

Lecture by the SALGA President, Councillor Mpho Parks Tau, at the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute, UNISA, City of Tshwane

Topic: *“Migration and Urbanisation: Policy Implications for Local Governments”*

23 October 2018

Moderator, Dr Kagiso Pooe,
Head of TMALI, Dr Edith Phaswana,
Distinguished guests, and
Ladies and gentlemen:

Introduction

It is a heart-warming honour to be here at the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) located in Africa’s premier university.

May I start by indicating from the onset that my prepared input on the subject of the day – that is migration and urbanisation – primarily recognises these factors as the critical DNA of the local government sphere.

Hopefully from today’s interaction, SALGA and TMALI can formalise a strategic partnership for eventual benefit not only of local government, but scholarship and public policy.

My presentation focuses on three (3) interrelated areas:

- first, it sketches the broad implications of urbanisation and migration megatrends for local governance;
- second, it identifies existing and latent opportunities in the agglomeration of people, place and institutions; and
- third, it explores the benefits or drawbacks of a youth dividend and an urban dividend.

Beginning with the first theme: what are the recent urbanisation and migration megatrends, that we in South Africa, are confronted with in the mid to long-term?

Ladies and gentlemen,

Urbanisation and migration megatrends

You may be familiar with media images of caravans of migrants travelling for days from Central America to North America. You may have seen pictures of West African migrants, in rickety boats, braving the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in Western Europe.

One immediate consequence we have seen, from these unregulated migration patterns, is

the emergence of far-right political movements mobilising on discriminatory populist mandates that recall the Nazi parties of the 1930s.

The rise of such right-wing parties has, in turn, culminated in what Dena Freeman calls the 'de-democratisation' process whereby certain communities believe their material conditions are threatened by migrants arriving from distant and nearby shores. This is one major factor explaining Brexit and Trumpism¹.

What is important to note though is that in South Africa, large-scale urbanisation is a relatively new phenomenon. We are a country just beginning to come to terms with challenges attending to migration and its subsequent impact on our urban infrastructure.

Linked to this is the point that migration is taking place in small to medium cities and towns which find themselves struggling to cope and accommodate these new migrants. This is a central argument from urban policy theorist, Edgar Pieterse, that our country is at the genesis of an urban transition whereby you find that 62% of African urbanites live in informal, auto-constructed makeshift shelters.

The outcome of this transition is that the bulk of city buildings can be attributed to actors outside of the state and formal business sectors. Therefore, we need a rethink of public policy and resourcing abilities to leverage opportunities that come with intra- and inter migration. Private capital and civil society has to come on board for comprehensive management of urbanisation and migration. State capacity is limited for well-known reasons.

As you know, in South Africa, internal migration has resulted in more than 63% of the general population residing in cities. This figure is projected to rise to 70% in 2030 and by 80% in 2050.

Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) informs us in their mid-year population estimates, that "Gauteng comprises the largest share of the South African population, with approximately 14, 7-million people"².

For obvious reasons, the *pull* factors for migration to the Gauteng city-region include its status as the continent's economic hub and possible employment opportunities. The Western Cape comes second due to *push* factors with people leaving the Eastern Cape since it is assumed it has limited economic or job prospects. In fact, the Quarterly Labour Force survey for the 2018 first quarter, specifies that the Eastern Cape has the highest unemployment rate of 35%.

These internal migration patterns are compounded by the arrival of asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants coming from the continent and elsewhere. It is important to note that these documented and undocumented migrants are both low- to high-skilled individuals.

Naturally, these cumulative migration patterns carry both opportunities and challenges. One can isolate three (3) perspectives on migration:

A *negative* perspective views migrants as a contributive burden to the urban infrastructure bottlenecks, social welfare services, mushrooming of informal settlements, propensity for land invasions, pollution etcetera.

¹ Freeman, D. 2017. 'De-democratisation and Rising Inequality: The Underlying Cause of a Worrying Trend,' *LSE Working Paper 12*, May.

