



VEDA
ASSOCIATES

**Mid-Term Review of the 2006-2011
Strategic Plan of the SACN**

**Compiled by VEDA Associates (Pty)
Ltd**

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Abbreviations

CCN	<i>Creative Cities Network</i>
CDS	<i>City Development Strategy</i>
CMTD	<i>Consolidation of Municipal Transformation Programme</i>
COP	<i>Community of Practice</i>
DPLG	<i>Department of Provincial and Local Government (now the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs)</i>
DTI	<i>Department of Trade and Industry</i>
EPWP	<i>Extended Public Works Programme</i>
JIKE	<i>Joburg Innovation and Knowledge Exchange</i>
KM	<i>Knowledge Management</i>
KM&I	<i>Knowledge Management and Innovation</i>
KSP	<i>Knowledge Sharing Programme</i>
NCN	<i>National City Network</i>
NCOP	<i>National Council of Provinces</i>
NLC	<i>National League of Cities</i>
RED	<i>Regional Electricity Distributor</i>
SACN	<i>South African Cities Network</i>
SALGA	<i>South African Local Government Association</i>
SOCR	<i>State of the Cities Report</i>
SOCFR	<i>State of City Finances Report</i>
UDZ	<i>Urban Development Zone</i>
UNPAN	<i>United Nations Public Administration Programme</i>

Section 1: Introduction and Overview of Study

Aim of this section:

To introduce the SACN, understand the context of the study undertaken
and the methodology deployed in conducting the study

Introduction

The SA Cities Network (SACN) was established in 2002 by the South African Minister for Provincial and Local Government in collaboration with the mayors of South Africa's largest cities and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), as an independent Section 21 Company, with the mandate to:

- Promote good governance and management in South African cities;
- Analyse strategic challenges facing South African cities, particularly in the context of global economic integration and national development challenges;
- Collect, collate, analyse, assess, disseminate and apply the experience of large city government in a South African context; and
- Promote shared-learning partnerships between different spheres of Government to support the management of South African cities.

In April 2006, the Board of Directors approved a 5-year strategic plan (or business plan framework) for implementation from 2006/07 to 2010/11. December 2008 marks the midway point in the implementation period, and the SACN secretariat thought it appropriate to use this milestone to review and evaluate progress in order to:

- (a) provide the Board of Directors with an objective analysis of successes and weaknesses; and
- (b) inform operational and programmatic activities to strengthen performance during the remaining implementation period.

To this end the South African Cities Network (SACN) has commissioned Veda Associates to review and evaluate its mid-term performance in implementing its strategic plan for the period 2006-2011.

Review Methodology

The methodology for this study can be summarised as follows:



Desk Based Research and Review

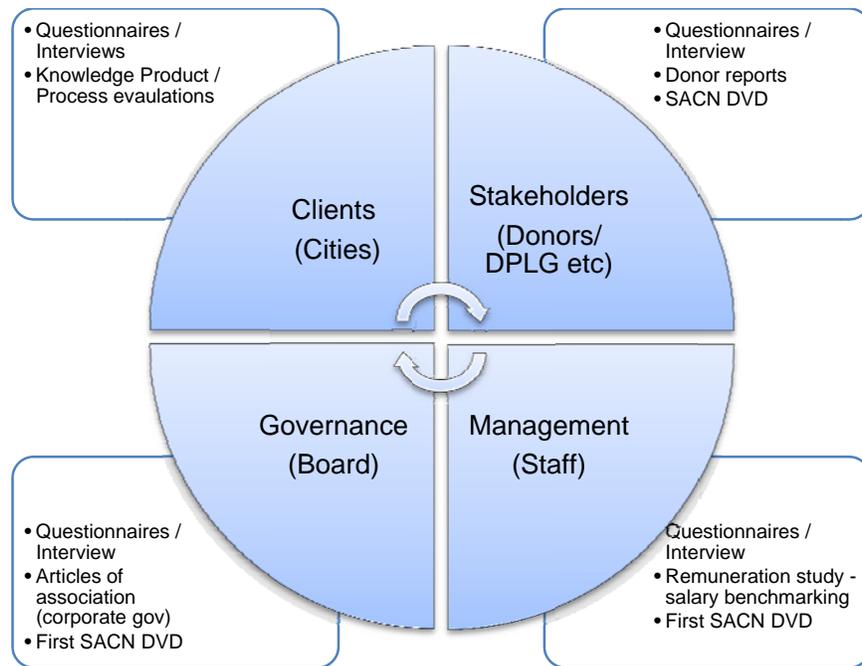
During this phase of the review we reviewed a number of key documents, these include: the 2006-2011 strategic plan, annual business plans, annual reports, the State of the Cities report and the SACN knowledge management methodology.

Interviews with stakeholders and collation of anecdotal information

For the purposes of the stakeholder interviews, a 360-degree type of evaluation method was chosen. In the classic sense, the 360-degree appraisal surveys and collects the views of all the appraised employee's colleagues, including the manager, peers, direct reports, and, on occasion, external clients. Additionally, the 'employee' / institutional subject will generally rate himself, so that his views of how he impacts his colleagues can be added to the mix. There is no absolute "truth" in the reflections given in a 360-degree survey, as these represent perceptions or views of the assessor. For this reason, 360-degree appraisals cannot be used to measure competence, just the perception of someone's competence.

(www.bnet.com) The views provided by interviewees should therefore be understood within this context.

For the purposes of this study interviews with various categories of stakeholders were identified as: Clients (member cities), Partners (donors, funders), Governance (Board of Directors) and Management (Secretariat).



A questionnaire was developed for each category of interviewee. Each question was classified in terms of an element that it intended to measure. For each question a qualitative rating scale was developed as well as allowed for detailed feedback from interviewees.

The results were then collated to provide a consolidated rating by interviewee category of the various elements measured. The more detailed narrative feedback was then utilised to start formulating the set of recommendations for the organisation for the remaining years in this term. Ideally a review of this nature should be based on an already establish performance matrix with key indicators and measures of performance prior to the review process. As the SACN does not have such a performance matrix in place, the authors of this report began by structuring a possible matrix of reporting using the mandate and area of functionality as a point of departure.

Each questionnaire was sub-divided in a number of elements for which specific questions were developed, in order to test stakeholder perception. Each question required a rating in terms of a four-point rating scale as well as a more detailed narrative response to justify/clarify the rating. It is important to note that the use of a rating scale is **not** meant to deliver a qualitative aspect to the study, but was used to try and sample consensus on a few key areas with the stakeholder interviews.

The four-point rating scale is defined as follows:

Rating statement
1. The SACN has exceeded the target
2. The SACN has met the target
3. The SACN has partially met the target
4. The SACN has not met the target

The following table provides a breakdown of the stakeholders interviewed. A total of 15 stakeholders were interviewed with some falling into more than one category and responded to questions in more than one category. While respondents have not been identified in the body of this review, detailed notes and questionnaires are available as an annexure to this report.

Category	Number
Clients	5*
Stakeholders	4
Governance	4*
Management	5
Total	15

* Individuals that fall in more than one category

Interviews were conducted with the following people:

Mr Andrew Boraine, former Chairperson of the SACN

Ms Zintle Peter, former Chairperson of the SACN

Adv Graham Richards, Municipal Manager of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality

Cllr Christine Walters, MMC Community Development COJ, SACN Board Member

Mr Rashid Seedat, City of Johannesburg (COJ)

Mr Graeme Gotz, City of Johannesburg (COJ)

Ms Nellie Lester, Department of Provincial and Local Government (dplg)

Mr Philip van Ryneveld

Prof Edgar Pieterse

Ms Ntombini Marrengane, World Bank, SACN Board Member

Mr Sithole Mbanga, SACN Secretariat

Ms Supriya Kalidas, SACN Secretariat

Ms Sharon Lewis, SACN Secretariat

Mr Seana Nkhahla, SACN Secretariat

Ms Astrid Wood, SACN Secretariat

Mr Patrick Siwedi, former member of SACN Audit Committee

Section 2: Locating the South African Cities Network

Aim of this section:

To contextualise the work of the SACN with the South African local government sector and set a foundation for contextual analysis of its 'performance' relative to its mandate.

