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PUTTING PARTICIPATION AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT// PUTTING DEVELOPMENT AT THE HEART OF PARTICIPATION

A CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The State of Local Governance publication

Since 2008, the GGLN produces regular commentaries on the state of local governance in South Africa. The purpose of the State of Local Governance (SoLG) publication is to present a civil society-based assessment of the key challenges, debates and areas of progress with regard to governance and development at the local level in South Africa. It also aims to provide local government policy-makers and practitioners with practical recommendations to improve policy, guidelines, systems and interventions where necessary, based on a sound analysis of the context and an assessment of the challenges and opportunities for improvements. The publication has also been used to build awareness of, and mobilise support within civil society and appropriate government institutions for the key advocacy positions of the network.

The first SoLG publication in 2008 was entitled *Local Democracy in Action: A Civil Society Perspective on Local Governance in South Africa*. This was followed by *Ethical Leadership and Political Culture in Local Government* in 2010. The third publication, published in 2011, was titled *Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction.*

Cover picture: GIZ-SLGP

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the GGLN

ABOUT THE GOOD GOVERNANCE LEARNING NETWORK

The GGLN was founded in 2003 as a national initiative to bring civil society organisations working in the field of local governance together. Knowledge sharing and peer learning, knowledge production and advocacy towards the goal of strengthening participatory, democratic and developmental local governance in South Africa are core sets of activities of the GGLN.

VISION

The GGLN's vision is to create a strong civil society network that harnesses and builds the collective expertise and energy of its members to contribute meaningfully to building and sustaining a system of participatory and developmental local government in South Africa.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the network are to:

* Share information and learning about local governance by creating an interface for organisations working in this arena;
* Document and disseminate best practices as well as produce information and research outputs that are of benefit to various stakeholders involved in local governance processes, including communities and municipalities;
* Advocate for changes in policy and practice to promote participatory local governance;
* Promote the development and replication of innovative models for participatory local governance and pro-poor development at the local level;
* Generate partnerships between civil society organisations, and between civil society and government at various levels, to strengthen local governance processes.

VALUES

The GGLN is underpinned by the following set of values, to which all members of the network commit themselves:

* Participatory and pro-poor governance
* Non-partisanship
* Constructive engagement with government and other stakeholders
* Working together in the interests of achieving the network's objectives
* Sharing the benefits of membership of the network amongst active members
* Building the capacity of member organisations of the network

MEMBERS

The full members of the GGLN are:

Afesis-Corplan

African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE – UWC)

Black Sash

Built Environment Support Group (BESG)

Community Law Centre (CLC)

Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC)

Democracy Development Programme (DDP)

Development Action Group (DAG)

Eastern Cape NGO Coalition (ECNGOC)

Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)

Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)

Isandla Institute

Mvula Trust

Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG)

Planact

Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD)

Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)

Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE)

The African Institute for Community Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd) and the Community Based
Development Programme (CBDP) have recently joined the GGLN and will be eligible for full membership in 2012.

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FOREWORD

The South African system of local government is on the brink of teenhood. Although in its current form it has only come into existence in 2000, it is easy to forget that it is barely 12 years old. It is, after all, a critical sphere of government that, if functioning effectively, can fundamentally transform the lives of people through service provision, planning and democratic governance. But as it approaches adolescence, local government is showing signs of distress. Fortunately, there is an emerging consensus that things need to change and that one of the imperatives is to allow for greater differentiation in the system. There is also much greater appreciation of the underlying governance dimension to the problems affecting and displayed by local government, although this recognition is not necessarily accompanied by the sense of urgency it deserves in finding appropriate solutions.

Over the years, the GGLN has consistently highlighted shortcomings in the design, interpretation and implementation of the edifice of participatory local governance. The 2011 publication *Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction* drew on the distinction between 'invited spaces', denoting state-provided opportunities for public participation, and 'invented spaces', meaning actions and processes initiated by citizen and communities themselves, outside of the formal channels and opportunities of communication and engagement. The analysis presented in the publication has made an important contribution to the understanding of the state of local governance in South Africa, the limitations of the institutional channels of public participation and the legitimacy, potential and weaknesses of autonomous civic expression and engagement.

Importantly, it has highlighted that the local governance arena encompasses more than the official structures and processes provided for by legislation and managed by municipal representatives. While the South African experience shows that, to a certain extent at least, 'invented spaces' have emerged as insurgent, oppositional spaces to a local state that is failing to be accountable, transparent, participatory and effective in providing basic services, the tendency to juxtapose 'invited' and 'invented' spaces as mutually exclusive and impenetrable modes of engagement has, justifiably, come under criticism.[1]

In this publication the GGLN seeks to expand on the analysis presented in the previous publication and make a meaningful contribution to the search for appropriate alternatives to reinvigorate participatory local governance. A critical observation that emerged in the network's deliberations is the disconnect between public participation and local development, hence the theme "Putting participation at the heart of development // Putting development at the heart of participation".

With this offering, the GGLN hopes to provide food for thought and inspire innovation and commitment towards inclusive engagement with South Africa's most precious asset: its people.

Mirjam van Donk

Isandla Institute/Chairperson of the GGLN Reference Group

Cape Town, March 2012

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[1] This point was raised by Yunus Carrim, the Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, in his speech 'Towards a Dialectic of Invited and Invented Spaces' at the launch of the 2011 publication on 13 April 2011 and reiterated in an address titled "Strengthening Community Participation in Local Government: Challenges and Prospects", delivered at the University of Johannesburg on 5 May 2011. Both speeches can be downloaded from www.cogta.gov.za.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the 2012 *The State of Local Governance* publication of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN) is to explore alternative conceptions, approaches and methods for shaping a vibrant, pro-poor system of local governance and democracy in South Africa. It consciously seeks to depart from what has been a preoccupation, both in government and in the local governance civil society sector, with current legislation, policies and practice, and with how these can be better implemented or modified in minor ways. Anyone reading this publication in the hope of finding solutions on how to 'fix' the structures and mechanisms already in place will be disappointed unless they are open to exploring innovative approaches and models that aim to enhance participatory local governance. Ultimately, participatory governance needs to be substantive, both in terms of process and with respect to outcomes, hence the call underlying this publication: 'put participation at the heart of development // put development at the heart of participation'.

The 2011 municipal elections recorded the highest voter turnout rate in municipal elections in South Africa since 2000; yet, the local sphere of government has also felt the brunt of popular discontent. Dissatisfaction with the delivery rate and quality of housing and basic services has been the main driver of protests across the country, but increasingly governance-related factors have been brought to the fore. This is echoed in official reports, such as the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs' (COGTA) *The State of Local Government Report*, National Treasury's 2011 *Local Government Budget and Expenditure Review* and the *National Development Plan* of the National Planning Commission, which highlight the governance dimension underpinning the failings of local government. The underlying governance dimension has also been underscored in previous publications of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN).

As Mirjam van Donk highlights in the Introduction, the 'governance deficit' has its roots in a number of factors, including political culture, leadership, mindsets and attitudes, and administrative practices. Conversely, interventions in each of these areas are required to overcome the governance deficit in local government. In particular, there is a need to reconceptualise state–civil society relations to one in which both groups see themselves and each other as development actors and co-producers of development. Furthermore, there is a need to translate the reconfiguration of state–civil society relationships into practice through the design and application of practical models and tools.

More especially, the apparent disconnect between public participation on the one hand and local development trajectories and outcomes on the other hand needs to be addressed. In many instances, participatory local governance has become devoid of substantive meaning and lacks influence on planning,

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Equally important is the underlying value system and a commitment, not just to the letter, but especially to the spirit of participatory local democracy, which cannot be institutionalised beyond inculcating a public service ethos (Batho Pele).

resource allocation and implementation. The practice in many municipalities is seemingly one of 'going through the motions' and ensuring compliance with the legislative requirements which, ironically, were designed to facilitate substantive public participation in terms of both process and outcomes.

Drawing on the work of Amartya Sen, Van Donk emphasises the significance of enabling people to exert agency in development processes. This implies that both the power and the responsibility to determine development trajectories and outcomes cannot be vested in the state alone, regardless of its democratic features. Thus, new ideas and practices to enliven local governance, enable agency, facilitate mediated development scenarios and enhance accountability need to be explored and, where appropriate, institutionalised. Equally important is the underlying value system and a commitment, not just to the letter, but especially to the spirit of participatory local democracy, which cannot be institutionalised beyond inculcating a public service ethos (Batho Pele).

This publication offers a number of insights and methodologies related to community-led initiatives for engagement with the local state and for local development, collaborative planning, social accountability tools and other models for community involvement in local development. It is by no means exhaustive in its analysis or in the tools and methods presented, but it is nonetheless a valuable offering for anyone open to exploring innovative approaches and models that aim to enhance participatory local governance. The contributions are based on existing practices and emerging areas of work of member organisations of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN). Individually and collectively (including through the production of this *State of Local Governance* publication), member organisations of the GGLN seek to contribute to the advancement of participatory, democratic and developmental local governance in South Africa.

The first set of papers by Ngamlana and Mathoho (Afesis-corplan), Hollands (Mbumba Development Services) and Tissington (Socio-Economic Rights Institute, SERI) focus primarily on autonomous civil society initiatives for social mobilisation and engagement with the local state.

Social media has significant potential as a tool for enhancing accountability, communication and social mobilisation. Hollands reviews the use of social media by government, both globally and in South Africa, before turning his attention to the use of social media as tools of activism, to engage the state, by civil society organisations. While social media has been used effectively to facilitate communication and/or engage the state, there are also notable risks associated with it.

Ngamlana and Mathoho narrate a number of examples of community-led initiatives which offer citizens structured and innovative ways of engaging the local state and monitoring its performance, based on Afesis-corplan's work in the Eastern Cape. These spaces are designed to be co-operative rather than confrontational and aim to be viewed by local municipalities as development partnerships. This requires both political will and a paradigm shift on the part of local government, one that supports the

notion of a pro-active citizenry, actively and rightfully involved in decisions and development initiatives in their communities.

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Tissington's contribution focuses on community organising in the context of *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements. Her paper documents an example of unfulfilled development promises, and the tenacity of the local community (Slovo Park settlement in Johannesburg) to engage with community development

Tissington's contribution focuses on community organising in the context of *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements. Her paper documents an example of unfulfilled development promises, and the tenacity of the local community (Slovo Park settlement in Johannesburg) to engage with community development processes. The Slovo Park example provides clear proof of community action and agency with respect to community planning, enumeration and, ultimately, litigation.

processes. The Slovo Park example provides clear proof of community action and agency with respect to community planning, enumeration and, ultimately, litigation. This is by no means a passive community, waiting for development. In reality there is very little evidence of the apathy often blamed on communities who are seen as waiting for development to be delivered to them. Despite this, the Slovo Park community has been frustrated in its efforts to engage the state and be recognised as a credible development partner. The paper highlights several fault lines around planning and participation in upgrading which affect many 'Slovo Park communities', which may well be less organised, across the country.

Collaborative planning provides an important way out of the current impasse. The three papers by Bolnick (CORC/Ikhayalami), Masiko-Kambala, Gōrgens and Van Donk (Isandla Institute), and Makwela (Planact) highlight how collaborative planning in its various forms and manifestations can (and does) take root in South African municipalities.

Bolnick narrates the case of Ruimsig, where organised networks of the poor and the state work collaboratively to co-produce solutions for the upgrading of thousands of well-located households, improving service delivery and incremental tenure security options. In this model, capacitated networks of the poor are linked to grassroots collectives who provide the necessary skills, depth and breadth to make it possible to replicate these innovative models at scale. The case study is an insightful example of how collaboration between

communities, the state and other stakeholders can transform mindsets, relationships and development outcomes.

Masiko-Kambala, Görgens and Van Donk argue that 'networked spaces' are a critical addition to the participatory governance repertoire. They contend that existing spaces for engagement have a number of limitations that prevent genuine deliberation and knowledge sharing to inform pragmatic solutions supported by government officials and community members alike. This suggests the need for the creation of networked spaces that are explicitly designed to navigate these tensions and contradictions in order to build communities of practice which produce novel and co-produced solutions to specific problems facing communities. The authors argue that such spaces are crucial to ensure that participation leads to tangible developmental outcomes as they enable mediated processes of contestation, negotiation, priority setting and tradeoffs.