² StatsSA, 'Mid-year Population Estimates: 2018' *Statistical Release PO302*, p. 1.

A *positive* perspective sees intra- and inter-migration as an opportunity to fill in labour gaps, drive population growth, spurs economic activities in SMMEs, add to the tax base and production and consumption.

A *pragmatic* perspective views internal and external migration as a historical imperative. For instance, intra-Africa migration is intrinsically linked to societal development and human civilisational advancement. For instance, the role of the precolonial Mapungubwe state-kingdom for southern Africa is well documented. Its impact is known in precolonial international trade through the port of Sofala, in Mozambique, and its later influence in the development of the Great Zimbabwe city.

Friends and colleagues,

Moving on to the second theme of this lecture, what are the opportunities in the agglomeration of people, places and institutions?

Opportunities in agglomeration of people and place

South Africa is rapidly urbanising without, however, an adequately sufficient institutional capacity or supportive resources to absorb demands of urbanisation and migration. What are the available and unexplored opportunities of agglomeration of people, institutions and place?

On average, towns and cities produce the bulk of the national gross value add. Metros and towns have much higher average incomes as compared to the country as a whole. And yet, as the CoGTA Deputy Minister, Mr Andries Nel, once said, “‘urbanisation of poverty’ is increasing, especially in townships, informal settlements and inner cities”³.

What then can be done to counter and reduce risks that come with ‘urbanisation of poverty’? For one, the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) is government’s strategic intervention to coordinate our work and synergise resources and capacities in supporting the National Development Plan (NDP), or Vision 2030, which we have to implement fully within literally twelve (12) years.

The IUDF’s core objectives are to provide a guiding framework for building liveable, inclusive, safe, efficient and resilient urban settlements. The IUDF is a public-private partnership (PPP) between a developmental state and private sector to engender integrated urban spaces. This is cognisant that cities and towns differ in themselves and, as such, policy interventions should accommodate these differences in towns and cities.

The applied theoretical paradigm informing this lecture is inclusive urbanism. By inclusive urbanism is meant equitable space utilisation and equitable service delivery which echoes the social scientist David Harvey in his right to the city argument.

Inclusive urbanism talks to the acknowledgement that, as a result of our past and pressures from the present, you invariably find people located in sprawling informal settlements and RDP houses placed in inappropriate locations. These are locations where there is no civic or social infrastructure such as supportive transport arteries as intended with the Corridors of Freedom programme.

³ Minister Nel’s briefing to the National Assembly portfolio committee on the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), 26 May 2015.

The unintended result of informal or unsupported settlements is that they reproduce apartheid spatial patterns. This goes against the Constitution which reminds us that “the right of people to have control over their living environment is entrenched in our Bill of Rights”.

Moderator,

Therefore, the somewhat uncomfortable question we have to confront is how far the democratic dispensation has been successful in prioritising spatial equity and offering access to socioeconomic opportunities for those trapped in the bottom of the pyramid?

In terms of housing and land use management, how have we come to transcend the nimbyism syndrome or the attitude that says ‘not in my back yard’ attitude prevalent amongst middle-class communities?

For us as practitioners in the local government sphere, these questions are real and compel us to constantly seek to reduce the inherent risk factors that come with rapid migration and urbanisation. This is in the context of low economic growth, a low investment climate, diminishing revenue sources, a declining tax base, and population growth.

It requires conscientious awareness about sustainable usage of energy sources, environmental degradation, carbon emissions and the untapped potential in mainstreaming Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

Inclusive urbanism is about efficient service delivery for everyone in the city – whether defined as a citizen, resident, asylum seeker, or migrant – to have access to efficient public services. It is about bringing opportunities closer to people and people closer to opportunities.

This should, and can be done through spatial and land use policy, infrastructure investment, and a revised policy on human settlement to create inclusive cities and towns. We have to move beyond an obsession with measuring success by simply counting the houses built, inadequate and unsupported as they are with equitable infrastructure.

