for political interest may create large but dysfunctional Metro that does not deliver effective service delivery and may not be described as functional as per the provisions of section 152 of the constitution. Efficiencies and effectiveness improves productivity and service delivery, which is critical in this rapid changing environment characterised by impatient rate-payers and collision governments as well is brutal rating agencies.

Metropolitanisation means the City has an extended area of jurisdiction and mandate and on a positive note the City will have more borrowing capacity and big staff complement, which should be proportional and commensurate to more revenue generation and enhancement to avoid a distressed Metro with unjustifiably higher salaries, but less improvement of basic services. Simply put, clear synergic benefits should be realised beyond the metro excitement and hype to ensure that the amalgamated municipality renders better services when amalgamated than individually.

5.3.2 Administrative implications

The Council of the City must adopt a coherent organisational structure to avoid bloated workforce and implement an effective performance management to improve the administrative capacity of the City. Proper streamlining of organisation structure should be done and recruitment of more technicians, engineers, electricians, and less administrators and consultants, to enhance the ability to respond to service delivery requirements.

A clear segregation of powers between the Political and Administration must be maintained, and key processes such as Recruitment and Procurement must be completely depoliticised, so as to avoid irregularities. Intense public consultation ought to be undertaken so as to properly manage political tensions from the reconfiguration of the District and absorbed municipalities.

5.3.3 Politics

It is recommended that the process of metropolitanisation, from consulting of both powerful and vulnerable stakeholders should be comprehensive, so as to minimise political infighting and instability, where the role of a de-politicised municipal demarcation board (MDB) cannot be over-emphasised. Additionally, metropolitanisation should be founded on social and economic conditions between diverse groups, such as urban and rural, as well as white and black settlements, as well as foreigners, in order to redress the legacy of socio-spatial apartheid on the one hand, and creating viable and sustainable metro and while promoting social cohesion on the other.

Key processes such as Recruitment and Procurement must be completely depoliticised to avoid irregularities and instabilities that can compromise service delivery and to better navigate political dynamics inherent to the municipal environment.

5.3.4 Economic benefits

It is recommended that he City of Mbombela launch an ambitious investment drive to attract the necessary investment and capital to roll-out the significant infrastructure needed for a viable metropolitan municipality. Put differently, industrialisation of the City jurisdiction is imperative. A specialised workforce of Chartered Accountants, City Planners and Engineers among others should be recruited through a de-politicised process to enhance integrated planning and project implementation.

Strategic partnerships such as PPPs as well as small scale businesses and informal sector through a comprehensive Local Economic Development (LED) strategy will be critical to ensure beneficiation and inclusiveness and subsequently position the City as a better place for stay, work and play.

5.3.5 Ramifications

It is recommended that the causes of instability in most municipalities such as limited-silo planning, poor change and knowledge management, political interference, poor governance, weak institutional capacity and the overall entrenchment of non-performance culture can be mitigated by proper consultation of stakeholders and merit based appointments and promotions to avoid creating an incoherent metro that will subsequently be dysfunctional. Mergers and amalgamations should be based on synergy benefits not narrow political interest to avoid merging dysfunctional municipalities and hope to result in a functional one, the -1 + -1 story will always result in the unintended -2.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study is that it placed focus on City of Mbombela and the Ehlanzeni District Municipality to the exclusion of other scenarios. Most respondents were found to have extreme views, whether too optimistic or too antagonistic or too negative or too positive towards metropolitanisation, which overall may create a clouded perspective. The collection of field notes was limited to mainly municipal officials and employees, overall participants were interviewed on personal capacity which created an open-ended risk. As a result, this limits the transferability of this research study.

The political dynamics and landscape differ per municipality hence interventions implemented by the national government, such as project consolidate, municipal turnaround strategy, operation clean audits, and the recently introduced a back-to-basics approach and district model approach that have to date yielded little to no results.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This objective of this project was to investigate the organisational efficiencies required in upgrading or progressing the City of Mbombela to a metropolitan municipality. As literature supports, a qualitative research design was followed to solicit primary data mainly from the administrative staff and political officials in the City of Mbombela and the District municipality. An interview guide was administered through semi-structured interviews. The newly acquired primary data was analysed using an interactive thematic analysis process.