Participatory budgeting is an underexplored tool in the South African context, yet it has the potential to transform socio-economic and development conditions within a municipality in a manner that realistically prioritises local needs in the context of limited resources. As Makwela maintains in his contribution, it is both a technical and political tool which involves issues of power, accountability and empowerment. Participatory budgeting denotes a significant paradigm shift, away from a technocratic approach to budget preparation and monitoring to a participatory process involving local communities. Drawing lessons from international experiences, Makwela describes a recent pilot initiative in Makhado municipality, Limpopo, to explore how participatory budgeting can be institutionalised as a tool for enhanced accountability and citizen engagement in South African municipalities.

> The contributions in this edited volume, in some way or other, all point to the need for reconceptualising the relationship between the local state and communities in overcoming the 'governance deficit'.

Social accountability mechanisms, such as citizen report cards, service-level benchmarking, citizen charters and social audits can play an important role in deepening local democracy and improving service delivery. The papers by Thompson (African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, ACCEDE) and Paulus and Samuels (Black Sash) provide examples of social accountability tools in the South African context.

Thompson describes how a perception-based survey can be a valuable tool to assess the views and experiences of local residents and communities on the quality of participatory processes and municipal service delivery. She further presents the findings of a perception-based survey that was developed and used by the ACCEDE. In Cape Town, these surveys have informed the development of citizen scorecards rating local government performance in a range of areas.

Another example of a tool to facilitate social accountability is the Black Sash Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project, a community-driven initiative to monitor public services in South Africa. Paulus and Samuels present the rationale and emerging lessons and findings of the project. The intention of the initiative is to put in place a system that enhances government accountability for the quality of services it provides. By virtue of its locus and scope, it also holds the promise of enhancing an active citizenry.

In the final paper, Chivingwe and Moodley (Eastern Cape NGO Coalition) reflect on the Household Food Security Model piloted in the Eastern Cape as an example of active citizen involvement in meeting basic needs. They demonstrate that the direct involvement of communities in development processes can result in better socio-economic outcomes, such as improvements in household food security and income as well as enhanced community health and wellbeing.

The contributions in this edited volume, in some way or other, all point to the need for reconceptualising the relationship between the local state and communities in overcoming the 'governance deficit'. While some offer practical tools and methodologies that can be further explored and replicated in the South African context, others emphasise the need to shift/transform paradigms, mindsets and attitudes. Ultimately, this publication reinforces the imperative to fundamentally rethink what is meant by public participation based on an appreciation of the notion of active citizenship.

TACKLING THE 'GOVERNANCE DEFICIT" TO REINVIGORATE PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE

By Mirjam van Donk, GGLN Secretariat / Isandla Institute

The 2011 municipal elections saw the highest voter participation rate in municipal elections since the establishment of democratic local government in 2000. This is a positive sign for a sphere of government that has traditionally attracted the lowest interest of voters in elections and simultaneously has felt the brunt of popular discontent. But local democracy is not merely defined by voter turnout.
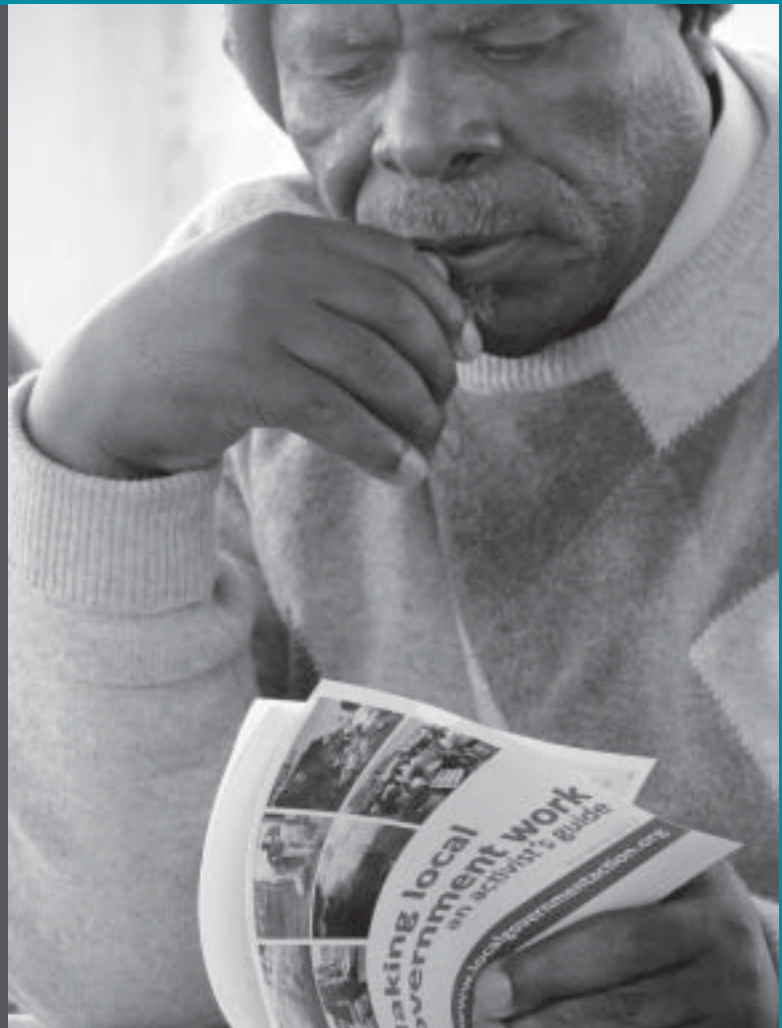
PHOTO: GIZ-SLGP

THERE IS widespread consensus that local governance in South Africa is not particularly healthy or vibrant and is most certainly not living up to the ideal expressed in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government. Recurring community-based protests are a key indicator of this state of affairs. Official reports and civil society perspectives agree that local government, in parts at least, is in 'distress' and that the solution lies in a combination of institutional, political and community-focused interventions, primarily aimed at addressing the underlying governance challenge.

This paper reviews the key factors contributing to what can be termed the 'governance deficit'. While corruption and patronage politics are recognised as critical factors, a core argument of this paper is that, in many instances at least, participatory local governance is devoid of substantive meaning and lacks influence on planning, resource allocation and implementation. Instead, the practice in many municipalities is seemingly one of 'going through the motions' and ensuring compliance with the legislative requirements which, ironically, were designed to facilitate substantive public participation

(in terms of both process and outcomes). At the same time, decisions about the nature, pace, sequencing and location of development are taken in 'closed spaces' (Gaventa 2006), which are impermeable to local citizens and communities. As a result, participatory processes seem to be, and in many instances are, delinked from developmental outcomes. Thus, a call is made to 'put participation at the heart of development // put development at the heart of participation'.[1]

PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: A DISTANT REALITY

South Africa arguably has one of the most progressive policies on participatory local governance in the world. This progressive intent is articulated in a sophisticated edifice of public participation, as outlined in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000).

However, South Africa's much heralded and progressive policy framework for democratic, development-oriented and inherently participatory and inclusive local government institutions stands in stark contrast to recent, and rather sobering, assessments of the state of local government. In 2009, the Department for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) concluded that the sphere of local government is 'in distress' and that many municipalities are poorly governed or dysfunctional. The dysfunctionality has its root causes in a host of factors, including institutional design and intergovernmental relations, political culture and social values, socio-economic context, weak leadership and/or capacity, and poor internal systems for performance management and accountability (COGTA 2009:9).

The COGTA assessment has made an important contribution to the understanding of the weaknesses

and failings of local government by expanding the analysis to go beyond the often-heard refrain of 'capacity and finances'. The underlying governance dimension is also picked up by National Treasury in its 2011 *Local Government Budget and Expenditure Review*, in which it notes: 'To date, there has been a tendency to attribute all failings in municipal performance to a lack of capacity—whether it be individual or organisational capacity. However, when evaluating municipal performance failures, the reality is that many municipal failures can be directly attributed to failures in local political leadership' (National Treasury 2011:24). Sharing this concern, the National Planning Commission (NPC) reiterates the importance of safeguarding the integrity of municipalities in general, and municipal administrations in particular, from political patronage and interference. It further raises the need to make working in local government a 'career of choice' (NPC 2011:365)—

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PROTESTS BETTER

Recent research has highlighted useful insights about the geographical location, seasonality and driving forces of community protest.

Geographically speaking, the majority of protests have taken place in the highly urbanised provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape. In fact, community protests are primarily concentrated in urban areas, which suggests that relative deprivation and inequality are key drivers of these protests.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is also a seasonal factor, with more protests taking place in winter months (with the exception of 2010, when South Africa hosted the FIFA World Cup which coincided with a prolonged holiday period). As Yunus Carrim, the Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, noted in 2009, the cold winter weather undoubtedly makes poor living conditions even more intolerable, which deepens frustrations (in Karamoko 2011:10). Worryingly, since mid-2009 violence has become an increasingly commonplace part of these protests.

Sources: Jain 2010; Karamoko 2011; Municipal IQ 2012.

something that can only be achieved if the administrative structure is insulated from unjustified political interference and improper influences.

Governance failings in the sphere of local government have been put into stark focus through the phenomenon of community protests, which have become an enduring feature of local governance in South Africa in recent years (see text box). Data from Municipal IQ shows that the number of service delivery protests was highest in 2009 and 2010,[2] and declined in 2011 (Municipal IQ 2012). The decline is attributable to the municipal elections of May 2011, which, as noted above, attracted the highest voter turnout for municipal elections since 1994 (Independent Electoral Commission 2011). The run-up to the elections was volatile, not least as a result of the candidate nomination process pursued by the ANC (Ndletyana 2011). Service delivery issues also took centre stage in protests across the country, including in Ficksburg where the death of one of the protesters,

Andries Tatane, at the hands of the local police shocked the nation and the world.[3] But in April and May a lull in community protests was recorded, leading Municipal IQ (2012) to conclude that 'during local government elections…there can be mitigation of protest activity due to increased consultation with communities'. However, Municipal IQ hastens to add that it expects community protest to remain part of the socio-political landscape as the underlying demand for housing and basic services still remains.

While housing and basic services are often cited as key motivations driving protests, issues related to trust, and concerns about the integrity and professionalism of municipal institutions (related to corruption, incompetence, unresponsiveness and broken promises), also feature prominently in the list of grievances (Karamoko 2011). As the NPC (2011:383) notes: 'The spate of service delivery protests stems partly from citizens' frustration that the state is not responsive'.

Figure 1: Major service delivery protests compared to Trust in local government institutions, South Africa, 2004–2009
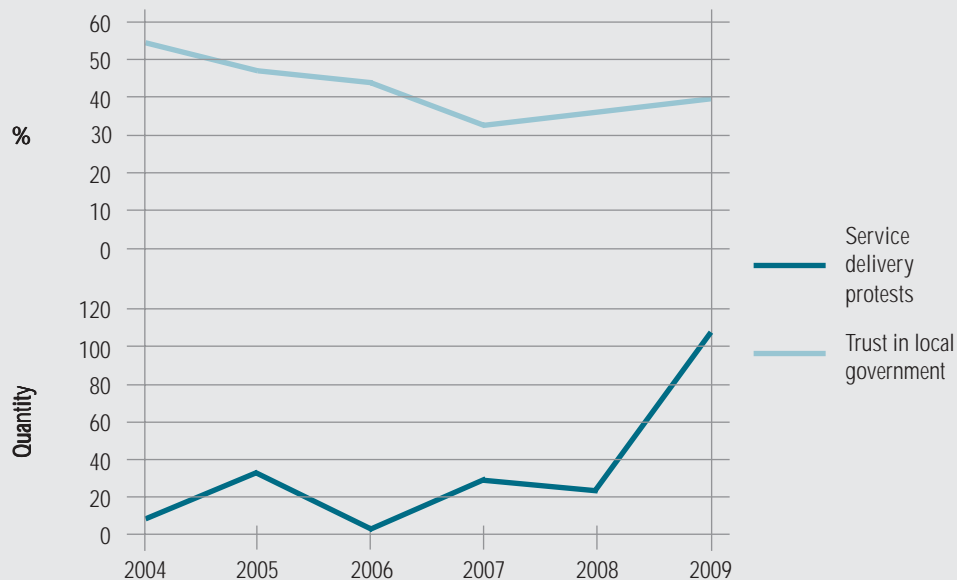
Sources: Municipal IQ (2012), Roberts (2010)

Data from the South African Social Attitudes Surveys (SASAS) shown in Figure 1 suggest that there is a correlation between declining levels of trust in local government and an increase in community protests. It would be interesting to see whether the 2011 municipal elections have served to instil greater levels of trust in local government, although there was clearly no direct correlation when the previous municipal elections were held in 2006. SASAS data further shows that levels of trust in local government are generally lower compared to trust in national and provincial government, which have also both fluctuated in the period 2004 to 2009 (see Figure 2). A careful review of these trends further show that trust in local government has declined more rapidly as compared to the other spheres of government, especially in the period between 2004 and 2007.