Overview of cities and urban development issues

South African cities as with urban areas elsewhere in the world are strategically important as they are ‘... simultaneously the most productive sites in the national economy, as well as areas that accommodate the largest number of poor people...’ (State of the Cities Report, 2006:p2-2)

According to the SACN 5-year strategic plan, ‘Urban development lies at the heart of the country’s vision of a productive, democratic and non-racial society. While cities generate 80% of the country’s wealth and have higher than average economic growth rates, they also house the largest concentrations of poverty with 40% of the urban population living under the poverty line. More than half the people who are unemployed in South Africa live in cities. So, from the dual perspective of human need and the imperative to foster economic opportunities and growth, cities must be the critical sites of development intervention in the second decade of democracy.’ (A Business Plan Framework for the South African Cities Network 2006-2011, 2) It is within this context that the role of the SACN as a learning network – which for knowledge generation , knowledge exchange as well as opportunity for networking and application of best practice – for the largest cities cannot be underestimated.

Although learning from networks is not a new phenomena, its most recent application in the management sciences in the guise of ‘Communities of Practice’ has been credited to Etienne Wenger and anthropologist Jean Lave who coined the term while studying apprenticeship as a learning model:

“People usually think of apprenticeship as a relationship between a student and a master, but studies of apprenticeship reveal a more complex set of social relationships through which learning takes place mostly with journeymen and more advanced apprentices. The term community of practice was coined to refer to the community that acts as a living curriculum for the apprentice.” Etienne Wenger, (www.ewenger.com/theory)

The Department of Public Service and Administration describes a learning network as a group of individuals and organisations which join forces on issues of common concern, by sharing ideas, experiences, lessons learnt and insights.

This definition is in line with that of international agency, the United Nations Public Administration Programme that uses learning networks to allow public managers to network, through annual conferences and workshops –in averting and remedying challenges facing their respective organisations: “People from the Health sector need to understand how their colleagues in Education, Safety, Justice, Social Development, and so on work and which challenges they face in their respective sectors” (UNPAN, 2005).

Background of the SACN – why was it formed?

In a 2006 interview with then Chair of the SACN Board, Andrew Boraine describes that the initial thinking in setting up the network was for the purposes of ‘horizontal learning’ i.e. city-to-city learning but later found that the ‘vertical learning’ i.e. between cities and other spheres of government was even more important as through this interaction, for example, the national Department of Provincial and Local Government (dplg) understood that there are distinct differences between large cities, districts and rural municipalities. Boraine believes that the biggest achievement at that stage was that national government understood that the ‘one size fits all’ type of approach to local government was neither appropriate nor sustainable.

The SACN believes that since its inception, it has maintained sound relationships with all spheres of government, enabling it to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of city development strategies as a tool for urban development. In its first three years of operation the SACN developed knowledge products and added value through its input to processes which address governance challenges as well as opportunities for cities. These include:

- 2004 State of South African Cities Report
- Inputs into a range of National policy processes with an impact on urban development representing the views of the member cities (including the National Urban Development Framework and the National Spatial Development Perspective).
- Inputs into a range of National programmes that rely on member cities for their implementation (including guidelines for the Urban Development Zone (UDZ) tax incentive legislation and the Urban Renewal Programme).
- A comparative analysis of globally competitive city regions and a strategy for cities in the Gauteng region

- A study on spatial exclusion and urban renewal in South African cities: published as People and Places
- Technical and operational guidance for the member cities on subjects such as skills development and HIV and Aids in the workplace.

SACN has positioned itself as both a source of information for leadership of South Africa's largest cities and also as a catalyst for debate. In South Africa's dynamic political and legislative environment there are many influences that will have direct effects on the administration of cities. SACN identifies, assembles and disseminates information that enhances the ability of decision-makers to learn from the experience of others and efficiently use their resources to build sustainable cities.

The SACN also organized its work programme around five thematic areas of focus:

- **City Development Strategies Programme:** This programme focuses on cross-cutting issues that have strategic impact on all aspects of city management. This includes but is not limited to the mitigation of HIV and Aids, the emergence of global cities regions in the South African urban landscape and the second State of South African Cities Report which will document the best practices and binding constraints of governance in large cities today.
- **Inclusive Cities Programme:** This programme focuses on urban renewal, urban resettlement and the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). The growing demand for housing and the need to reclaim urban centres are both at the heart of this programme. Local authorities in urban centres are faced with the challenge of addressing spatial exclusion which is the legacy of apartheid planning while stimulating interest and development of areas within proximity to transport and housing opportunities for the poor. The need to create inclusive cities is being translated into the introduction of new housing typologies and patterns that redress old inequalities and try not to create new ones.
- **Sustainable Cities Programme:** This programme highlights the need for capacity to plan and create cities using strategies that take cognizance of the need careful and sustainable the use of finite resources such as land and energy in delivery of infrastructure. Within the Sustainable Cities Programme, SACN will examine a number of environmental issues that impact on the quality of life and cost of living in urban centres. These areas include water, energy, air quality and waste

management. In addition this programme will look beyond the solely green and brown issues and examine the financial and institutional sustainability of cities

- **Well-governed Cities Programme:** This programme develops tools and frameworks for the measurement of city performance. In the South African context, measurement of performance necessarily involves key outputs summarized in the integrated development plan (IDP), which is the legislated planning mechanism for municipalities. Through a series of IDP Hearings at provincial level SACN will with other key stakeholders review the effectiveness of the IDP as a planning tool. In addition this programme will continue with its work on the refinement of urban indicators, thereby strengthening the definitions and data sources used to measure city performance.

- **Productive Cities Programme:** This programme is focusing on key factors required for increased global competitiveness. This programme is anchored around an economic research platform specifically examining the role local authorities in enhancing productivity through planning and coordinated implementation around such issues as transport.

The key tools and instruments that the SACN applies for knowledge exchange and networking, include:

- Peer Review, mentorship and coaching
- Joint Research
- Newsletter
- Quick briefs and special reports
- Conferences, seminars, workshops and training
- Study tours, placements and exchanges
- Documentation of best practice and innovation
- Electronic database of performance indicators
- Thematic working groups, reference groups, or communities of practice

The 5-year Strategic Plan 2006-2011

The theme for the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan is '*Supporting the South African Urban Development Framework for the Second Decade of Democracy*' which was the outcome of

various workshops held with development practitioners, and urban development specialists including representatives of various government departments, which aimed to:

- Increase the status of urban issues across government policy and action.
- Prevent institutional exclusion by fostering participatory, transparent and democratic administration for every urban resident.
- Maximise the impact of government action in urban areas by aligning policies, investment and enforcement.
- Introduce new instruments and incentives for urban reforms that meet social need, create economic opportunities and protect the environment.
- Improve intelligence on urban dynamics to inform policy, planning and spending.
- Develop human capacity for urban management and co-operative governance

The stated objective for this period is:

To develop the knowledge, information and technical resources and expertise required to provide member cities with guidance on a strategic set of urban development themes and urban policy priorities.