Inclusive urbanism focuses on cities and towns because, as city planning specialist, Ivan Turok says: “Cities function as catalysts for prosperity that can generate economies of scale and scope through reduced logistics costs, shared services, specialised suppliers, thick labour markets and knowledge spill-overs”⁴.

Inclusive urbanism is therefore about agglomeration of activities in commercial, industrial, institutional sectors. It centres on leveraging the skills-set that migrants bring with them. It requires re-engineering activities that would meet the state demands, market demands and devising reskilling programmes that would meet the needs of migrants.

Quite simply, equitable urbanism is about enabling and empowering people to climb the ladder of prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much is said and written about Africa’s youth dividend. What are the positive and negative effects of the relation between this country’s youth dividend and a potential urban dividend?

⁴ Turok, I & Visagie, J. 2018. ‘Does moving to a city mean a better life? New evidence’, *Econ3X3*, April, p. 2.

Youth and urban dividends

Urban theorists inform us that, ordinarily, South Africa is supposed to leverage the capabilities of its demographic dividend so that our urban policies can also benefit from the strength, innovation and talents of its youth.

However, the sizeable numbers of our unemployed or unemployable young people not in education and training (NEETs) tells us our dual demographic and urban dividends are not being leveraged. The threat of this failure to include or capacitate young people are known – they become amenable to join populist propagandists and participate in violent acts of civil disobedience.

We live in a complex and changing fourth industrial revolution (FIR). In the publication I usually make reference to when discussing these matter, *No Ordinary Disruption*, the authors argue that first, urbanisation and productivity are mutually inclusive in the sense that the average incomes of city resident is much higher and a high quality of life requires a supportive infrastructure investment.

In the FIR, what happens though when there is a skills mismatch between job requirements and prevalence of unemployable youth? As you know, technology usage is a key driver of innovation and economic value. If you have an unskilled and inadequately trained youth base, you will not be able to leverage from the youth dividend. And in turn, the youth not sufficiently integrated into the urban dividend are not able and enabled to reap rewards of urban opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As such, it means that if we are to maximise the urban dividends for our large youth population, training and skilling will have to factor in the disruptive technologies such as big data, automation of work, e-commerce, and the Internet of Things.

The era of digital technologies demands that we prioritise life-long learning and resourcing vocational training that still provides the best training for small businesses as the example of Germany testifies to.

Friends and colleagues,

What then are the available policy options that can be proposed in addressing migration and urbanisation challenges?

Practical policy implications

As of yet, we still need a multilinked national migration observatory framework which will collect and collate data for usage by government at national to local levels. After all, poor uncoordinated analysis of migration and urbanisation trends compromises the ability of government to properly plan in terms of e.g., budgeting services.

There still needs to be capacity building of municipalities to address and mitigate emergent migration pressures into IDPs while still addressing the legacy of apartheid morphology.

We still need to improve demographic data to inform local level planning – again, this requires coordination and synergy between respective research institutions (e.g., SA Cities Network, GCRO, UCT Centre for African Cities, HSRC) and StatsSA, CoGTA, DPME.

In conclusion, it is encouraging that in the continent there is some progress in unleashing the power of intra-Africa trade and migration. In this regard, as recent research from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicates, “many countries are supporting the African Union’s new Migration Policy Framework for Africa” and “since March 2018, more than half of the nearly 50 countries that pledged to create an African Continental Free Trade Area have adopted its protocol on the free movement of people”⁵.

Once again, I wish to thank TMALI for creating a platform where we can deliberate on the subject of migration and urbanisation, as well as policy implications for the local government sphere.

My sincere gratitude to the Institute for the invitation to share insight with you on the subject of the day.

I thank you.

⁵ Kituyi, M. 2018. ‘Redefining African Migration,’ *Project Syndicate*, 04 October, p. 2.