Figure 2: Trust in government institutions, South Africa, 2004–2009
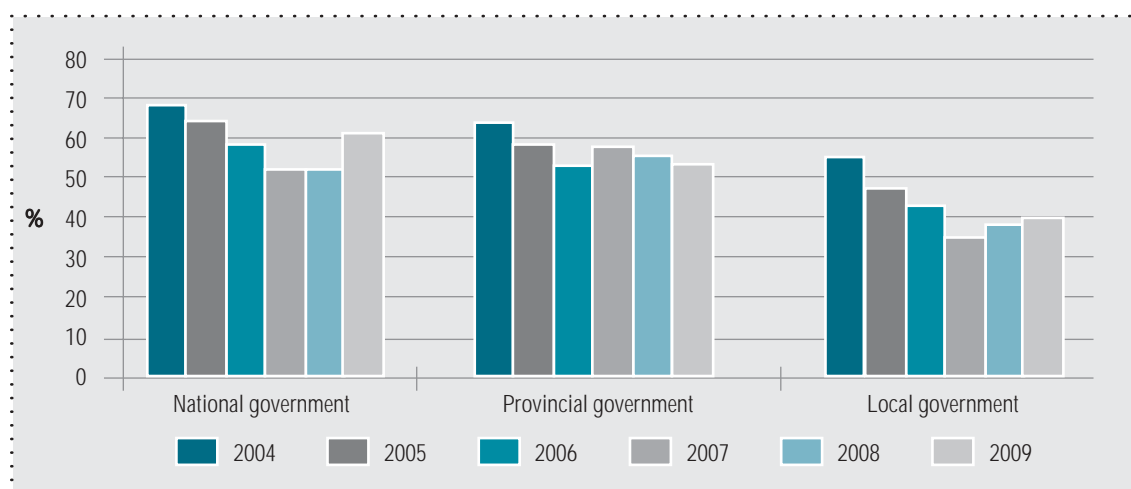
Sources: Roberts (2010), National Treasury (2011)

Clearly, this does not bode well for the realisation of participatory local governance. On the one hand, relatively low levels of trust in local government suggest that there is insufficient fertile ground for constructive engagement between the local state, local communities and citizens. On the other hand, citizens' dissatisfaction with local government stems, in part at least, from the lack of accountability on the part of local representatives and a dearth of meaningful opportunities to engage with municipal representatives and influence local decision making. Thus, improvements in these areas will presumably serve to bolster trust in local government.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE 'GOVERNANCE DEFICIT'

It is helpful to further unpack specific factors that contribute to the 'governance deficit'.[4] This deficit has been the core concern underpinning the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN)'s previous publications in 2008, 2010(a) and 2011, often referred to as 'the state of local governance'. In this paper four factors are highlighted and discussed below (although these are by no means as the only ones) namely: political culture, leadership, mindsets and attitudes, and administrative practices.

POLITICAL CULTURE

The issue of political culture is increasingly recognised as a critical factor impacting on municipal functioning. In addition to rent-seeking, COGTA's assessment highlights corruption and patronage, corrosive party politics, factionalism and interference in administrative appointments as worrying realities that serve to undermine the legitimacy of local government (COGTA 2009:9). Outside interference by political-party structures and caucuses or factions negatively affects the political–administrative interface and undermines the integrity of municipalities (De Visser 2010). This also has dire consequences for service delivery and on prospects for local economic development (NPC 2011; Isandla Institute 2011).

The Municipal Systems Amendment Act of 2012 was passed to address some of these problems as it aims to enhance the professionalisation of local government, but it is insufficient to address all these problems effectively (GGLN 2010b). There are also question marks about the extent to which the Act will be effectively implemented and enforced, as highlighted at a roundtable discussion organised by the Community Law Centre in November 2011 (Ntliziywana 2011).

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a critical factor in governance and, more especially, what the GGLN (2010a) has referred to as 'ethical leadership', and a strong public ethos guiding the decision making and behaviour of both elected and appointed senior municipal officials. Public leadership involves

'goal-orientated action, undertaken through a dynamic and transparent process, involving the leader with relevant others, in an inclusive setting, and effective realization of legitimate, legal and useful goals and objectives. This process requires continues democratic and organizational mandating and learning to progressively enhance effective and proper policy making and policy implementation for service delivery aimed at improving the quality of lives of citizens.' (Schwella 2008:27)

Seen from this perspective, public leadership suggests high levels of transparency and accountability, where decisions and behaviour are open to public scrutiny and can be assessed against agreed norms and standards. The 'governance deficit' is often a result of weak public accountability[5] or leaders who put personal and/or party interests before the public interest, and, in particular, before the interests of poor and marginalised sections of society.

Leadership in public institutions needs to be matched with leadership at community level that is able to advance inclusive local development and hold local government institutions to account. Unfortunately, it cannot be assumed that community leadership is inherently more democratic, more accountable or more inclusive (Cornwall 2008). Rather, leadership at community level is sometimes weak and/or divided and divisive, with the fragmented structure of local government contributing to community fragmentation, division and disempowerment (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008). It is therefore important to consider how best to cultivate and support non-partisan leaders and leadership structures at community level.

MINDSETS AND ATTITUDES

A critical factor in the 'governance deficit' is the dominant mindset that the state will act as a provider

of services and deliverer of development, making communities passive recipients and beneficiaries of the development process. In communities, this mindset comes with a sense of entitlement.[6] In the state, this mindset often comes with a need to control the course of development processes to achieve preconceived outcomes. Where this mindset dominates, there is little appreciation of the intrinsic value of engaging communities in planning, implementation and monitoring of local development and of the notion of active citizenship, as espoused in the *National Development Plan* (NPC 2011).

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

One particularly unfortunate result of the progressive edifice of public participation in local government is that it seems to have stifled further creativity in designing models, structures and processes to facilitate inclusive participatory governance. With the emphasis on compliance across a host of municipal roles and functions, it is perhaps not surprising that a compliance-oriented mentality also seems to manifest towards the dynamic and unpredictable imperative of public participation. As the NPC (2011:366) notes,

> 'Initiatives aimed at preventing malfeasance often focus on restricting the scope for discretion, but this has the unintended consequence of limiting the scope for innovation. The danger is that the principal objectives of public servants becomes following rules, whereas it should be about getting things done.'

The preceding discussion brings to the fore a number of imperatives to overcome the 'governance deficit'. First, there is a need to address the value system that permits certain behaviours and practices, such as corruption and undue political interference, and to put in place the necessary mechanisms of routine accountability. Measures such as the Municipal Systems Amendment Act are a step in the right direction, but much more is required to shift the political culture of the day to a more democratic, accountable and service-oriented one. Among others, political parties have an important role to play in this regard (Isandla Institute 2011).

Related to this, and this is the second imperative, is the need to strengthen leadership, in particular, leadership that is motivated by a public-service ethos and is intent on improving the quality of lives of people through collaborative approaches.

Third, there is a need to shift the relationship between state and communities/citizens from provider and recipients to one in which both groups see themselves as co-producers of development (Mitlin 2008) or, as the title of a paper by Cornwall and Gaventa (2000) suggests with reference to communities, 'from users and choosers to makers and shapers'. Finally, and linked the previous point, there is a need to translate the reconfiguration of state–civil society relationships practice through the design and application of practical models and tools. The emphasis is on simultaneously enhancing and expanding current structures and processes to allow for more inclusive and meaningful community engagement in local planning and decision making. Here it is instructive to look beyond the procedural tools and structures provided for in the Municipal Systems Act and learn from community-based collaborative planning in other sectors, such as primary health care, water and human settlements. Ultimately, by bringing these experiences into view, the scope of local governance will be broadened beyond what is currently provided for in local government legislation.

For the purposes of this paper, the last two imperatives are focused on: the next section makes the case for reconceptualising state–civil society relations, drawing particularly on Amartya Sen's work; and this is followed by a section on approaches, tools and models to reinvigorate participatory local governance in South Africa. The final part of this paper provides a brief roadmap to the contributions in this volume.

RECONCEPTUALISING STATE–CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

As argued before, the seeming disconnect between public participation on the one hand and development trajectories and outcomes on the other hand, is partly a result of how the relationship between the (local) state and civil society/community/citizen is conceptualised.

While this was not envisaged in the design and policy formulation of the South African local governance system, in practice, public participation has more often than not been approached as an activity, an event, a regrettable legislative requirement perhaps, with little bearing on local priority setting and development. Local communities may be consulted, as legislation necessitates, but they are not routinely equipped with relevant information and insights to participate in a *negotiated* process of determining priorities and trade-offs (Friedman 2006; Ramjee and van Donk 2011). Also, there is a lack of feedback to communities once consultative processes have run their course, resulting in community discontent where it appears their views have been ignored or sidelined. Thus, public participation does not seem to yield significant substantive results.

The real issue at stake here is power and influence, that is, the extent to which local communities and residents have the power to

influence the development course of their municipality. As Cornwall (2000) has noted, to be meaningful, arguments for participation and institutional accountability must become grounded in a conception of rights which, in a development context, strengthens the status of citizens from being beneficiaries of development to becoming its rightful and legitimate claimants. Kothari (2001) suggests that participatory development programmes emphasising social inclusion draw previously marginalised individuals and groups into the development process, but do so in ways that bind them more tightly to structures of power that they are then able to question. The emphasis on making claims, as per Cornwall (above), and the ability to question, as Kothari highlights, is crucial to avoid situations in which the terms of the engagement and the possible outcomes are predetermined. Otherwise, 'what people are "empowered to do" is to take part in the modern sector of "developing" societies' (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:182). This implies foreclosing a range of debates about alternative futures and the political projects that might enable them to be realised. Williams (2004) refers to this as the spread of bureaucratic non-state power.

Ultimately, what is required is a recalibration of state–civil society relationships based on an appreciation of the notion of active citizenship, as foregrounded in the National Development Plan (NPC 2011).

Amartya Sen's work on justice, capabilities and public reason is instructive here (Sen 2005, 2009), and has seemingly informed the drafters of the *National Development Plan* (NPC 2011). Sen's notion of justice is premised on choice, agency, public reasoning and accountability. Thus, Sen discards the notion of a perfectly just society as an ideal that can be brought about when reasonable

persons agree on what the ideal is and make rational choices about public policy—including what the ideal institutional requirements of justice are. While other political philosophers, such as Rawls, have adopted the notion of a hypothetical social contract that reasonable people would ascribe to, Sen (2009:17) argues that 'What is needed instead is an agreement, based on public reasoning, on rankings of alternatives that can be realized'. These alternatives, Sen maintains, need to be worked out in detail to allow for assessments of possible options or scenarios to be meaningful. Moreover, the process of how these alternatives or scenarios have come about is as important as the scenarios themselves. Sen therefore sees a direct relationship between the procedures of deliberation and accountability (referred to as 'public reason') and democracy, which in turn is closely connected to justice.

The emphasis on deliberation and reasoning strongly resonates in the literature on collaborative planning. Patsy Healy, a leading planning theorist, stresses the 'significance of the micro-processes of governance practices and the role of ideas and discourses in structuring how these happen' (Healy 2000:917). She further argues: 'This moves the debate in planning theory from the crude opposition between "scientific–technical rationality" as a way of producing policies versus so-called "politics" to an analysis of the micro-political processes through which policy meanings are constructed, resources distributed and regulatory powers exercised.'

Indeed, differentiating between democratic government and the norms and features of public reason, Sen argues that what makes a society just is the existence of discursive characteristics that create a climate of open public discussion. These characteristics include freedom of information and speech, an independent media, basic civil rights,

opportunities to participate in politics, and the possibility of political dissent (Sen 2009:327). These discursive features provide citizens with opportunities to exercise freedoms ('capabilities'—see below). As a result, better outcomes will be achieved and accountability will be enhanced. For Sen, discursive features that facilitate open public discussion are not merely procedurally just, but also advance substantive justice.

Put simply, *how* development options are developed and realised is as important, if not more so in Sen's argument, than *whether* these options are realised. This implies that both the power and the responsibility to determine development trajectories and outcomes cannot be vested in the state alone, regardless of its democratic features.

The ability to exercise freedoms ties in with Sen's conceptualisation of capabilities. Capabilities denote a person's opportunity and ability to generate outcomes that s/he has reason to value, taking into account relevant personal characteristics and external factors. This resonates with the notion of agency, that is, the capacity to make choices and engage in economic, social and political actions. This, in turn, links to the notion of accountability. In the words of Kelly (2011:5), 'Accountability underscores the agency-focus of a capabilities approach'.

The capabilities approach also reminds us that participation in formal processes relies on participants understanding the norms and rules that frame the dialogue, as well as the rationality that underpins the whole process. However, Watson (2003; 2009:2269) reminds us that there are deeply different rationalities 'between, on the one hand, organisations, institutions and individuals shaped by the rationality of governing (and, in market economies, modernisation, marketisation and liberalisation), within a global context shaped by

historical inequalities and power relations (such as colonialism and imperialism) and, on the other hand, organisations, institutions and individuals shaped by (the rationality of) the need and desire to survive and thrive (broadly the "poors" and the "informals")'. She argues that the construction of these 'micro-political processes' (see Healy above) is profoundly shaped by the worldviews and value systems people hold. In a highly divided context like South Africa, we cannot simply assume that public reasoning will lead to consensus; rather, we have to acknowledge the existence of fundamentally different and conflicting rationalities and develop appropriate intermediating spaces. She therefore urges us to recognise that potential of the 'nature of the "interface" between those involved, where unpredictable encounter and contestation also open the possibility for exploring alternative approaches to planning' (Watson 2009:2259).

It is clear that this conceptualisation serves to radically reframe the relationship between the democratic state and communities/citizens to one of partners in development, engaged in collaborative planning and, what the New Economics Foundation refers to as, 'co-production' (New Economics Foundation 2008). The prospect of this as a 'radical' alternative is likely to be brushed aside by militant social movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo and affiliated researchers (Pithouse 2006, for example). While there is always a risk that such processes could defuse and deflate popular struggles through co-option, this is not about depoliticising community struggles; rather, it's about ensuring that the politics of the poor (further qualified as 'constructed around a political and material commons', Pithouse 2006:7)—which in itself is subject to contestation and negotiation—is at the heart of these approaches.

REINVIGORATING PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Reconceptualising the relationship between the local state and communities is a critical step in overcoming the 'governance deficit'. This is not merely an academic exercise, but needs to find expression in practical tools and models as well as in valued norms and standards of engagement. In other words, the intention is not simply to institutionalise public participation through a fixed repertoire of tools and models, thereby precluding any other forms of political (dis)engagement or disallowing political dissent. Rather, as Sen (2009) has argued, the possibility of political dissent is a key feature of a just society. Thus, respect for alternative modes of expressing voice and dissatisfaction, outside of formalised spaces of engagement, is important, as the GGLN argued in its 2011 publication *Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction.* At the same time, though, there is undoubtedly a need to infuse new ideas and practices to enliven local governance, enable agency, facilitate mediated development scenarios and enhance accountability.

Fortunately, we don't necessarily have to look far to find these models and approaches. In fact, some have already been implemented quite successfully in local communities. The issue is that they have not yet necessarily been recognised as being part of the 'local governance repertoire', because they are pursued in specific sectors such as water, health or human settlements. These initiatives can provide insightful examples of collaborative planning tools, either in the form of structural mechanisms (such as community water management structures, school governing bodies, or planning committees constituted to facilitate informal settlement upgrading in particular localities) or process methods (such as participatory action research and

community planning based on participatory learning and action, including community mapping and enumeration used in informal settlements or community asset mapping in health, etc).

Similarly, there are tried and tested models and methods used in other parts of the world that can be contextualised and adapted to the South African context. To date, participatory budgeting has not adequately been explored as a tool for democratic deliberation and decision making in South Africa, despite its widespread usage in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and North America (Shah 2007). Likewise, social accountability mechanisms, such as citizen report cards, service-level benchmarking, citizen charters and social audits remain underexplored in local governance.[7] A similar observation can be made about social media as tools for enhancing accountability, communication and social mobilisation.

Bold approaches to building partnerships that are able to traverse scales of planning—from neighbourhood-level processes to city scale initiatives—have been experimented with in Latin America, the Philippines and Thailand. Describing the Baan Mankong programme in Thailand, Boonyabancha (2005:21) indicates that its distinctive nature was its willingness to provide support not only for community organisations formed by the urban poor, who were involved in neighbourhood level projects, but also for their networks, 'to allow them to work with city authorities and other local actors and with national agencies on citywide upgrading programmes'. International experience with collaborative approaches to service delivery therefore can also be used to clarify how to further bring 'participation into development'. For example, Kyessi (2005) has shown the value of an incremental approach to service provision using community-based and informal service providers, managed by local committees, with technical advice from city administrations.

Back in South Africa, there are moves afoot to revisit and redesign the ward committee system, which continues to serve as the corner stone of the system of participatory local governance in South Africa.[8] While the debate on the benefits and drawbacks of ward committees is highly polarised, these efforts clearly stem from a recognition that the ward committee system in its current form is not living up to its potential of being an effective mechanism for improving public participation, representation and development at ward level.

In sum, municipalities in South Africa ought to have access to a wide-ranging menu of options and methodologies for deepening and expanding participatory democracy, and have the political will and courage to experiment with the tools and approaches deemed suitable for their specific localities. Equally important is the underlying value system and a commitment, not just to the letter, but especially to the spirit of participatory local democracy, which cannot be institutionalised beyond inculcating a public service ethos (Batho Pele). Ultimately, participatory governance needs to be substantive, both in terms of process and with respect to outcomes, hence the call underlying this publication: 'put participation at the heart of development // put development at the heart of participation'.

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The purpose of this edited volume is to explore alternative conceptions, approaches and methods of shaping a vibrant, pro-poor system of local governance and democracy in South Africa. It consciously seeks to depart from what has been a preoccupation, both in government and in the local governance civil society sector, with current legislation, policies and practice, and with how these

can be better implemented or modified in minor ways. In other words, the emphasis has tended to be on how existing participation mechanisms and development-related policy can be strengthened within the boundaries of what already exists. Significant attention has been given, for example, to the failings of the ward committee system and how to make it work better (Smith and de Visser 2009). While there is value to this kind of approach, it is necessary to explore new methods of promoting participation and development and to ask: 'What's next?' Anyone reading this publication in the hope of finding solutions on how to 'fix' the structures and mechanisms already in place will be disappointed unless they are open to exploring innovative approaches and models that aim to enhance participatory local governance.

In exploring innovative models for participatory local governance and pro-poor development, the contributors to this publication were advised to consider four dimensions of innovation: extent, locus, range of applicability, and the level at which innovation occurs (see text box). The resulting contributions do not all follow this characterisation exactly, but they do cover most of the dimensions in some or other respect.

The first set of papers focuses on community-led spaces for engagement with the local state and community-driven development. Nontando Ngamlana and Malachia Mathoho present a sample of Afesis-Corplan's work related to citizen-driven initiatives to engage the local state and monitor its performance, including the Good Governance Surveys, civil society action groups, ward key performance indicators and land access forums. The paper concludes that the spaces for engagement provided for by current legislation are inadequate and that municipalities need to recognise and appreciate citizens as partners in development, rather than seeing them as passive beneficiaries.

Glenn Hollands then reviews the role of social media in citizen-initiated forms of engagement with the state. He notes that social media has significant potential for effective service delivery, enhanced public participation and accountability, and for facilitating social mobilisation. His paper focuses primarily on the latter, that is, social media as tools of autonomous civil society activism, and its potential for enhanced communication, opportunity, responsibility, agency and accountability. The author concludes that this potential remains underutilised in South Africa.

INNOVATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The following four dimensions of innovation related to participatory local governance and pro-poor development were identified in the process of compiling this publication:

The extent of innovation: While the need for innovation is clear, it is not necessarily the case that current practices need to be abandoned. Innovation can occur within existing spaces by injecting new elements without fundamentally changing the nature and purpose of a particular structure. For example, the current ward committee system can be modified to make room for new approaches to ward governance so as to make it more inclusive and ensure that citizens can exert influence during key decision-making points, such as processes linked to the drawing up of integrated development plans. Similarly, new skills may be needed by community leaders to optimise the impact of citizen-led development initiatives already under way.

Alternatively, innovative approaches can mean entirely innovative approaches that introduce new methods, structures, or policy that have not yet been explored or implemented.

The locus of innovation: Innovative practices or approaches can be directed at municipalities and government structures, or at civil society. Because one of the core functions of civil society is to hold government accountable, the focus is often on offering critiques and feedback on governance matters from the perspective of the public. It is necessary, however, for civil society to also look inward and to determine what new methods and approaches can be harnessed into their own practices, such as innovative methods of engaging with the state or different ways of building networks and coalitions.

The range of applicability: Innovative approaches can be directed at broad conceptions of public participation or can be issue-based. For example, new methods of participation and consultation can be introduced into the policy drafting processes, such as new spaces for obtaining citizen feedback. This is a broader approach to innovation that tends to focus on overarching principles and structures, without addressing a particular socio-economic right. Alternatively, innovation can be introduced into a specific issue such as informal settlement upgrading or civil society's mobilisation around land rights.

The level at which innovation occurs: Innovation can be found at the level of policy and legislation, or practice which also has an impact on how far-reaching a particular shift may have. For example, changes in municipal-related legislation is likely to be nationally relevant which means that factors beyond any particular municipality need to be taken into account and country-wide distinctions should be considered (rural and urban; affluent and economically marginalised; levels of education; existing infrastructure). Similarly, innovation can occur at the level of practice which means that guidelines and practical consideration remains within the boundaries of existing policy and legislation.

In her paper, Kate Tissington of SERI focuses on community organising in the context of *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements. Her paper documents an example of unfulfilled development promises, and the tenacity of the local community (Slovo Park settlement in Johannesburg) to engage with community development processes. The paper highlights several fault lines around planning and participation in upgrading. It concludes by observing that the community of Slovo Park is by no means passive and in fact is a well-organised and cohesive community. Despite this, it has been frustrated in its efforts to engage the state and be recognised as a credible development partner.

The next set of papers focuses more explicitly on collaborative planning as an approach and on the types of processes, methods and structural mechanisms that ought to be explored.

Also focused on the theme of human settlements, Andrea Bolnick of CORC/Ikhayalami narrates a case study of a community-led upgrading initiative in the informal settlement of Ruimsig in Roodepoort, Johannesburg. Various other stakeholders, including the local municipality and built environment professionals, have supported the initiative in various ways. The case study is an insightful example of how collaboration between communities, the state and other stakeholders can

transform mindsets, relationships and development outcomes.

The paper by Pamela Masiko-Kambala, Tristan Görgens and Mirjam van Donk of Isandla Institute elaborates on the notion of 'communities of practice' and argues for the establishment of 'networked spaces' that bring together multiple stakeholders. The paper argues that such spaces are crucial to ensure that participation leads to tangible developmental outcomes, as they enable mediated processes of contestation, negotiation, priority setting and trade-offs.

Mike Makwela of Planact promotes participatory budgeting as an innovative model to enhance local governance and citizen participation. Participatory budgeting denotes a significant paradigm shift, away from a technocratic approach to budget preparation and monitoring, and towards a participatory process involving local communities. Drawing lessons from international experiences, the paper describes a recent pilot initiative in Makhado municipality, Limpopo, to explore how participatory budgeting can be institutionalised as a tool for enhanced accountability and citizen engagement in South African municipalities.

The last set of papers reflects on social accountability tools and other models to facilitate active citizen involvement in monitoring and development.

Lisa Thompson of the African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE) writes about the use of a perception-based survey as a tool for assessing the views and experiences of local residents and communities about the quality of participatory processes and municipal service delivery. In Cape Town, these surveys have informed the development of citizen scorecards, which citizens and municipal employees can use to rate local government performance in a range of areas.

Elroy Paulus and Gouwah Samuels of Black Sash present the Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project, an innovative and ambitious community-driven initiative to monitor public services in South Africa. The intention of the initiative is to put in place a system that enhances government accountability in relation to the quality of services it provides. By virtue of its locus and scope, this initiative also holds the promise of enhancing citizen participation by training and deploying a cadre of active citizen monitors.

The final paper by Artwell Chivhinge and Rooks Moodley of the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition introduces the Household Food Security Model piloted in the Eastern Cape as an example of active citizen involvement in meeting basic needs. The paper shows that by virtue of the direct involvement of communities better socio-economic outcomes can be achieved. It specifically notes improvements in household food security and income as well as in community health and well-being.