The primary data revealed that the respondents support the process of progressing the City of Mbombela to be a metropolitan municipality, through necessary organisational efficiencies such as smart-governance, change and knowledge management, operational efficiencies (including digitalisation & Innovation) among others, by means of which to avoid creating a politicised, incoherent, and dysfunctional metro. In response, detailed recommendations were drawn up suggesting ways to ameliorate these concerns.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

Future research ought to focus on rendering conclusions on the relationship between metropolitanisation and service delivery, sufficiently respond to questions of whether a bigger municipality is a better municipality, and to ask after the extent to which the district development model affects metropolitanisation. It is necessary to ask whether regression of a metro to a secondary city a necessary adjustment when metropolitanisation can indeed be sustained.

Other areas that be considered for future research or be explored further in the municipal or local government context include (among others) are the following:

- drivers of knowledge management (KM) systems to improve the knowledge transfer;
- the relationship or correlations between coalition governments and stability in governance;
- the meaningful role (if any) that traditional leaders play in the development and urbanisation of rural municipalities;
- Institutional capacity enhancement strategies, in particular for small municipalities;
- unbundling strategies in metropolitan municipalities and secondary cities;
- national and provincial government failure and its impact in municipalities; and
- the sustainability and viability of socialist programmes in municipalities such as free basic services (or how to contain ballooning indigents).

The overall landscape of municipalities in South Africa is dynamic and evolving at an alarming pace, and factors such as increase in independent candidates and normalisation of coalition governments (councils) further compound the already turbulent sector.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

NB!! Participants interviewed on personal capacity

Level of Occupation	*Tick appropriate box below*	**Type of Occupation**	*Tick appropriate box below*	**Organisation (optional)**	*Tick appropriate box below*
Senior Management		Political occupation			
Middle Management		Administrative occupation			
Lower Management		Technical occupation			
Other (Specify)					

Please answer the questions below:

1. What is your opinion regarding the organisational efficiencies required for City of Mbombela to be established as a metropolitan municipality?

2. What are the benefits of establishing the City of Mbombela as a metropolitan municipality?

3. What are the setbacks of establishing the City of Mbombela as a metropolitan municipality?

4. What is your opinion on the process of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

5. What are the politics involved in the process of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

6. What is the impact on Service delivery will such establishment have?

7. What are the administrative ramifications of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

8. What are the financial consequences of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

9. What are the socio-economic implications of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

10. What are the administrative implications of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?
11. What are the business prospects of establishing the City of Mbombela as a Metro?

12. Do you have any additional information you would like to share regarding the process of establishing City of Mbombela as a metro?

APPENDIX 2 (Respondents Information Sheet)





Good day Sir / Madam,

My name is Skhumbuzo Sunday Metiso and I am a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student at the University of the Witwatersrand Business School (Wits Business School) in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating ‘’organizational efficiencies in the establishment of City of Mbombela as Metropolitan municipality’’ under the supervision of Dr Rob Venter. The aim of this research project is to investigate the administrative, financial, and political challenges and opportunities of establishing the City of Mbombela as a Metropolitan municipality.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a short interview. This activity will involve answering questions only and expressing your perspective on issues around the City of Mbombela. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device. This recording will be stored in an external hard drive that will be stored in a secure place and back-ups will be uploaded to a cloud service encrypted with a password. Only the researcher will have access to this recording. The recordings will be deleted after five (5) years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The responses will be confidential. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in an external hard drive and cloud service will be kept for five (5) years.

APPENDIX 3 (ETHICS CLEARENCE)

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA1255546/333
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below)

Project title	Organisational efficiencies and the establishment of the City of Mbombela as a metropolitan municipality
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Skhumbuzo Metiso
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	01 02 2023
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

01 February 2023
Date: