

The Resolve Group: The policy review process of the current system of provincial and local government

By Pascal Moloi

The DPLG launched the process late last year to review the system of provincial and local government in the country. The process will culminate in the development of a new white paper on provincial government.

Resolve is proud and privileged to have, in various ways, been closely associated with local government policy formulation and implementation for at least 10 years. We would like to take this opportunity to further stimulate debate by using this short article to comment and add some questions to those posed by DPLG.

"Municipalities are required by law to find ways and means to involve communities in their affairs. There is a need to improve the quality of local democracy, the degree of municipal responsiveness and accountability"

Two questions relating to this topic may be posed: (a) Is there merit in compromising on the size of councils in favor of smaller, full-time councils? (b) Is it appropriate to contest local elections along party lines?

Regarding the first question, a proposal to review the size of our councils may be considered. While the determining factor might have been the need to have smaller constituencies and enumerator areas, the question remains whether the institutions have found adequate methods to effectively engage the aspirations of their constituencies.

A proportional representation system brings into focus the role political parties play in determining the ultimate character and composition of our councils. Communities should be left to determine who should represent them, irrespective of the political hats they wear.



Pascal Moloi
Managing Director

"Local government is categorised into metro, district and local municipalities. There are functional and structural challenges that need to be reviewed"

The national spatial development perspective recognises that localities have a different standing in the manner in which they impact economic and social transformation in the country today. The current categorisation

of municipalities and the determination of their powers and functions should also take into account their ability to be more competitive and attractive at a global level.

While dealing with the question of structure, the issue of a single public service needs to be raised. The establishment of single public service that will include local government runs the risk of stifling the ability of municipalities to project manage the delivery of their services. The subjective conditions that prevail are different from area to area and should not be compromised.

"Municipalities are dependent on a strong revenue base to sustain their viability and need strategies to support this"

Given that the combined revenue base of metro municipalities in the country contributes to a significant percentage of the gross national product, the following needs to be asked: (a) Are most of the district municipality tax bases viable? (b) Can their local tax bases sustain developments in these areas on their own? (c) Where it is possible, is there merit in "pooling" tax bases? (d) Is a common Gauteng tax base a solution to "rural" Gauteng limitations?

"Provinces were created as a result of constitutional negotiations and have no policy framework that sets out their roles and functions"

This is probably the most crucial question posed by DPLG. Some of the smaller geographic regions in the country may be over-governed with executive political centers for dense or small populations. Specifically, the question to be asked is whether there is a need for a provincial government in Gauteng? There may be a case for a strong Gauteng Mega Metro within a relatively weak Gauteng province.

Conclusions

Municipalities are special and have unique features that the country should exploit in a way that differentiates them from each other and from the rest of the provinces, for the benefit of the country and the continent. ■

*This article was commissioned by The Resolve Group.
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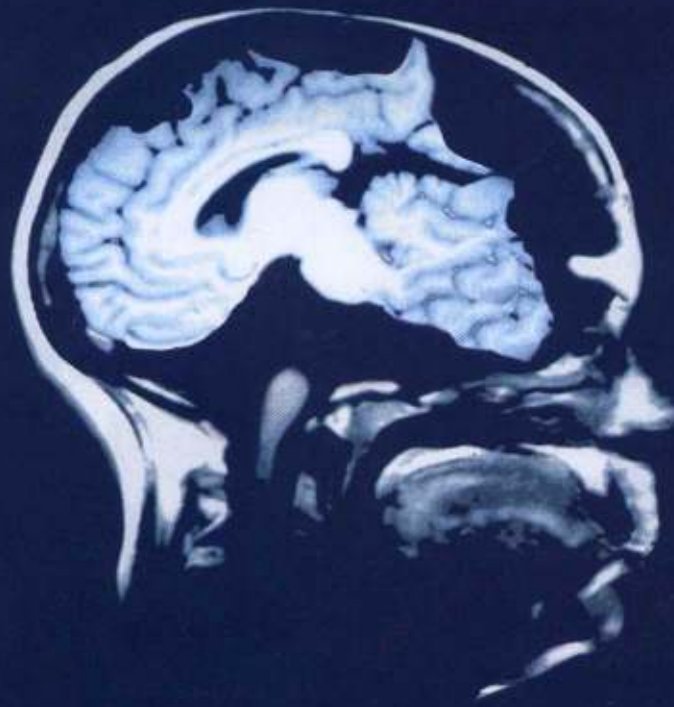
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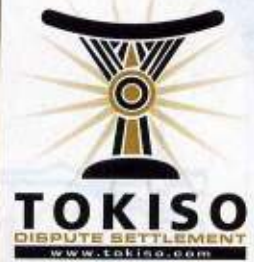


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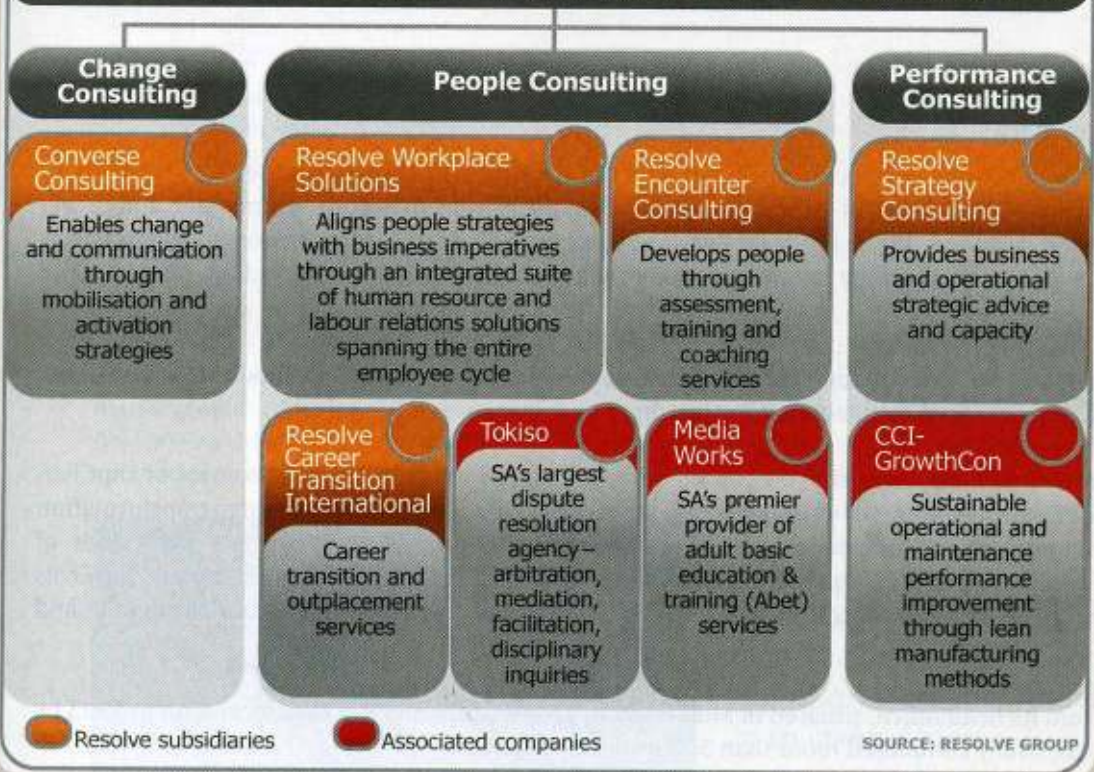
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- The South African Local Government Association
- Various local government partner institutions (The Cities Network, MIIU, MISC, DBSA, EDI Holdings, etc)
- International local government institutions and donors (e.g. GTZ, World Bank, Local Government Association of Zambia and the government of Ethiopia)

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- Organisational restructuring (including organisation design, business process mapping and organisational design, role-profiling, migration and transfer, assessment, recruitment and change management)
- Ring-fencing of municipal services and the establishment of municipal entities
- Legislative compliance (employment equity and skills development)
- Labour relations advice
- Performance management (institutional and individual) including systems design and reward advice