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NOTES

[1] I am grateful to Ronald Mukanya and Tristan Görgens for allowing me an opportunity to share the emerging argument and for helpful comments and suggestions for improvement on an earlier draft.

[2] Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor records major protests staged by community members against a municipality, as recorded by the media, concerning issues that are the (perceived) responsibility of local government. It excludes protests stemming from other issues, e.g. demarcation, provincial disputes, industrial relations disputes and clear party political issues.

[3] Andries Tatane's beating and shooting was broadcast on YouTube and international stations such as CNN.

[4] On 17 January 2011 a group of concerned Indian citizens published a letter in the Hindustan Times ('An Open Letter to our Leaders'), in which they used similar terminology to express their concerns with the state of governance in India. They coined the term 'governance deficit' to highlight undue political interference, corruption, political intolerance, and lack of meaningful public participation, all of which contributes to an erosion of confidence in national institutions. (See http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/An-Open-Letter-to-our-Leaders/Article1-651546.aspx.) In a different context, the United Kingdom, the term 'democratic deficit' has been used to denote declining voter trends and reduced trust in political institutions (see Jamie Bartlett in Cornwall 2008:7).

[5] This is contrasted to the notion of 'party accountability', where office bearers primarily (if not exclusively) account to relevant political party structures and party leaders. The current political culture reinforces this type of accountability above public accountability.

6   This point was made by Bridgette Gasa, a member of the National Planning Commission, in a radio broadcast of *AM Live*, 26 March 2012.

7   Chicago provides a far-reaching example of how a municipality can institutionalise public accountability. Here, Mayor Rahm Emanuel forced the city to publish all 'no-bid contracts' on their website and instituted a system of 'reverse auctions' where bidders for city contracts have to post the details of their bids online—allowing other organisations to openly compete with them, and ensuring accountability to the public about the final outcome. (see http://m.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/meet-the-new-boss/8899/?single_page=true Retrieved 28 March 2012).

8   In 2011 the Department for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs started the process of revisiting the ward committee system, with the intention of publishing a discussion document for public engagement. The department's intention is to strengthen ward committees by granting them more powers and resources to engage in neighbourhood planning. While the discussion document has not yet seen the light of day, similar ideas have found their way into the ANC Policy Discussion Document on Legislature and Governance, released in March 2012.

CITIZEN-LED SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: LESSONS FROM THE GOOD GOVERNANCE SURVEYS

By Nontando Ngamlana and Malachia Mathoho, Afesis-corplan

South Africa has extensive legislation supporting public participation in local governance. However, participation that is genuinely empowering, as opposed to token consultation or outright manipulation, is still lacking in most municipalities. This paper draws on research conducted by Afesis-corplan in rural municipalities in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces that highlights the need for spaces in which citizens can participate in local governance, other than those that are currently provided, resourced and supported by the state. In support of this argument, the paper draws on experiences of the innovative alternative spaces for public participation in local governance that have been facilitated and supported by Afesis-corplan since 2007.

PHOTO: AFESIS

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: PRE- AND POST-1994

DURING THE apartheid era, the government created race-based municipalities and suppressed public participation by African, Indian and coloured communities. Under apartheid, power was highly centralised, and local government was the lowest tier of a rigid hierarchical structure. Meaningful public participation in local governance decision making was minimal. The post-1994 South African government committed itself to instituting wide-ranging participatory processes within the different spheres and institutions of government.

Attempts to introduce participatory and direct democracy are evident in the planning and policy-formulation processes adopted by the government since 1994. Measures have been introduced to entrench community participation and transform local-government functions so as to emphasise

development rather than *regulation* as the previous dispensation tended to do. Thus the concept of 'developmental local government' was introduced with the main aim being to create a 'local Government committed to working with citizens and the community to find sustainable ways to meet social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives' (RSA 1998:Section B). In 2005, the *National Policy Framework on Public Participation* was published and defines participation as 'an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making' (Department of Provincial and Local Government 2005:1). Thus the policy framework views public participation as a democratic process of engaging people in decisions that affect their communities, and allows for citizens to play an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives. Municipal authorities are thus now legally obliged to involve community organisations in formulating budgets and setting development priorities.

Although ward committees are perhaps the most accessible forum for community participation, research has shown time and again that this structure is not adequately managed or resourced to play a meaningful role (see Idasa 2004; GGLN 2009). The situation is even worse in small municipalities where there is no budget for capacity building and even less support for ward committees. In these areas, the bulk of local government budgets tend to be spent on personnel costs, including remuneration for ward councillors; minimal resources are spent on service delivery or the strengthening of governance systems, and even less on combating corruption and dealing with the exceedingly high social challenges.

Despite this sorry situation, it is widely acknowledged that, as a political principle, public participation has the potential to empower local

citizens to hold their municipalities to account, which, in turn, helps to improve the governance of local municipalities. Empowered communities tend to result in empowered local councils, where development initiatives are directed at people's real needs rather than being determined by what municipal officials think people want or need. Empowered communities start to think pro-actively and view themselves as part of their local municipality rather than as passive bystanders who have no say in what their municipality does. Empowered communities act to improve their own socio-economic conditions.

More than merely a political principle, however, public participation is a right; citizens have the right to participate in decisions pertaining to the development of their communities. While the principle of public participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making processes, real participation implies that the public's contribution can and should influence the decisions that are made.

THE GOOD GOVERNANCE SURVEY

The Good Governance Survey (GGS) is a perception-based tool developed by Afesis-corplan that has been proven to make a significant contribution to citizens' awareness and understanding of local governance.[1] It also provides a useful self-assessment tool for municipalities. The GGS has emerged as one of the few alternative instruments for appraising local governance practices. Its uniqueness lies in its ability to offer a non-technical approach to municipal performance that is inclusive of civil society and is able to compare both quantifiable and perception-based data.

GGS interrogates eight key elements (or indicators) of governance, namely: decision-making

within local government; public participation; community consultation; transparency; disclosure; corruption; service delivery; and systems and structures. These eight elements have been drawn from good-governance indicators accepted by various institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations, Transparency International, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the African Peer Review Mechanism, and the South African government itself.

Before we move any further, however, it is important to define governance in general, and good governance in particular.

> The United Nations included 'good' governance as an essential component of the Millennium Development Goals because 'good' governance establishes a framework for fighting poverty, inequality, and many of humanity's other shortcomings

DEFINING GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance, for us, refers to the formal and informal arrangements that determine how public decisions are made and carried out from the perspective of maintaining a country's constitutional values. McGee (2004) and the European Commission (2003, cited in United Nations 2007a) argue that governance is not just about how a government and social organisations interact and relate to citizens, but that it concerns a state's ability to serve its citizens and other actors, as well as the manner in which public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised.

Nzongola-Ntalaja (2003, cited in United Nations 2007a) describes three forms of governance which include:

* political or public governance for which the state has authority
* economic governance over which the private sector exercises authority
* social governance for which authority resides in civil society.

According to Rothberg (cited in United Nations 2007a), governance can be assessed as 'good' when a state allocates and manages resources in ways that respond to collective problems and when it efficiently provides public goods and services of sufficient quality to its citizens. Hence, states should be assessed on both the quality and the quantity of public goods and services provided to citizens.

The United Nations included 'good' governance as an essential component of the Millennium Development Goals because 'good' governance establishes a framework for fighting poverty, inequality, and many of humanity's other shortcomings (United Nations 2007b).

PARTICIPATION IN GOOD-GOVERNANCE SURVEYS

Based on this understanding, citizens are encouraged to participate in a GGS and to give their perceptions of how their local municipality is managing in terms of governance. This provides a space for citizen's voices to be heard and is empowering in that it assures citizens that their voices, perceptions and experiences can help to shape how municipalities conduct their business.

GGS is not an 'invented' space, but an 'invited' space for participation[2]—that is, citizens are invited to participate and share their views—which creatively and innovatively promotes citizen participation and aims to bring about good local governance. Although the GGS was developed by an NGO and its pilot phases were civil society-led, GGS

has grown such that municipalities are now able to conduct their own self-assessments without NGO involvement. In these situations, however, the involvement of community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs within the jurisdiction of the municipalities is always strongly encouraged.

Although the impact of a GGS relies partly on the implementation of the findings and recommendations, the tool has a far greater effect when gaps identified are addressed through systematic programs and innovative interventions. To monitor the impact of the GGS as a tool for enhancing community participation in local governance, it is crucial for those involved to go beyond simply outlining the findings, to working on proposed recommendations, and then resurveying at a later date to evaluate the progress that has been made.

GOOD-GOVERNANCE SURVEYS IN THE EASTERN CAPE AND MPUMALANGA

Although GGS have been conducted in various provinces over the past few years, for the purposes of this paper, we draw on findings from surveys conducted in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. Evaluating the findings from these two provinces allows for comparisons between conditions in a large rural province (Eastern Cape) with those in a relatively smaller province (Mpumalanga). Socio-economic conditions in both provinces are fairly similar as, to a large extent, are the service delivery-related challenges. As a point of departure, we offer a brief description of each province.

The Eastern Cape Province is home to about 6.3 million people, and has the highest net migration outflow (211 600 people per annum) in the country (ECSECC 2011). The character of people leaving the province—skilled, entrepreneurs, investors and/or

The population of Mpumalanga, on the other hand, is a bit more than half the size of the Eastern Cape's (3,6 million people) and 59% of its households earn less than R1 050 a month. Over 3.2 million people (87.8%) do not have access to medical aid and depend on the public health system while 83.9% of households have access to piped water (Stats SA 2010).

energetic youth—is a major concern for policy makers and for the province as a whole. According to Statistics South Africa's 2010 *General Household Survey* and the *Local Government Turnaround Strategy* (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2009), the Eastern Cape ranks highest in the country in terms of: net migration outflow, poor facilities at schools, corporal punishment at schools, use of paraffin and wood for cooking, unsafe water for drinking, inadequate sanitation (worst backlog), and reliance on grants as a major source of income. Furthermore, the province ranks second to KwaZulu-Natal in terms of illiteracy levels.

The population of Mpumalanga, on the other hand, is a bit more than half the size of the Eastern Cape's (3,6 million people) and 59% of its households earn less than R1 050 a month. Over 3.2 million people (87.8%) do not have access to medical aid and depend on the public health system while 83.9% of households have access to piped water (Stats SA 2010).

In the Eastern Cape, surveys were conducted in five municipalities in Cacadu District municipality, namely, Baviaans, Camdeboo, Ikhwezi, Makana and Ndlambe, whilst in Mpumalanga's Ehlanzeni District, the surveys were carried out in Bushbuckridge, Mbombela, Nkomazi, Thaba Chweu and Umjindi. Key lessons from the findings of these surveys are summarised below.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE EASTERN CAPE'S CACADU DISTRICT AND MPUMALANGA'S EHLANZENI DISTRICT

In the districts surveyed in both provinces, few respondents attended council meetings. Various reasons were cited for this, varying from poor notices and poorly-timed invitations to people not knowing that they could attend, meetings being held at inconvenient times and in inaccessible venues, and/or the use of a language that most people were not comfortable or conversant in. When asked what community participation forums existed in their municipalities, a significant percentage (an average of 41% in Cacadu and 34.4% in Ehlanzeni) of respondents were of the view that there were no such forums in their municipality. A paltry 4% in the Baviaans municipality confirmed the existence of a ward committee.[3]

A worrying finding was the high proportion of respondents in both districts (an average of 66% in Cacadu and 72% in Ehlanzeni) who reported that they had never attended a meeting convened by the municipality and had never participated in the state-legislated forums for community participation. The same numbers of respondents stated that they had never participated in discussions at community level about priorities for the development of their area or about how they could contribute to the realisation of their vision for their community. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of respondents (an average of 82% in Cacadu and 79% in Ehlanzeni) did not know anything about the vision of their municipality or their wards, nor did they know anything about the development agenda in their wards.

Asked how effective they thought their integrated development plan (IDP) and ward-committee forums were in fostering community participation, about 35% of respondents in Cacadu and 40% in Ehlanzeni stated that they did not know how effective the IDP forums were, and an average of 44.4% in Cacadu and 16% in Ehlanzeni reported that ward committees were very ineffective.

It seems therefore that there is a general lack of knowledge of the existence and purpose of community forums across both districts, and may well be impeding citizens' ability to contribute meaningfully to the governance of their respective areas. In addition, although these forums may well be in existence (as reported by councillors, officials and some respondents), they are probably not well-established or effective enough to assuage the widely held public view that they are non-existent or ineffective.

These findings confirm that there is a need for interventions to ensure that the legislated forums for public participation, especially the ward committees, are fully operational and effective in the execution of their development mandates. To this end, issues of human-resource capacity, access to technical and financial resources, the credibility of civil-society forums, as well as a sound understanding of their specific roles, should be dealt with by government as a matter of priority. Recent capacity-building drives for ward committees, led by the Local Government Sector Training Authority (LGSETA)[4] and various municipalities, combined with proposed reforms to the ward-committee system are noted and welcomed as useful and necessary interventions.

Although the majority of councillors and officials surveyed reported that their respective municipalities had a specific official responsible for co-ordinating public participation, it is evident that in all municipalities surveyed, the majority of residents were not aware of the existence of these officials. Thus even as municipalities strive to strengthen and reform ward committees, they should also disseminate vital information such as the presence and identity of designated officials to the public

through all the means of public communication at their disposal. Municipal commitments to enhancing public participation must be backed-up by consistent efforts to keep the public informed.

The survey findings in both provinces also reveal that, although the legislative framework regulating public participation has long been in place, the reality on the ground is somewhat worse than the desired ideal. Municipalities continue to make ill-informed decisions regarding the development priorities and needs of the citizens. From the findings, it appears that even legislated spaces for public participation are poorly resourced and supported, and that they fail to contribute meaningfully to local governance.

With local government structures having been in existence for over than ten years, one could argue that these findings point to a failure by both citizens and municipal officials to properly create and make use of the legislated spaces for public participation. The devastating developmental effects for the citizens residing in these areas are clear for all to see.

THE NEED FOR ALTERNATIVE SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION

From the findings presented above, we can deduce that, in the municipalities surveyed, state-provided spaces for public participation have not worked as effectively as envisaged. As a result, citizens in these areas have been deprived of opportunities to influence decisions pertaining to the development of their own areas and to participate meaningfully in local governance. State-legislated spaces, in particular ward committees, IDP forums and budget forums, are fairly new to the public and require a substantial amount of co-ordination, support and resourcing from the municipality to get them going. Where this support is not in place, it becomes

difficult for community members to manoeuvre their way into and through the local government system on their own. Smaller and more rural municipalities are even more likely to lack the necessary resources to properly support and co-ordinate these spaces even though this is required by law.

Numerous other challenges limit the ability of smaller municipalities and rural communities to create effective spaces for public participation. While the government focuses on reforming the 'invited' spaces for citizen participation in local governance, it is our view that efforts to create more diverse and innovative 'invented' spaces for citizens to participate meaningfully in local governance need to be intensified.

Cornwall (2002:3–4) eloquently states that 'participation [ought to] extends beyond making active use of invitations to participate, to autonomous forms of action through which citizens create their own opportunities and terms of action'. Cornwall goes on to state that there are two kinds of spaces—'invited' versus 'claimed'—which should exist alongside each other and that are both imbued with different sets of power. Lessons from the GGS reveal that while these spaces are distinct, they should converge at certain points—the spaces in which people participate through invitation and those that they create for themselves are never neutral, and (most of the time) the same people participate in both kinds of spaces.

In our view, the government ought to create both 'invited' and 'invented spaces' to increase and enhance citizen participation. In theory, these spaces ought to work in harmony because the same citizens participate in both. It is important, however, to allow citizens to create their own terms of engagement so long as these are harmonious and allow for citizens' voices to be heard. This calls for government to move away from a prescriptive stance when it comes

to facilitating citizen participation, to a position of openness and willingness to learn from citizens and to allow citizens to create their own forums as they see fit.

CITIZEN CREATED FORUMS: LESSONS FROM FOUR PROGRAMMES

Motivated by a desire to see more empowered citizens participating in local governance and local institutions expressing people's needs and aspirations, Afesis-corplan has initiated various programmes to assist civil-society organisations to create claimed or invented spaces. In this section we describe a few of these programmes and highlight what citizens can achieve through participating innovatively in both legislated 'invited' spaces and 'claimed/invented' spaces.

It is evident through the examples provided that communities are able to organise and create alternative spaces for participation other than those

In municipalities where CSAGs have been organised, they have advocated for the establishment of IDP forums in municipalities where previously none existed (or none in which they could fully participate).

provided for by the state. It is also apparent that communities differ and that their needs, experiences and dynamics also vary. Therefore, a blanket approach to citizen engagement in all municipalities may not be the best way to encourage citizens to actively engage with the state. There seems to be value in allowing citizens to organise on their own and to participate actively in their own development.

The examples given also show that it is possible for state-legislated 'invited' spaces for participation

to co-exist with citizen-initiated 'invented' spaces. There is, therefore, a need for government to embrace and listen to the voices that are emerging from both kinds of spaces. It is important to note that 'invented' spaces are not necessarily as independent of government as is sometimes assumed, but are merely citizen-led spaces that have the potential to stand as equal partners with government on issues relating to local development and governance.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION GROUPS

Civil society action groups (CSAGs) are organisations that are mobilised and organised to effectively engage and participate in local governance. They are partly meant to supplement the role of ward committees in promoting public participation in municipal processes, but being autonomous civil society outfits, they have a much freer space to operate in, devoid of the political rigmarole that characterises ward committees. Therefore, although they work in the same local municipalities alongside the ward committees (in most instances), they offer a different quality of participation and engage municipal leadership in ways that can add value to government accountability at that level.

In municipalities where CSAGs have been organised, they have advocated for the establishment of IDP forums in municipalities where previously none existed (or none in which they could fully participate). CSAGs have also called for key public documents to be made available including local IDPs, auditor-general's reports, municipal annual reports and reports on investigations paid for from public funds, etc. Some CSAGs have submitted memoranda to councils and requested to be present at council and mayoral meetings. These groups have thus claimed a space for their inclusion in local

governance and exerted themselves as partners and stakeholders in local development.

CSAG meetings are open to members of civil society organisations and the public. At these meetings, key issues for engaging with the municipality are identified, feedback is given (where applicable) and a way forward is discussed. The frequency of meetings varies from group to group. Technical support offered by Afesis-corplan to CSAGs ranges from capacity building to information sharing on legislation and policy documents. Assistance in analysing documents such as IDPs, municipal budgets, and local economic development plans or other municipal policies is available, and the groups also shared expertise between themselves. For example, an accountant or lawyer in one CSAG may offer an opinion on a call for comment from another CSAG operating in another particular municipality. These partnerships and networks have helped the CSAGs to develop strength, skills and expertise.

WARD KEY-PERFORMANCE-INDICATOR PROGRAMMES

One of the mandated roles of ward committees is to monitor performance of local municipalities, thus giving effect to the requirement for community involvement in this process. The Ward Key Performance Indicators Programme was set up to train ward committee members to use a key-performance-indicator matrix to monitor the performance of their local councils, thus empowering them to engage with municipal officials from an informed position. Using the matrix, ward committees are able to assess municipal performance at ward level and to provide feedback to council via their ward councillor. Subsidiary outcomes of using the matrix include the fact that ward committees become more aware of the extent of their mandates and are able to make more

meaningful contributions to developmental processes within their municipality.

The programme also involves urging community development workers to form a cadre of development-oriented people within municipalities who will then be in a position to train future ward committees to use the matrix. Thus, the programme offers a creative way of ensuring that the legislated structures such as ward committees can play a more active role in influencing development within the municipality in a structured and coherent manner.

LAND ACCESS FORUMS

Land Access Forums are spaces where citizens from certain municipalities organise and position themselves to participate meaningfully in municipal planning processes, particularly those related to land and settlement planning. These forums are 'networked spaces' where various groups come together to reach a common goal. They define their own terms of reference, timeframes and codes of conduct; they also set their own agendas and how they will resource their own cause.

These forums are different to CSAGs and ward committees in that they came about in a more networked manner. Unlike the 'claimed' spaces of the CSAGs, or the 'invited' spaces of ward committees, these groups came together around the need for increased community participation in land planning and a deeper understanding of how municipal land planning and zoning processes work. They emerged to demand inclusion during the technical processes of land planning and access to information on state, provincial and municipal land.

The difference between Land Access Forums and CSAGs is that the former are guided by the underlying principle that they have to participate in the land-planning process on an equal footing with the relevant municipality. They therefore employ (at

their own cost) and consult with technical experts, such as civil engineers or environmental experts, etc. where necessary. CSAGs, on the other hand, see themselves as partners of the municipalities and responsible for ensuring that citizens are able to participate in relevant municipal processes. They see themselves as both municipal development partners and watchdogs. On the other hand, Land Access Forums advise municipalities on how best to address citizens' settlement needs and access to land, including on municipal improvement projects and instilling a sense of pride in communities. Because this is generally based on sound technical advice, municipalities tend to be willing to heed their advice.

MTHATHA'S LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Leaders from civil society, business, academic and traditional structures in Mthatha (in the Eastern Cape) have come together to create a space in which to work together and to participate in implementing a 20-year plan aimed at turning their town around for the better. Armed with an understanding of the not-so-impressive history of the post-apartheid municipality, the community of Mthatha resolved that the realisation of their vision for 2030 relied on their active participation and involvement in the implementation of development plans. A strategic partnership was formed in which each of the stakeholders (including the municipality and some government departments) are represented, and progress and challenges related to the implementation process are discussed. The space that has been created is about consensus seeking; the rule is that all stakeholders hold each other to account in relation to the pace and the manner in which implementation takes place. Terms of reference have been developed and adopted that define and guide the roles of each stakeholder.

CONCLUSION

As a perception-based feedback tool, GGS have proven themselves as an effective means for citizens to communicate with their government about its performance. The surveys allow issues of governance and service delivery to be approached in a consensual way by building a dialogue between communities and their municipalities. They also offer an invited space for participation, in that citizens participate in a GGS at the invitation of those who conduct them. It is suggested, therefore, that municipalities conduct the surveys (manuals are available from Afesis-corplan on request) with the support and involvement of local civil society structures.

The four examples of community-led initiatives that are profiled in this paper indicate that attitudes tend to be less hostile towards community-initiated structures that engage local government in a creative yet structured and orderly manner. These spaces offer citizens structured and innovative ways of engaging with the state. It is important to note that these are different from social movements, and while social movements are welcome to participate in these spaces, these structures but tend to be civil-society-created and led spaces for widening participation in governance, that is, they are seen as more co-operative than confrontational and aim to be viewed by local municipalities as development partners.

In its efforts to reform ward committees and to realise effective citizen participation, government ought to ensure the creation of conducive environments for both 'invited' and 'invented' spaces to thrive. This requires political will as well as a paradigm shift. It calls for a conscious move towards allowing citizens to define their own terms and find their own spaces in local governance. It calls for local government that truly sees citizens as

development *partners* and that is willing to recognise and appreciate a pro-active citizenry. Finally, it requires municipalities that are willing to empower and support the citizens they were created to serve.

Participation in local governance is indeed a human right, and it is becoming evident that, in South Africa, its realisation lies in the creation of spaces for citizen engagement other than those that are provided for by current legislation.

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NOTES

[1] The survey is described in detail in the *Good Governance Survey Handbook*, and various good-governance reports derived from the use of the survey are available at www.afesis.org.za/Local-Governance-Publications/ Reports. Only two of these (on public participation and community consultation) are discussed in detail in this paper due to space constraints.

[2] For a detailed discussion of the notion of 'invited' and 'invented' spaces for citizen participation in local governance, see the GGLN *State of Local Governance Report* (2009/2010).

[3] At the time of the surveys, all the local municipalities surveyed had mayoral-executive-committee systems; a single political party dominated the mayoral executive committees and the portfolio committees, but there was a fair representation of different opposition parties.

[4] Afesis-Corplan participated in capacity-building drives as a lead provincial facilitator in the Eastern Cape.

THE INNOVATIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADVANCE CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

By Glenn Hollands, Mbumba Development Services

The use of social media in political activism and protest activity has been growing for more than a decade, but 2010/2011 has seen a startling demonstration of mobile communication technology or other forms of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) playing a key role in the organisation, management and publication of popular uprisings and other forms of citizen-initiated engagement with the state (see Mernit 2011). While the use of ICTs and social media in South African politics has yet to be fully documented, three distinct threads are likely to drive future interest in the topic.

FIRSTLY, THERE is a fairly well-developed concept of digital solutions for streamlined government services, often referred to as *e-government*. Examples of this include the Uthingo postal service and the Gateway Service Centres, which offer a range of integrated services in highly populated areas (see SALGA and GIZ 2011).[1] Secondly, there are the two-way interactions or digital-participation systems developed by the state to increase citizens' participation, improve accountability and accommodate feedback. In the SALGA and GIZ study (2011:68-70), these examples of *e-governance* are explored primarily within the municipal sphere. Examples include the e-registration of interested parties for input on *Integrated Development Plans* and the City of Cape Town's use of social media to generate discussion on key topics. Finally, there is the autonomous use of social media and ICTs by civil society organisations to engage the state for purposes of protest or advocacy (2011:85). It is the

latter that forms the primary focus of this paper but, in so doing, the overlap between all three threads has to be acknowledged and factored into the discourse.

In the first section of this paper, the international context of ICT and social media usage by government is outlined. This is followed by a brief examination of the South African government's understanding of ICT-enabled governance, and an overview of social media usage by autonomous civil-society organisations in their engagement with the state, i.e. as tools of activism. However, the use of social media has not only supplemented the discourse of social activism, it has also reshaped it, hence the need to recognise some of the risks and critiques that attach to the use of social media in this manner. Finally, the likely scope for expanded digital engagement and activism is analysed in relation to key demographic trends in South Africa.

ICT AND GOVERNMENTS INTERNATIONALLY

The potential to use ICTs and social media to facilitate organised political and civic interactions between citizens and states has long been recognised, if weakly explored. ICT researchers such as Holzer and Kim (2007) have refined a discourse of *digital governance* suggesting that this includes both digital government (delivery of public service) and digital democracy (citizen participation in governance). These researchers based their insights on the *Digital Governance in Municipalities Worldwide Survey* which assesses the practice of digital governance in 100 of the world's most wired (ICT enabled) municipalities by subjecting their websites to a survey covering 98 indicators (2007:24).

Holzer and Kim (2007) noted that the internet, and therefore also social media, is a convenient mechanism for citizens to engage their government and possibly also to decentralise decision making.

However, even across some of the most sophisticated websites, the potential for online participation was still underdeveloped. What emerged, however, were a handful of innovative practises where municipalities (in Seoul and Helsinki for example) used their websites in conjunction with social media to conduct online surveys or polls and to engage citizens in community discussions of important public-policy issues via blogs, bulletin boards, or e-discussion forums. The same websites also typically made provision for reporting crimes and violations of administrative laws and regulations (Holzer and Kim 2007).

Mcloughlin and Scott (2010) echo the view that ICTs have the potential to positively impact on government transparency, responsiveness, and accountability and to empower citizens by improving information flows between government and citizens. They caution, however, that much rests on the political will of the state to take up such opportunities. Governments that choose not to take up these opportunities will eventually be confronted by the reality described above, i.e. that, outside the framework of orderly governance and *provided spaces* for good governance, ICTs and social media are effective tools against state-sponsored repression and despotism. As Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe (2011:8) note:

> Social media activists, bloggers, tweeters and speak-to-tweeters keep the world updated even if the television cameras have been switched off…In essence, the over-regulation of the right to freedom of expression and association cannot achieve its ends in the context of connected societies where ordinary citizens - most of them young - cannot easily be manipulated or controlled.

Clearly ICTs and social media can fulfil this e-governance potential only if citizens can access and use the technology. This is where new social media (e.g. mobile phones) have opened up the internet as an alternative medium for citizen communication or participatory democracy (see Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe 2011).

ICT AND GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The concepts of e-government and e-governance are already well established in the South African discourse of participatory democracy. Farelo and Morris (2006:3) of the South African Department of Public Service and Administration and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Meraka Institute understand e-government as 'the use of ICT to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens.' The study into the use of ICTs to promote local participatory democracy (SALGA and GIZ: 2011) noted the importance of distinguishing between *e-government* as ICT use within government for efficiency objectives, and *e-governance* which looks at ICT use in the interactions between government and civil society. The study also found good practical examples of ICTs being used to enhance efficiency and convenient service (e-government), but less evidence of digital enhancements of citizens' participation in local governance (e-governance). Effective e-government practises include the following:

* The City of Cape Town's use of ICTs for basic customer transactions, where a 'new online self-help utility has been launched to invited constituents and is in use by 30000 beta users (registered email clients of CT). Most of the online transactions available to call centre staff can now be operated independently by the constituents themselves, for instance, submission of meter readings, submission of motor vehicle licensing information, job applications, etc' (SALGA and GIZ 2011:130).

* The Department of Health, and the primary health care sector in general, including role-players like the Treatment Action Campaign, have used mobile technology to monitor adherence to TB treatment and to record the progress of community-based projects. Further use of social media like Facebook, Twitter and Mxit is planned for increasing the uptake of HIV counselling and testing and TB screening and for improving communication with target groups (SANAC 2011).

In the realm of non-structured or unregulated interactions between government and civil-society groups such as social movements, NGOs and ratepayer associations, the SALGA and GIZ study found much anecdotal evidence of the use of web-based platforms, e-newsletters and mailing groups, issue-based blogs and other digital technologies. In general, however, this form of independent ICT usage for engagement purposes is under-researched and not fully analysed (SALGA and GIZ 2011:88–89).

SOCIAL MEDIA AS TOOLS OF ACTIVISM

According to Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe (2011), the term 'social media' generally refers to web-based tools and services that allow users to create, share and search for information without having to log into any specific portal site or portal destination. International media coverage of political and social conflict has highlighted how ICTs have boosted the potential of citizen groups to mobilise,

co-ordinate events and campaigns, and shape news coverage when interacting with the state. Mobile technologies such as cell phones, smart phones, and iPads are now acknowledged tools for social activism and have been in evidence at barricades and picket lines all over the world in 2010 and 2011. In these settings, social media are often used to greater strategic advantage than rocks and petrol bombs—see Mernit (2011) and Papic and Noonan (2011).

Similarly, regimes confronting popular uprisings have begun to take the role of social media more seriously. The Mubarak government in Egypt, for instance, quickly identified the threat posed by social media in organising protests and after initially trying to block certain sites, eventually disconnected every internet service provider in the country.[2] The ICT world did not back down however. Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe (2011:3) describe Google's innovative response:

> Google devised a way in which people could still voice their opinions without being connected to the internet. This new communication tool was dubbed 'Speak to Tweet' and it allowed anyone with a voice connection to dial one of three international numbers and have their voice messages sent out as tweets with the word #egypt added as a 'hashtag' (user-generated coding for searchable terms and keywords) to the links. People could thus call these numbers and voice their solidarity, concerns and opinions about the protests by having their phone voice messages converted into tweets.

According to Papic and Noonan (2011),

> The situations in Tunisia and Egypt have both seen an increased use of social networking media such as Facebook and Twitter to help organize, communicate and ultimately initiate civil-disobedience campaigns and street actions. The Iranian "Green Revolution" in 2009 was closely followed by the Western media via YouTube and Twitter, and the latter even gave Moldova's 2009 revolution its moniker, the "Twitter Revolution".

Social media have also played a major role in civic organisation for anti-capitalist demonstrations in western countries where the objective is economic change, e.g. *Occupy Wall Street,* rather than regime overthrow. Furthermore, social media have allowed activists and participants to not only organise and manage such events but develop their own media and news profiles by recording and uploading footage of the events and the response by the authorities (Papic and Noonan 2011). Social media also seem to have opened up new strategic opportunities for organisations, for example, leveraging the participation of high-profile personalities, such as WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Above all it has been very successful in generating an extensive on-line network of discussion and debate.[3] From the diverse discourse on the role of social media in participatory governance (protest, activism, social mobilisation etc.), the following forms of functionality seem to be key (Haider 2011:1):

✳ enabling interaction, organisation and cooperation towards more effective and swift action around a particular social or political issue

✳ lowering the costs of the above

✳ allowing a community of interests or collective identity to coalesce

✳ expanding and accelerating communication and the flow of information for stronger transparency and accountability.

These factors enhance the ability of citizens to track and engage government decision making and policy shifts.

Whether viewed as spontaneous and popular uprisings or manipulated campaigns to achieve regime overthrow, these world-changing events have seen ICTs used to hugely enhance citizens' power vis-à-vis the state. Shirky (2011) describes various international examples where ICTs and social media completely redefined the manner in which people vent their dissatisfaction with government and government policy. Shirky shows how ICTs greatly boost the potential of citizen groups to mobilise, coordinate events and campaigns and shape news coverage when taking on the state. Citing recent uprisings in Iran and Thailand, Shirky, however, cautions that the effective use of social media does not guarantee an enhancement of democracy where political repression is severe and sustained. In fact social media tools may be most effective 'where a public sphere already constrains the actions of the government' (2011:2).

Neither is the use of digital technology for political purposes, inherently restrained nor purely civic. The most publicised forms of political engagement—including those cited by Alam (2011), Mäkinen and Wangu Kuira (2008) and Mernit (2011)—are often violent, anarchic and tread a fine line between civic activism and insurrection. Such movements are, nonetheless, widely regarded as a legitimate response to the well-known problem of democratic deficit',[4] and seem to underline the fundamental assertion made by Shirky, i.e. that 'communicative freedom is good for political freedom' (2011:3).

ICT enabled protests and social movements, including protests around poor municipal service and state corruption, cannot therefore be entirely delinked from formal participation in well-regulated political systems in South Africa, as previously described by Fakir (2009). The use of social media in protests and social mobilisation should not be seen as inherently anti-statist, threatening to national sovereignty or simply an extension of political power. 'The more promising way to think about social media is as long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere' (Shirky 2011:3). Drawing partly on the work of Jürgen Habermas, Shirky also shows that in circumstances of revolutionary change, *all* communicative technologies, and not just digital formats, have the potential to act as instruments of democratisation. The key attribute of social media is its ability to promote interaction or a discretionary level of participation, as Alam (2011:19) observes:

> Social media is important not only because it is a medium through which information spreads, but also because it provides an opportunity, responsibility, and choice for the receptor as to what an individual will do with the information. It is in this capacity that people maintain agency and categorize themselves as passive bystanders or active participants.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Some might find irony in the spectre of social media being used against globalisation and the forces of neoliberalism. The development of mobile technologies has, after all, been driven by some of the world's most opportunistic entrepreneurs, and by opportunities to make obscene profits out of consumer fixations with gadgetry and promises of

instant gratification or definitive change. As Shirky (2011:4) concedes, 'most people simply use these tools for commerce, social life, or self-distraction' (although, as he points out, the same may be said of other media).

A well-established critique of mobile technologies is that they enable a less than healthy tendency among young people to self-publicise and communicate personalised trivia in a manner that can easily be dismissed as frivolous and even antisocial. Shah, Stremmelaar, and Jansen (2010:14) are concerned about these characterisations, arguing that they set up a false discourse around social media and its impact on activism:

> On the one hand were narratives of euphoria, where every new gadget, new tool, new instance of adoption and abuse was celebrated as the ringing in the new, the ushering of the age of dawn; the euphoria almost couched in the language reminiscent of the promise of the Revolution in the early twentieth century…The euphoria narrative is countered by the growing tales of despair…a bunch of superstars (notorious but with star value nonetheless) stand in for the deep and dire dangers that these young generations are in. They are addicted, distracted, lack political consciousness or empathy, and are so seduced by immersive webs that they are neglecting their apportioned role in societies.

Linked to this, Gladwell (2010) identified the problem of 'slacktivism'—the idea that the costs or sacrifices of social activism are reduced to the point where short-term sentiment and easy gestures of resistance or solidarity replace commitment and dedication. Social media allows the commitment of activist groups to go largely untested, cautions Gladwell. The

strong commitment and individual sacrifices, that are required to legitimate and give credence to a social cause, are not prerequisites of ICT activism. Thus social media may cause activist movements to overreach their own institutional and organisational capabilities before they have sufficiently matured—a risk also noted by Papic and Noonan (2011).

> Anyone can publish on social media, including those whose agendas may be racist, sexist, violent, narcissistic, anti-democratic or just poorly conceived and half-baked. By way of example, Mäkinen and Wangu Kuira (2008) have described how social media were used to further destablise Kenya during a period of political turmoil that included ethnic violence.