In line with this proposed shift in the strategic objective, the SACN's functions was rationalised into three categories of activity:

- a) Guidance: By preparing and disseminating strategic inputs and positions
- b) Discovery: By undertaking selected monitoring and evaluation including a regular State of the Cities Report
- c) Assistance: By preparing technical inputs on leading practice and processes

These activities would be supported by a set of cross-cutting information and knowledge management activities and is summarised as follows:

SACN Medium Term Priority Matrix 2006 - 2011

		Thematic focus			
Functional focus	a. Values	Productive cities	Inclusive cities	Well-governed cities	Sustainable cities
	b. Medium-term policy priorities	Economic growth (Asgisa) Job creation (EPWP) Increased trade Infrastructure investment Urban-rural linkages	Extended access to services Efficient service delivery By-law enforcement Inclusion of youth and migrants	Public infrastructure investment Municipal asset management Anti-corruption	Efficiency in service delivery Environmental and resource management Sustainable development
	Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic integration in city regions. Financial incentives for private investment. Trade and investment. 2010 SWC. Economic transport networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIV and AIDS. Public transport. Social safety net and indigent support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement monitoring. Asset management. Mega-projects. Property development partnerships. CIDs. Disaster management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource efficiency. Urban environmental management.
	Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators programme 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gauteng Global City Region. Urban employment research partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation in service provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer reviews. Evaluation of achievement of national govt priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UEM research. Cost of service provision. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDS guidance. Planning reviews. Co-operation within and between city regions. Urban renewal. Trade and investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIV and AIDS. Neighbourhood development. Implementation guidance for national priorities: LED, EPWP, BNG etc. By-law enforcement. Secondary property markets in townships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning alignment guidance. Law and order guidance. Managing labour disputes and disciplinary procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on making IDPs more sustainable. Improving State of the Environment reporting. 	
Cross-cutting activities					
Knowledge Production (including State of the Cities Report) and Sharing (including reference groups and seminars)					
City Development Strategy inputs and resources					
Strengthening the network					

Review structure and approach

As indicated earlier during the period under review the SACN executed its mandate through the following key functional areas:

- a) Guidance: By preparing and disseminating strategic inputs and positions
- b) Discovery: By undertaking selected monitoring and evaluation including a regular State of the Cities Report
- c) Assistance: By preparing technical inputs on leading practice and processes

Using these functional areas as a basis for analysis, this report has consolidated the three functional areas into two key outcomes which capture the essence of what the SACN has been mandated to do thus far:

- Knowledge Generation - discovery (Outputs take the form of publications and articles and reports published on the website)
- Knowledge Dissemination – guidance and assistance (Outputs take the form of learning events, and material distribution vehicles used by the SACN including but not limited to the website, CD –ROMs, DVDs etc)

Any gaps or recommendations around scope have been noted in the last section dealing with recommendations and points for consideration.

Section 3:
Issues Emerging –
Knowledge Generation and
Knowledge Dissemination

Aim of this section:

To review the work of the SACN at the Mid-Term of 2006-2011 period,
relative to its key functional areas of knowledge generation and
knowledge dissemination.

Overview

According to the statistics provided in the 2007 Annual Report as well as the 2006/07 annual performance report the SACN had an exceptionally good year in 2006/07. During this period the knowledge generation and dissemination activities had grown from the previous year both quantitatively, as the comparative numbers below indicate, as well as qualitatively in terms of the participants' evaluation surveys conducted at the end of each of the learning events. The following numbers quantify the achievement during this period: 5 new publications; 26 learning events attended by 1 332 people.

During 2007/08 the knowledge generation and dissemination activities exceeded all previous years in quantitative terms, and qualitative surveys of participants' views revealed higher levels of satisfaction with the relevance and effectiveness of the SACN learning events. During this year 5 new publications were produced, 29 learning events convened and an average of 1834 people received the monthly SACN newsletter.

Mid way through implementation of the 2008/09 business plan the following achievements have been recorded: the SACN has hosted 14 learning events which account for 138 hours of learning; and can be extrapolated to 7500 person hours of learning. By comparison, all of SACN's learning events in 2007/08 accounted for 198 hours of learning and 9 544 person hours. Because the number of events, the average length of learning events and the average number of people attending each event have all gone up, the SACN can be expected to exceed these performance levels by a significant margin in 2008/09. Thus far 6 publications have been produced and 3 video recordings of events. This is less than half of all outputs, but an intensive work programme in the second half of the year should deliver the remaining learning events in time, and many of the publications will reach the design and printing stage after March 2009.

Knowledge Generation (publications)

“ ... these (publications) were not just research reports, most of them provide guidance on leading practice, record experiences and lessons learnt by the city municipalities and made recommendations for future city development strategies, plans and programmes”

Zinhle Peter, former Chairperson of the SACN (from the 2008 Annual Report).

The knowledge generation programme resulted in the following print publications during the period under review:

- Skills Development Toolkit (July 2006)
- The State of the Cities Report 2006 (August 2006);
- A Sustainable Cities pamphlet to support the SA-Denmark UEM programme (October 2006)
- SACN collaborated with Succeed magazine in developing a series of monthly magazine features on all member cities
 - Positive spaces: A report on the proceedings of a seminar on HIV/Aids and sustainable human settlements (September 2007)
 - The State of City Finances Report (October 2007)
 - Sustainable Cities Annual (October 2007)
 - Effectiveness of Urban Developments Incentives (April 2008)
 - Inclusive Cities Annual (June 2008)
 - The Expanded Public Works Programme in SACN cities (June 2008)
 - Inclusive Cities Annual 2008 (August 2008)
 - Sustainable Cities Annual 2008 (September 2008)
 - Green Rating Tool for offices (September 2008)
 - State of Cities Reporting: Good Practice Guide and Toolkit (October 2008)
 - Urban Space Economy Study (November 2008)

In 2006/7 the SACN had released 5 printed publications, which has increased up to 7 halfway through the 2008/9 financial year, with a projection of 17 being released by the end of June 2009. This is an increase of more than 300% over the period of the review as illustrated in the table below:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 3rd Qtr	2009/10 Planned	Total
Expenditure Rm	6.206	6.206	6.411	6.267	10.829		14.637	40.304
Number of knowledge exchange and networking events	6	17	2	26	29	26	40	128
Number of people attending KE and networking events	230	620	86	1 332	1 183	1 359	1 600	6 583
Number of publications	2	4	1	5	5	7	17	31
Number of printed copies of publications	1 800	2 000	4 000	3 600	16 500	1 200	8 000	29 200
Number of publications downloaded off website				2 439	9 044	7 634	8 000	19 117
Avg number of people receiving a newsletter every month	666	854	1 114	1 549	1 894	1 890	1 800	7 847
Number of page impressions on website		156 891	231 200	324 883	416 177	403 669	504 574	1 583 910
Number of unique visitors to website		25 427	42 070	54 173	62 153	56 226	60 000	240 848
Number of video records of events				8	3	3	3	18

(Source: SACN Second Quarter Performance Report 2008/9)

If the SACN meets its targeted goals illustrated above, it would have reached a segmented audience of around five and a half thousand city stakeholders since its inception, significantly increasing its points of contact from 6 knowledge exchange and networking events in 2003/04 to 40 in 2008/9.

Of particular note during the period under review is the release of the second State of the Cities Report (SOCR), which was launched in September 2006. The SOCR has indeed become a 'franchise' product of the SACN. Many countries in Africa and elsewhere are development and future challenges. This is indeed a proud achievement for the SACN. For South African cities, the report highlights several challenges that if attained will bring the country closer to the ideal of people centred development. The State of the Cities Report 2006 provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of South Africa's largest cities, it reflects on what has been achieved by cities in the first term of office under the new municipal dispensation brought about by the Local Government White Paper, the Municipal Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act. Whilst the SOCR looks back at achievements it also looks forward to new challenges and opportunities facing cities.

In recognising the importance of the finances of city governments to the functioning of Cities, the SACN in 2007 published a sector State of the Cities Report focused in more detail on municipal finance management. The State of City Finances Report analyses the expenditure patterns of its nine member cities and considers the financial risks facing the cities in the

future. While city finance may appear to be a largely technical matter, the SOCFR promotes finance as having deeply strategic, social, economic and political dimensions.

Stakeholder Feedback ...

1 – Relevance and quality of flagship products

Key among SACN knowledge products are the State of the Cities Reports, including the sector reports on State of City Finances and State of EPWP in the cities. All respondents interviewed consider these publications as the SACN's flagship projects and in the case of the State of the Cities Report see the publication as an industry benchmark which is now being followed by others in this space. These publications have impacted hugely on the positive perception of the SACN as a thought leader in city and urban development. A crucial question for the SACN, given the content 'success' of these publications, is 'where to from here'. What emerges from respondents is a need for there to be a more consistent approach in creating a direct impact on practice and improvement within the cities themselves. This call, which is not unique in the Knowledge management space, is an opportunity for the SACN is to explore how to make the publication 'useful' to its municipal audience so that content generated will eventually lead to the kind of change that the SACN hopes to foster in regard to urban policy and other developmental approaches.

Some of the comments from respondents can be summarised as follows:

- 'Although one acknowledges these reports, there is too much emphasis on the research and policy issues and not much to show or measure how we've moved beyond the findings in these reports. This may make the reports to appear too 'academic'.'
- 'The SACN has illustrated leaps in quality from the 2002 CDI report to the SOC reports in 2004 and 2006, to the SOC Finance report. The work produced by the SACN is commendable but there is a question mark as to the actual impact that it has.'
- 'The SACN has understood its strength as being that of knowledge sharing and the State of the Cities Report and State of City Finances Report has set it apart as a credible institutions for municipalities.'

2 – Meeting the needs of diverse audiences

On the whole stakeholders across the board – clients, donors, partners felt that SACN knowledge products were of an extremely high quality with some respondents indicating that their learning needs had been met through the products and interventions executed by the SACN over the mid-term. The overall assessment is quite mixed and it appears that cities believe that there is still room for broader marketing and exposure of materials and events. 2 of the 5 respondents rated this question at a 2, i.e. managers and practitioners have adequate access to SACN learning materials and events, whilst the remaining respondents believe that exposure has been limited and marketing of products and events could be improved. 3 of the 5 respondents felt that the SACN had met their learning needs.

In some cases, as indicated by responses below there seems to be some confusion of who exactly SACN publications are targeted toward. This has resulted in comments, which suggest that SACN needs to understand municipal processes. Given the composition of the SACN board and the complete dedication to local government issues as well as a pre-meditated approach toward understanding the attention span of its audience, it is unlikely that the SACN is 'out of touch' with the needs of cities or that it would deliberately produce complex material to confuse its audience. Perhaps what comments like these are suggesting is that SACN needs to be explicit about its target audience and include this link of information in the actual publication. In other words the SACN should externalise its methodology and make it part of the knowledge system and product. One would hazard the SACN to become an 'everyman' in its attempts to reach out to its constituency as this might lead to a diffusion of its content and work against its ultimate goal to promote an urban agenda in Cities.

3 – Expanding the reach of the SACN through creative marketing

Some respondents felt that the SACN needs to cast a wider net in terms of its marketing of publications and other knowledge products. This is an appropriate comment, which suggests that one cannot separate the 'product' from the means of delivery. That indeed is the Knowledge Management aspect of SACN's work – it's about making the content available in as many forms as possible, given the learning needs and abilities of a specific audience. Perhaps the SACN could consider a broader range of partners who might share the need to distribute material (like the UrbanWiki initiative emerging from the World Bank)

or partners who are purely in the game of packaging and distribution of material (like design experts who are well versed in new and varied forms of on and offline communication and collaboration methods).

Some of the comments from respondents can be summarised as follows:

- 'SACN products and events are very accessible, some are available online on the SACN website whilst others are sent out to cities directly. A broader range of managers who are not board members have access through their participation in the reference groups.'
- 'Some departments in cities have had more access whilst in some cases it appears that SACN does not have an understanding of protocols within municipalities.' –
- 'For those managers and practitioners that are part of the SACN, they have adequate access to the SACN's network, materials and events. The observation is that the products of the SACN are not adequately marketed beyond this group and that may be attributed to the lack of co-ordination within the city itself.'
- 'SACN had done well in terms of meeting its objectives, however, not appropriate to our city due to its complexity'.
- 'Yes, they met our needs because we (the member cities) determine the agenda through debates at the board level'
- 'It depends on the city's focus at the time. Many events/products were relevant as it was very timeous for our city's needs but in some cases city had to undertake own intervention.'
- 'The SACN should be acknowledged for meeting our learning needs. It must be acknowledged that the SACN cannot meet all our learning needs. They have successfully managed to focus in on priority areas (instead of trying to do a shopping list of things). Their printed documents have served as a good resource and the events have created a good platform for active learning.'
- 'The SACN provides an extremely mixed bag of products, which could on the one hand be rated as excellent such as evidenced by the 2006 SOC report and the SOC Finances report, which raised the debate to a new level and facilitated a shared learning network. And on the other extreme, bad in that the products do not result in anything tangible, such as the sustainable cities report and the HIV/AIDS reports, which are too basic and are written in a style that assumes that people have no understanding of the contents. The downloadable reports were found to be useful, but the website of the SACN is not completely up to date in areas such as city data.'

- Engagement with member cities are sometimes not as good as it should be, there is often a perception that the work of the SACN might be more useful to the secondary cities not the three largest. However, SACN requires engagement from cities themselves to ensure that it remains relevant.

4 - Learning to Action

A key issue for the SACN remains how to encourage 'consumers' of their products and processed to translate their learning into action. Making this link would stand to increase the IMPACT of SACN knowledge products and processes significantly and would provide a more useful way of measuring the tangible benefit of their guidance. When asked "to what extent do you feel that SACN knowledge products and hosted events have led to a change / improvement in local government practice in your City?", it appears that cities believe that whilst the knowledge products and events are very useful, they do not translate in improved practice in cities. 3 out of 5 respondents rated this question at a 3, i.e. SACN had partially led to improvement in the city; whilst the remaining 2 respondents felt that they were unable to rate this element.

Despite the fact the SACN is yet to establish how to measure the impact of its knowledge products, its audience seems to already be using impact as a measure for assessing the knowledge generation efforts of the organisation. It would be prudent therefore to explore how other organisations with a knowledge management agenda manage to transition between awareness (characterised by access and use of knowledge products) to learning (characterised by an assimilation and reflection of knowledge product content) to action (characterised by a change in behaviour motivated by the learning experience and grounded in the content contained in the knowledge product).

Still on the issue of impact, there is a significant awareness from some respondents on the inevitable impact that the SACN would have merely by deciding WHAT to focus on. Put directly the question of 'who sets the agenda' within the SACN seems to be of import to respondents who feel that the status of the organisation has grown to the extent that it is capable not only of responding to issues in the local government sphere, but indeed by influencing or setting this agenda. This might in the future translate too into a need for a greater level of transparency on how 'issues' are formulated within the SACN.

Some of the comments from respondents can be summarised as follows:

- 'Whilst it is quite difficult to make a direct link between learning and improvement in the city, there is some assimilation of new thinking and action. Good value and excellent ROI' – 'This is quite difficult to assess because it depends on who participates and how information is further disseminated. However, there have been instances where the city as a result of SACN intervention had changed its practice, for example: use of research data and analysis in the drafting of the IDP.'
- 'There are gaps in terms of certain key policy areas that the SACN has not managed to address such as the Global City Region and Urban Management. What could assist could be the use of more independent external thought leaders and researches to add value to the discussions and debates.' –
- 'Issues dealt with by the SACN are not precise enough to generate a research agenda. Currently the agenda is set based on the funding requirements, the board and the SACN staff, the missing link are appropriate officials within municipalities dealing with the issues on a daily basis.'
- 'One cannot conclude that a single SACN product or event can attribute to changes or improvements in local government practice. An example is the State of the City's Finance report. The content of the report was quite interesting, had a good analysis and conclusion, but did not necessarily dramatically impact on municipalities.'
- The SACN products have been able to meet a gap in the market, however, there is a need to strengthen and expand on the Peer Review mechanism in order for the learning and application of learning to be expanded.
- The SACN has done exceptionally well in terms of analysis, collation and dissemination of knowledge products, however, the challenge is to move from the quantitative (number of products and number of people reached) to the actual IMPACT of the work having been undertaken.
- The SACN had done well in terms of understanding the lessons learnt from one area and sharing with others, however, the limitation has been to what extent municipalities are able to implement and apply the learning and SACN does not have control over this aspect.
- Whilst the SACN facilitates numerous events and produces high quality documents and research, it does not monitor impact and application.

Knowledge dissemination programme

“A recognised strength of the SACN is the value of its network, their ability to bring persons of a very high level of skill together ... to facilitate sharing at a very high level. This is in large part also due to the reputational success of the organisation.”

SACN Stakeholder – interviewed on the occasion of the Mid Term Review.

Stakeholder Feedback

1 – Tangible Impact

The SACN had done well in keeping cities informed on emerging urban trends and policy but its impact on action within cities is not tangible. When asked to what extent the SACN has managed to keep Cities abreast of current and emerging changes and trends in urban policy in South Africa and across the world - 3 out of 5 respondents rated this question at a 2, i.e. SACN had met cities' expectations of keeping them abreast of urban development issues; whilst the remaining 2 respondents felt that they were unable to rate this element.

The point has been made earlier that some respondents are aware of the impact that the SACN could make, merely by deciding what issues to focus on. This issue is raised again in this section, this time in relation to the SACN's ability to bring a broader set of stakeholders into the City look by virtue of the status and reputation that it has build over the last few year. Asked directly the question is whether the SACN is making the most of the “NETWORK STATUS”, again the call is for the SACN to see the issues that impact cities and the levers that can effect change as being bigger than just City administration issues and should rather

be positioning for City Interest issues which will involve a much wider and broader set of stakeholders.

One City respondent expressed a desire for closer working relationships between the SACN and City functionaries in the area of knowledge management. While the SACN has operated a strong and vibrant Knowledge Managers Reference Group, this team of people are yet to have a presence across all of the SACN's programmes. Indeed looking at how the SACN has approached the segmentation of its audiences in relation to its products, one might be tempted to ask to what extent the parts come together to be 'sum of the whole' and to what extent this happens on a consistent basis. This might lead one to conclude that while the SACN **DOES** knowledge management in relation to its products and activities perhaps it needs to **BE** knowledge management by rolling out the same approached internally and in relation to all its programmes.

From a programmatic perspective some respondents have called for a 'futures' orientation to the current research approach taken by the SACN. Indeed the most recent release of the Dinokeng Scenarios begs the question of what impact the three paths projected would have for SA Cities. 'Futures' is a well - placed suggestion as the SACN could only benefit from using its strong analytical approach to assist Cities to PROJECT into the future, thus impacting on an agenda that is perhaps yet to be set. Research in the areas of "Anticipatory Governance" might be an approach place for the SACN to start to chart a futures path for South African cities.

Again the matter of audience segmentation is raised in relation to the learning events and activities hosted by the SACN, with one respondent cautioning that the network might be seen as an 'exclusive' club. This is a tricky one, requiring greater reflection outside of this review, because on the one hand the SACN has to maintain an agenda that will hook and maintain interest of the highest levels of City politician and official, and yet its material must also speak to the practical needs of implementing officers, who are unlikely to be seen in the same company as City Managers and Members of Mayoral Committees. Perhaps the trick here is to externalise the rationale behind the targeting of certain levels of municipal stakeholder in relation to specific events and to have a balance of events that target various levels and still those that are by intent meant to mingle between levels (as this is too an important endeavour). It is unlikely though that the SACN is going to please everyone in this matter, but deciding on what options to take should happen at a strategic level driven by the overall intent of the product, event or activity.

2 – ‘Champion for Cities’

Some of the comments received from interviews with stakeholders indicate that there is a general sense that the SACN has done exceedingly well in fulfilling their role within the realms of knowledge generation and knowledge sharing. However, there does appear to be a perception that it suffers from a kind of ‘crisis of success’, where stakeholders and beneficiaries of its services believe that it should begin to consider the increase in its scope of work to the extent of becoming a ‘flag-bearer’ for cities. This would imply performing a lobbying and advocacy role on behalf of cities.

There still seems to be confusion about the difference of the roles to be played by SALGA and the SACN and make calls for the SACN to take a more ‘lobbied’ approach to the issues that it focuses on. While it is important to acknowledge some of the challenges that SALGA has experienced in the past, it would be wise for the SACN - given its mandate – to ‘stick to its knitting’ and stay the course with regard to its knowledge support role in SA Cities. This matter is dealt with in greater detail in the last section of this report.

3 – Scope vs. Competencies

Some comments from interviewees spoke to the need for the SACN to look at increasing its own internal competencies, which would allow it to deal internally with a wider range of issues. However, when one considers the range of issues at the local government level, it would be impossible for any organisation, much less an organisation like the SACN, which essentially plays a facilitation role, to effectively address all these areas.

As outlined elsewhere in this report our recommendation would be that the SACN, having accurately identified its role and having had enormous success in this regard, should indeed ‘stick to its knitting’ and attempt to improve on the existing achievements. It would be more desirable that the SACN instead identify opportunities to improve on its facilitation and networking role in ensuring that the correct skills are paired with the need.

4 – City Development vs. City Administration

Cities and the urban environment are exceptionally complex both in terms of the issues dealt with as well as the stakeholders involved. To date the SACN has been focused on the issues of 'city administration'. This is influenced by the SACNs members as being cities. However, cities are about more than just the municipalities. There are many stakeholders involved in development work in cities, for example: major property owners and developers, environmental specialists, etc. These types of groupings have very specific expertise and specialisation which are not the 'core business' of municipalities and cities could benefit from pooling resource, information and knowledge with these stakeholders to find better ways of doing within cities, that would allow city administrations to focus on the core business for which they exist.

Some of the comments from respondents can be summarised as follows:

- 'The SACN has added value in keeping municipalities abreast of trends through their research and allowed for municipalities to piggyback on their findings as a learning experience for their own municipalities. The creation of inter municipality visits as a learning platform was also useful. The recommendation would be for institutions such as JIKE in municipalities to play a more active role in institutionalising and disseminating information and knowledge from the SACN across their municipalities. This may require that the SACN creates an interface with municipality structures similar to COJ JIKE to enhance their role in municipalities beyond individual participation.'
- 'The SACN has met this expectation and forms part of a menu of options of similar resources available, such as SA Civil Society Network and World Bank. '
- 'The SACN has illustrated leaps in quality from the 2002 CDI report to the SOC reports in 2004 and 2006, to the SOC Finance report. The work produced by the SACN is commendable but there is a question mark as to the actual impact that it has.'
- 'The SACN had to quite achieved on the expectations we had, for example key strategic issues such as the impact of globalisation on municipalities should have been vigorously debated at the board level. SACN should play a bigger role in trend analysis to assist cities' planning processes.'

- The SACN has done well in terms of the knowledge products that it has been able to pull together, however, the success and impact has been limited. The organisation should focus much more on a 'trend spotting' type of role that assists and enables cities to plan better. A greater impact of the work of the SACN might be felt if the reach to more municipalities as well as a broader scope of work was encouraged.
- SACN should define its role more as the 'national flag-bearer' urban issues. Who is the champion for cities? The current perceived 'shift' in focus to rural development speaks to the lack of a recognisable champion for cities and the issues of urbanisation and urban policy development.
- In order for the SACN to retain its sharpness and quality of work it must start to look at how it increases its own competencies. Does it grow the operation or remain small and bring in expertise and resources on need basis?
- A recognised strength of the SACN is the value of its network, their ability to bring persons of a very high level of skill together ... to facilitate sharing at a very high level. This is in large part also due to the reputational success of the organisation.
- An area of crisis of its own success the SACN is often expected to perform a lobbying function on behalf of cities; sometimes expected to express an opinion on developments. This extends beyond the knowledge generation and sharing role of the SACN.
- The events that are hosted by the SACN are very well prepared and presented and the products have high levels of credibility and integrity. However, the question that remains unanswered is 'who are they sharing the information with, would there not be more value in sharing with other Mayors and City Managers who are not currently member cities of the SACN?' the SACN runs the risk of being considered an 'exclusive club' as a result of limited municipalities able to participate in the programmes. Is there opportunity for the SACN to create a more inclusive platform for engagement around urban issues by all stakeholders/interested parties operating within the urban space.
- The SACN has been able to respond to new challenges facing cities, often not quickly enough. However, it must be understood that in the urban space things change quickly

and there are wide range of issues that cities deal with. Reference groups have been excellent in providing technical expertise but sometimes that the fact that the SACN does not have technical expertise in-house can be considered a draw-back.

Section 4:
Issues Emerging –
Organisational Effectiveness, Mandate
and Approach

Aim of this section:

To consolidate review notes and feedback into issues for consideration
and recommendations for the SACN.

Outside of a discussion around knowledge generation and knowledge dissemination as key outputs of the SACN programmatic efforts is a range of other issues, which point to the overall effectiveness of the organisation within a certain environment context.

This section explores these remaining issues.

Issue: SACN Mandate

Respondents who have known the SACN over the course of its existence still find value in the mandate of the institution (as articulated in section one of this document). For some this mandate has never been more relevant with current government management policy emphasises rural development, when the country is about to hit 70% of the population in urban areas, one respondent says this raise the role of cities and towns on the national agenda.

It is felt that knowledge management and knowledge sharing around city town strategies is again completely relevant, for one respondent - “cities need to learn from each other and not to reinvent the wheel. A key learning is not so much between the cities themselves, as it has been between cities and national government departments ... again it has been uneven, some departments have been engaged and other have not realised why to focus on cities. Treasury, DPLG, Extended Public Works, DTI have been participative but there is much more that we could do in the economic cluster in government.”

One respondent openly states a desire for the SACN to be more of a more lobbying organization. Yet, in reflecting on a recent engagement with the SACN, he suggests that being a lobbying organization would at some stage stand to compromise the SACN's member cities which might have political and other considerations to take into account – “Lets take electricity distribution ... If the SACN took a position against the REDS ... what would have been the implication ... there must be an organic concept of letting things emerge in an organic and unstructured way ... there are other ways to lobby without being overt ... maybe this is why SALGA's job is so difficult ...”. In locating this kind of comment it is clear that the SACN would face distinct challenges if it did decided to play a more lobbying role. This would also ‘muddy the waters’ with regard to the role played by SALGA – which should be avoided at all costs.

This issue of mandate and scope sometimes does cause the SACN to have to clarify its position and role relative to the South African Local Government Association – SALGA. For

one respondent the lines between them are clear – “The voice of City Governments is very weak in South Africa ... this is the role for the SACN it needs to organize that voice, in a way that it is not a FORMAL lobbying organization ... could it be that merely that they organize the ideas of the 9 metro cities and becomes the locus for discussion and the creation of ideas to be articulated. SALGA then should listen to this voice and decide on how to articulate it. Any position that SALGA takes should be an agreed position from those municipalities ... because it has a seat in the NCOP, it has to develop a position in which it take into account the overall national debate.”

Other respondents agree. According to one who has played an institutional role in the SACN in the past, the organisation was not set up as an advocacy group: “... it does not represent any one consistency this was because SALGA said that this was there role, if you see the SACN not at representing cities but building a network between bodies "then you realise that they move that the pace of their partners ... its role depends largely on its ability to work within the system ... which might be limiting. It is not an independent urban think tank ... but it never set out to be ... “.

For one respondent – the comparison to SALGA is an unnecessary one – “if the SALGA was functional, SACN would still have a space because the SACN would be / should be ‘cutting edge’ ... their work is in international comparisons ... bigger perspectives is a very important part of who the SACN is and how they add value for clients ...”.

In executing its mandate one respondent cautioned the SACN against been too ‘faddish’ - for this respondent the SACN approach to 2010 is a case in point – “ ... is 2010 a real issue? Are there other ways to look at it and focus on other issues through the current focus on 2010? Could they conduct research on where the other cities are on legacy projects ... but let’s not hype with the rest of municipalities - so a COP would have been a nice project to look at the some of the devils advocate issues ... could the SACN have taken a more strategic point of view on something like 2010?”

This point perhaps speak to an issue raised in the previous section, calling for a more transparent approach to how the SACN sets its agenda. It is likely that the more the SACN grows in reputation that it will face an increasing call to explain what issues make its agenda and critically why.

In terms of how the SACN characterises its work moving forward it is recommended the SACN broaden its definition and scope of knowledge management beyond the key outputs

generated by the organisation. Typically local government organisations have focussed on the areas of knowledge products (knowledge generation from an SACN perspective), knowledge exchange (knowledge dissemination from the SACN perspective) and knowledge systems / processes (which the SACN does not at present execute in a direct way). It might be prudent for the SACN to explore how they can most effectively promote knowledge management systems in member cities bearing in mind this will ultimately impact on the reach and effectiveness of the knowledge material that they generate and of the kind of knowledge events that they hold.

A 2006 study of the knowledge management terrain that the SACN finds itself in notes:

“ ... There is space for the SACN to assist KM units to move from their current level of functionality to a higher level. Despite exposure to the SACN reference group, 5 Metros currently have little or no programmes in place to implement KM in their institutions, while four have the basic institutional arrangements in place and are seeking to entrench their efforts with work programmes.”

How the SACN helps SA Cities develop more competent KM structures is perhaps an issue that should be posed directly to Knowledge Managers currently participant in the SACN KM Reference Group, but there can be no doubt that by assisting City KM managers to thrive, the SACN is indirectly aiding its own cause to support Cities through knowledge driven approaches.

Issue: Peer Learning as a key SACN Methodology

How do leaders learn? According to one respondent, leaders can learn a huge amount from other leaders by just being in their company. “This is peer learning even though the actual peer reviews never got off the ground because they took up so much resources ... a lot of peer learning took place without people realising it because it was non threatening, every time the board met this was a peer learning opportunity ... generally peer learning has been positive at the SACN” he states.

Another respondent, while confessing that he did not know much about peer learning, did however agree that shared learning partnership ‘sounds like the right thing to do’, but cautioned that many times key learning and sharing happen linked to some key activity and didn’t just happen in a vacuum.

It is interesting to note that the SACN has made a considerable and growing investment in its person-to-person engagements. This is an encouraging, as many more developed knowledge management models have a tendency for over dependence on electronic and codified forms of knowledge exchange. Critically the SACN's person-to-person engagements, while being more challenging to measure impact, will be the most effective lever in promoting reflection and ultimately behaviours change in targeted audiences. It is indeed the start of the learning cycle for most of the SACN's clientele.

Issue: Operational Efficiency of SACN

In response to the question if the SACN is well managed and if it provides cost-effective services to member cities. All respondents responded emphatically... 'absolutely yes'.

One of the members of the SACN management team believes that its competitive advantage relates to its size – because the organisation is lean it allows for speed and flexibility of decision-making. Furthermore, the team employed by the SACN has the right 'attitude' to get things done. The work of the SACN is practitioner-focused rather than intellectually/academically based and therefore practically useful to cities and other organisations that hope to learn through their interaction with the organisation. Also the work is interesting and exciting for staff as they are constantly challenged by the type of work which involves trend analysis and innovation.

On the question of 'Value for money' member cities felt that they received good return on investment for their annual subscriptions.

Some of the concepts used to describe and justify the idea of 'well managed' in the SACN context are: clean audit, good procurement practices, due to good management budget has steadily increased over the years. Both the members of the secretariat as well as member cities interviewed they felt that the work environment created at the SACN bodes well for good individual performance. As one of the member cities representatives remarked: 'The energy, eagerness and excitement of the SACN team and what they do for their member cities is a plus and is welcomed. The team is good at conferences and provide good quality, best technology, well presented staff, well packaged documents. As a member it is not difficult to get information and documents from the SACN.'

Another member city representative agreed: 'Management had the relevant qualities to create a caring environment which contributes to productivity, teamwork and enjoyment.'

What emerges from the SACN's practice in terms of measuring the reach and extent of its indicators is an approach, which many other knowledge driven institutions struggle with. In the private sector knowledge management is measured like research and development – as an input factor into a broader production system. Thus any efficiency from the overall system gauged by increased profit or reduced cost is attributed to the input factors (of which KM would be one). Because of the complexities of the public service, this kind of direct line of measurement of the impact of KM on the 'Bottom Line' is always difficult because the bottom line is often so diffuse and difficult to measure in the first place. But what the SACN has managed to do by keeping clear record of its 'inputs' and therefore costs (for instance the number of events and the costs thereof) is to always keep a quantitative line to what is usually a blurred qualitative discussion. Perhaps the SACN should consider documenting its approach to be shared other KM institutions in the public sphere.

Issue: Making the most of the SACN's Governance Structures.

For a former SACN board member one of the inbuilt weaknesses of the SACN is the board structure - "but there is no way to get around it, consistency is a challenge when you are trying to reach this level of official and politician" he says. Another challenge is that politicians don't like to engage with officials "... you need one political and administration per City ... but this can be unwieldy" -

According to this respondent, a complicating factor is that quite a few of the board members are engaged in power struggles at the municipal level and this has impacted on the constitution and participation of board members – " it is a nightmare for the secretariat to keep consistency in a highly charged and unstable environment ... even the fact they have kept things together is quite remarkable because it is not easy".

In offering advice to the SACN this respondent suggests that the way to do it is not be trying to change the governance structure but by providing 'high value' – "... don't call people together to discuss an administrative issue, if you provide an agenda that's relevant to cities and high level officials and participants then you maintain a high level of participation ... so

every time the board meets it must be a learning experience and they must be able to get access to information that they would not normally get access to ... “

It seems then that for the most part, what the SACN is experiencing in terms of flux in relation to its board is ‘par of the course’. Their challenges are not unique and are faced by most organisations trying to target the level of participant that is the SACN board member. Indeed what the SACN experiences at a board level is indicative of a general challenge in the local government sphere that sees a minimal amount of time being spent on reflection and forecasting in favour of a more reactionary approach to governance and administration.

Issue: Donor perspective – Is the SACN delivering to its partners

For one respondent the SACN remains attractive to donors because it reaches out to constituencies that donors want to reach, suggesting that this too might be extended further – “maybe the SACN should be going further in this regard because SA Cities are changing rapidly... if they extended their reach (to cities other than the metros) that would be great.” The suggestion to ‘reach out’ might not go down well with all sectors though – another respondent felt that because the SACN was so ‘sexy’ to funders that they were ‘crowding out debate’ in certain areas – “the SACN operates on an upper end of the ‘consulting’, they use a lot of donor finance, because of the potential impact they can reach a higher level of stakeholders So this is a factor in terms of funding ...more so than an NGO. This raises the question of whether there is a need to support a more NGO / civil society perspective because these group can say the things that the SACN would not be able to because of its members In other words a more critical perspective”

Critical or not, one donor stakeholder respondent indicated that the SACN had exceeded in providing a return on donor ‘investment’, because the SACN has provided a strong consistent and stable model of how cities can organize themselves to cater for their own needs when there is a gap at a national level. This has galvanized other cities in Africa to think about their own needs in this regard – “... this will probably not have happened had SACN not demonstrated that this model of interaction was and could be possible. SACN has shown by demonstration of member dues that it is of value to members and not just donor funded. This is particular achievement because they are a relatively new initiative for African cities ... they have done incredibly well ... in giving donors a ‘bang’ for their buck.”

It is clear from the growth of the SACN's budget over the years that it has seen significant growth even in a constrained environment, pointing to a confidence of its key funding partners. Heeding some of the calls for transparency it might be well considered for the SACN to think about whether and to what extent its donor's / funding sources have driven its agenda and will drive its agenda into the future. This will become increasingly important as the SACN grows in reputation and success.

Issue: SACN ... areas of growth

For one respondent one of the key debates in the local government sector is how to link with the secondary layer of municipalities and 'bring them into the loop'. This is a an area of growth he says – “ If you have a tendency to have an urban vs. rural dichotomy amongst the politicians with an ABC (anything but cities) attitude ... if you are able to bring on intermediary towns, that act as intermediaries to the rural areas, that's how you reach out and should show that you are adding value to this sector”

Another interviewee recommends that the SACN follow through on extending and embedding the work started with the State of the Cities reports (finances included) “There is so much scope for debate and discussion in SA, some of the work that is being done ... maybe has got itself too bureaucratized ... must find a the five / ten most import positions that we think are required for the SACN: e.g. the local business tax, the restructuring of the electricity industry, the single public service. The SACN should be producing activities around influencing the debate without becoming a lobbying organisation ...”

For him the work of the SACN must be more driven by policy debates that are happing – “they need to find a balance toward influencing ideas with actually doing so (establishing / creating them?) Reports he says are really important to reinforce the status of the SACN ... then networking should be driven by these key pieces.

Regarding the matter of networking and other interactive engagement run by the SACN, one respondent offers a word of caution – “ ... workshops need to be strategic interventions because, SA is awash with workshops, must try to be strategic ... working with the universities is great, the SACN should maximize their ability to piggy back on other peoples initiatives ... e.g. IMFO ... initiatives ...because there are already too may workshops ...”

Regarding gaps in the SACN programme, one respondent notes that the one thing the SACN never really cracked was economic development strategy and what cities, could and should be doing – “integration issues are key” he says “ economic integration, policy matters around the connectivity, human settlement policy, transport policies, land use management policy which cities struggled to bring together into a coherent functional whole ... combating urban sprawl ... to turn that ship around needs a lot direction, strategies, support because they don't speak to each other”. This is not necessarily a municipal function he stresses but integration issues impact heavily on cities.

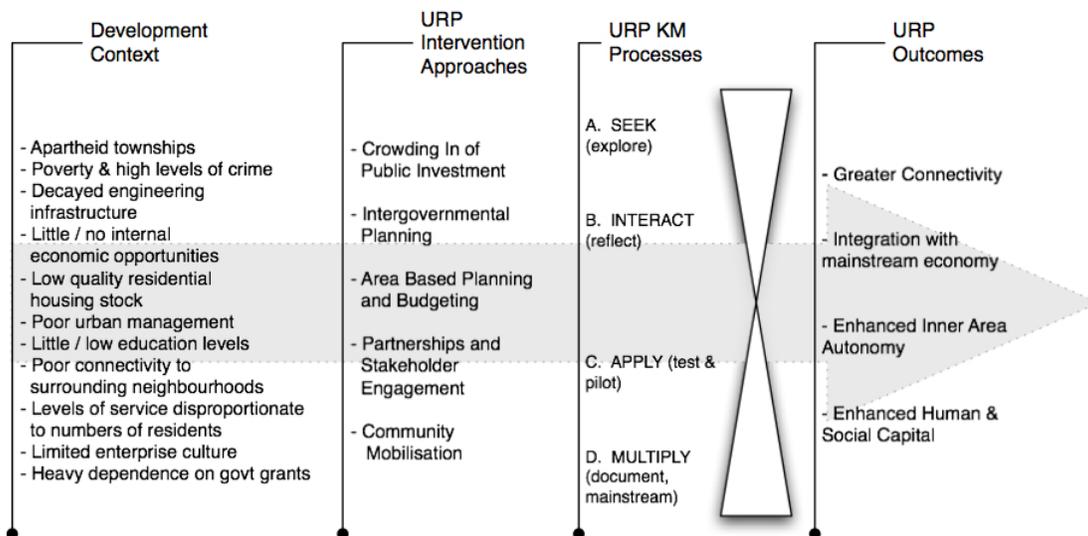
Another interviewee advises the SACN not to underestimate the intangible value that they are adding - ... the fact that people are getting together on a regular basis is itself a deliverable ... contrast to ten years ago with cities competing, duplicating stuff, going overseas and competing against neighbour cities... basic stuff but very important ... “

A key growth area for one respondent, which the authors of this report endorse, was the use increased use of ‘modern’ communications and available media – “they can make far better use of digital media ... the SACN website old fashion by today's standard (web 2.0 – facebook, twitter era)” Regarding the SACN's print material this respondent finds that much can be done to improve the use of content that the SACN generates: “... compared to what can be done they (written publications) are ‘ordinary’ could be much better use of available media – “ they should reflect the life of cities ... its not about infrastructure it is about people ... better use of maps, get in a new designer and think carefully about how to convey the information ... it is worth spending a little money and time on web2.0 communications,” he says.

Lastly he believes the SACN has not opened itself to other kind of non -municipal partners to complement the current municipal partners that they engage with – “like the chamber of commerce, and the South African Property Association, how does the SACN partner with other research think tanks ...”. This issue of City Administration vs City Issues has been raised in the previous section and it one that the SACN needs to consider carefully in broaden the current set of stakeholders that it has been targeting.

Issue: Knowledge to Action

The SACN has done a well quantifying knowledge management by focussing on its key outputs of knowledge generation and knowledge dissemination (essentially the creation and distribution of knowledge products and facilitation of knowledge exchange activities). A key are of growth however remains how to link the critical outcome issues with the input factors. Perhaps a deeper exploration of other institutional knowledge management models might assist the SACN in creating a knowledge continuum, which make the critical link between product and impact. For instance the Urban Renewal Programme has, albeit retrospectively, linked everything it does from a knowledge management perspective with the material conditions of townships. In the diagram below, which speaks to their 'hourglass' knowledge management model, one sees how they have tied the development context with their intervention approaches with their knowledge management approaches, eventually leading to the desired outcome of the entire initiative. While the jury is out on how effective this articulation of its work will be in moulding future knowledge management practice in the organisation, it is clear that a strong knowledge management influence runs through the core of their work.



Section 5:

Growing into the future – Benchmarking Opportunities for the SACN

Aim of this section:

To consolidate benchmarking opportunities for the SACN.

Much of what the SACN does has knowledge management at its core and relies heavily on basic knowledge management systems to be in place in targeted cities for there to be adequate synergy between the SACN and those it seeks to service. This includes current activities of promoting innovation and strategic thinking between cities and other spheres of government, fostering cooperation and exchange of best practice etc. Hence developing knowledge management capacity in South African Cities can be regarded as a critical success factor underlining all of the SACN's existing programmes.

In 2006 the SACN commissioned a study to recommend ways of improving the knowledge sharing capacity of the South African Cities Network'. This study makes relevant recommendations on possible scenarios for the SACN as it grows into its knowledge sharing role, which this report would like to highlight and restate:

Institution reviewed as benchmark	Issues for SACN
<p>National League of Cities and the National City Network. The National League of Cities is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centres of opportunity, leadership, and governance. The National City Network (NCN) is the web portal through which the National League of Cities offers its service and creates dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NLC and its web portal go beyond information sharing by creating platforms for dialogue on a range of City specific topics. ▪ The site is subscriber driven which gives the NLC the opportunity to target its content and monitor usage. ▪ The information on the site is organized primarily according to focus areas as opposed to the City members. ▪ The whole approach to narrowcasting its multimedia material through a separate TV web channel is quite innovative, and should be considered as a complement to the literary reports that are currently the mainstay of many cities in South Africa

<p>InfoCity. The <i>InfoCity</i> initiative, funded by Cities Alliance seeks to facilitate the exchange of experiences, ideas, and knowledge, as well as to provide a repository of this type of information among CDS (City Development Strategy) cities in East Asia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ InfoCity takes knowledge sharing to a regional level. It would be interesting for the SACN to consider forming linkages across SA borders and assisting other countries to form networks first in their own cities and then regionally.
<p>On a global level, linking Cities with content, the Global Alliance's Creative Cities Network (CCN) connects creative cities so that they can share experiences, know-how, training in business skills and technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The SACN can learn from this global effort to network people and project and cities according to specific content areas. Members have access to each other's data and are kept up to date on new initiatives.

Resources & References

Interviews were conducted with the following people:

Mr Andrew Boraine, former Chairperson of the SACN

Ms Zintle Peter, former Chairperson of the SACN

Adv Graham Richards, Municipal Manager of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality

Cllr Christine Walters, MMC Community Development COJ, SACN Board Member

Mr Rashid Seedat, City of Johannesburg (COJ)

Mr Graeme Gotz, City of Johannesburg (COJ)

Ms Nellie Lester, Department of Provincial and Local Government (dplg)

Mr Philip van Ryneveld

Prof Edgar Pieterse

Ms Ntombini Marrengane, World Bank, SACN Board Member

Mr Sithole Mbanga, SACN Secretariat

Ms Supriya Kalidas, SACN Secretariat

Ms Sharon Lewis, SACN Secretariat

Mr Seana Nkhahla, SACN Secretariat

Ms Astrid Wood, SACN Secretariat

Mr Patrick Siwedi, former member of SACN Audit Committee

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