SIDESTEPPING INTELLECTUAL, LEGAL AND ETHICAL FILTERS

In addition to the acknowledged risks of its exclusive use by political or social elites, its exploitation for managerial/privatisation purposes and its manipulation for political power rather than civic empowerment, social media poses other risks. One such risk is the capability to sidestep the intellectual, legal and ethical filters that apply to mainstream media. Anyone can publish on social media, including those whose agendas may be racist, sexist, violent, narcissistic, anti-democratic or just poorly conceived and half-baked. By way of example, Mäkinen and Wangu Kuira (2008) have described how social media were used to further destablise Kenya during a period of political turmoil that included ethnic violence. Haider (2011:8) summarised the problem as follows, 'During the 2007–2008 presidential election crisis in Kenya, the use of mobile phones made it cheap and easy to spread hateful and violent messages that contributed to mob violence'. From a democratisation point of view, the absence of filtering or regulation of content can, therefore, be a double-edged sword as Alam

(2011:18) notes: 'Information gathered, however, is not always reliable and can be manipulated by parties for ulterior motives, especially in politically charged environments'.

CONFUSING THE MEDIUM WITH THE MESSAGE

Proponents of social media as tools of social change also tend to confuse the message with the medium. Citing Ottaway and Hamzawy as well as Radsch, Haider (2011) notes that the labelling of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia as 'Wiki and Twitter revolutions' detracted from the economic, social and political grievances that inspired these uprisings. Had social media not been in use, analogue technology, faxes, telegraphs etc. would have been used for much the same purpose, albeit with reduced efficiency and impact. Contrary to those who would seek to invent new political discourse around ICT and social media, these technologies do not in

> The predicted benefits for public administration and government are ostensibly huge, but the promises often remain just that—promises and visions. The tendency towards hype has spread from the basic systems improvement (e-government) to the field of e-governance, that is, those critical interactions between state and society.

themselves inspire or motivate social reform and political change but, as Castells (2007) notes, they do give rise to new forms of insurgent politics and enable political action that could not have been conceived without these technologies.

HYPE AND PRIVATISATION

Social media and ICTs in general, are also the tools in trade of *new* public-management practitioners seeking to shrink government and extend public-

service efficiency and cost-cutting measures through improved technology and modernity. The ICT industry has countless proponents of e-government who are mainly in the business of selling advice, services, systems and software, all requiring some degree of privatisation or outsourcing.[5] The predicted benefits for public administration and government are ostensibly huge, but the promises often remain just that—promises and visions. The tendency towards hype has spread from the basic systems improvement (e-government) to the field of e-governance, that is, those critical interactions between state and society. Finger and Pécoud (undated:3), for example, talk about substituting the need for government to have direct transactions with the public by 'digitalizing the customer interface'— all in the name of a shift that would see the state acting as the *regulator* rather than the provider of services.

ENGAGING THE STATE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

In roughly the same period that social media were deployed for political ends, South Africa experienced a dramatic increase in the number of community protests (variously ascribed to poor services, lack of accountability by officials and weak provisions for public participation), which peaked at an average of nearly 18 protests per month in 2009 (Karamoko and Jain 2011:1).

Very little documented evidence has been published on the use of social media in such protests and other forms of activism. However, Nonkululeko Godana (in Shah et al. 2010) describes the use of Twitter by rape-survivors and their friends or support groups to draw attention to sexual violence and the associated failings of the justice system and school authorities. Godana describes the effectiveness of one victim's brave choice to recount her ordeal on

Twitter as a storytelling exercise, which mobilised other victims and their supporters. The subsequent development of a bond between friends and supporters culminated in the formation of an activist group, a campaign and even a dedicated song on one of South Africa's music video channels.

Two key points need to be made about the political use of social media; firstly, such opportunities are also available to the state (and other political actors) and, secondly, for governance purposes, social media offers considerable utility to governments that seek to streamline service efficiency or to govern on a participatory basis. Some governments are obviously aware of and anxious to explore the connection between social media and effective engagement with the state. As a case in point, in 2008 the British prime minister appointed a minister for e-government who proceeded to solicit comments and input on government activities through the popular Twitter service (see Peters and Abud 2009). What is perhaps most surprising is that governments seem to have woken up to these possibilities very belatedly and only after being been wrong-footed by the power of social media in enhancing the organisation and impact of protest activity.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Assumptions about the online impact of mobile technologies and social networking need to be treated with caution. South Africa, for example, has high levels of access to mobile phones. However, in 2010, there were just 2.5 million Facebook users in South Africa—a figure that is roughly the same as European countries that have much smaller populations. South Africa's Facebook use is, however, well short of that in other developing nations such as Indonesia (which has 21 million

users), the Philippines (12 million users), Mexico and Colombia (both at 9 million users), as well as a number of other South American countries that have between 3 and 9 million users (Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe 2011:2).

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While South Africa has the second highest number of Facebook users in Africa (exceeded only by Egypt) actual internet access is significantly higher in Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt. For particular countries, therefore, relative levels of internet access do not automatically translate into similar levels of social media usage. In South Africa, roughly half those who access the internet use Facebook, whereas only 9.4% of Nigeria's internet users choose Facebook. In total, Africa has about 100 million internet users and 17 million people access Facebook, making it the most visited site amongst those who do have internet access (Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe 2011:4). By this yardstick alone, Facebook is by far the most popular form of social media in Africa. As of 2012 then, social media seems to be a significant element of internet usage, but since only about 10% of Africans access the internet, the usage and significance of social media should not be overstated. As Mäkinen and Kuira (2008) warn, there is every possibility that social media will remain the tools of elites—reformist or otherwise.

The SALGA and GIZ (2011) study cited earlier provides a useful overview of ICT access and usage in South Africa as of 2011. The study found that web-based ICT interventions have limited relevance for the majority of South Africans unless facilitated by intermediaries, such as specialist community-based organisations, NGO programmes or social movements that deliberately set out to work with ICTs. The study also noted that NGO networks, like the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN), provide some level of electronic interface for civil-society organisations working on issues of local governance—mainly a website, newsletter and email groups.

Unsurprisingly, the study found far more prevalent use of social media by activist groups serving middle-class constituencies. The study also found that, in response to the increasing crisis in local government, many new and existing ratepayer associations in the more affluent areas have formalised their structures and now have well-designed websites with social media links including blogs, e-forums and other platforms. Social media are thus deployed for direct advocacy work, such as tracking and commenting on developments in policy, services, rates increases, tariffs, environmental issues and development control lobbies. The study notes that 'Engagement with local government is strong and often conflictual' (2011:85) and that alliances have been formed with business interests, such as the real-estate industry. The National Ratepayers Association, for example, claims to have about 320 member associations across South Africa and makes extensive use of electronic posts to update news of local campaigns, and to inform its members of expert views on issues such as property tax, etc.

At the other end of the political and economic spectrum, social movements such as Abahlali

baseMjondolo have their own websites and use social media to engage targeted municipalities, generally in a critical manner. These increasingly sophisticated social media or advocacy platforms are used to criticise failures in local governance and to resist what are seen as unjust municipal actions against informal shack settlements and other marginalised groups (SALGA and GIZ 2011). The SALGA/GIZ study also forecast that increasing levels of digital maturity could see municipalities using social media and web-based technologies to link with independent social movements, ratepayers, NGOs and organised business in order to facilitate debate or interaction.

Projections on the use of social media for political and social activism in South Africa are difficult due to a range of sometimes contradictory possibilities. Access to cell phones is very high but internet access is available to few. For basic co-ordination and organisation, mobile technologies therefore have great potential. For more sustained and coherent lobbying and advocacy, social media are more likely to be used by well-organised or relatively affluent groupings in the near future. Interesting exceptions to this are the social movements already described who have both a mass following and digital capability.

Lessons from Kenya suggest that, in times of political tumult, South Africa may be vulnerable to the abuse of social media by political groups or figures that seek to advance their cause through appeals to ethnic, racial or religious based identities. However, civil society in South Africa might find a less urgent need for social media, provided that its Constitution continues to be effective in protecting freedom of expression. Social media have found great utility in other African uprisings due to the absence of social and political frameworks that entrench freedom of expression—including well-

developed and independent media networks. South African media is still relatively free and information flows fairly easily between the state and civil society. Attempts to curb this could see social media assuming much more prominence. For the more economically marginalised, social media, especially mobile technologies, offer the opportunity to supplement protest and resistance with technology-based engagements that carry coherent messages. This may overcome the perception that such protests are purely spontaneous, politically opportunistic or simply a reaction to short-term service failure.

CONCLUSION

Social media and ICTs in general are set to play a key role in South African political and social activism. As demonstrated in the 2011 SALGA and GIZ study, important groupings in civil society are already making effective use of these mediums. However, the direct use of social media by the poorest and most marginalised constituencies is unlikely to grow significantly in the short-term due to limited internet access. Two key factors could impact on this. Firstly, mobile technologies, which have relatively high coverage, could see increasing usage for co-ordination and public communication functions. Secondly, social movements and aligned civil-society organisations are likely to play an important role as *advocacy intermediaries* for such groups and will carry their voices into social-media-based debates.

Innovative developments in e-government and e-governance are already evident in South Africa's better-performing government departments and municipalities, and this trend is likely to continue. However, ICTs cannot in themselves supply water or keep the lights on, and will thus be subject to the current levels of basic service (in)efficiency. In order for state departments and municipalities to meet basic service standards, emphasis will almost certainly be on customer convenience and streamlined services rather than participatory governance. In those rare cases where government commits to 'digital democracy', the use of social media for protest and criticism may be somewhat pre-empted. The government should, however, accept that independent engagement via social media fills an important gap in a maturing democracy.

There appears to be little documented research that clearly analyses the use of social media in South African civic–municipal activism and community protests, but recent national debates about restrictions on the media and freedom of expression, in particular the so-called Protection of Information Bill, have seen social media used widely and effectively. Journalist Mvelase Peppetta noted, 'With journalists and other media practitioners being so prominent and active on social media (Twitter in particular) it's hardly surprising that the fight against the bill has largely happened, and been coordinated, via social media. On Twitter, four of the Top 10 trending topics in South Africa are related to the controversial bill.'[6] This suggests that social media exists as a form of democratic backstop to a possible regression in formal systems and media freedom, or even to the democratic deficit that seems to afflict maturing political systems.

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NOTES

[1] The study was produced by SALGA with support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as part of their Strengthening Local Governance Programme. The study can be accessed at http://lgict.org.za/document/study-potential-utilize-information-and-communication-technologies-ict%E2%80%99s-promote-inclusion-

2 http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110202-social-media-tool-protest Retrieved 3 November 2011.

3 See, for example, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-10-17/news/30289923_1_social-media-protesters-videos/2 Retrieved 3 November 2011.

4 This term refers to the idea that ostensibly democratic institutions, and especially governments, are prone to lapses in democratic practice that may, for example, impact negatively on parliamentary democracy or the perceived integrity of public representatives. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_deficit)

5 See for example the 'Process and Systems Overview Using Gartner's Hype Cycle' (SALGA and GIZ 2011).

6 Mvelase Peppetta, South Africans Take to Social Media on Black Tuesday in 'Secrecy Bill' Protest. *Memeburn*, 22 November 2011. http://za.news.yahoo.com/south-africans-social-media-black-tuesday-secrecy-bill-050137072.html. Retrieved 24 February 2012.

TOWARDS GREATER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING: A CASE STUDY FROM SLOVO PARK, JOHANNESBURG

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According to official statistics, over 2.1 million households in South Africa lack adequate housing. Many of these households are situated in informal settlements, which range from the partially formalised—with some form of tenure security and access to basic water and sanitation services—to the extremely marginalised, with no security of tenure and little access to basic services. Since 2009, the South African government has ostensibly focused its national housing programme on the in situ *incremental upgrading of well-located informal settlements.*

PHOTO: HOUSINGISAHUMANRIGHT

THE KEY policy here is the revised Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), contained in the National Housing Code. Further, the accreditation of capacitated municipalities with housing functions means that national and provincial government control over housing delivery is shifting to the local level. The official target is to upgrade 400 000 households living on well-located land by 2014 (Department of Human Settlements 2010:14).[1]

The focus on *in situ* upgrading is a welcome shift from the 'eradication' and 'elimination' discourse and practice of the preceding five years. A major precondition for achieving successful *in situ* upgrading is community participation—as is the case with most legislation, government policy and programmes. Indeed, the South African National Planning Commission's *National Development Plan, 2030* highlights the need to shift to a development

paradigm that promotes the development of capabilities, the creation of opportunities and the participation of all citizens. The plan also highlights the importance of halting the practice of building houses on poorly located land and shifting 'greater resources to informal-settlement upgrading, provided that they are in areas close to jobs' (National Planning Commission 2011:33). The incremental upgrading of informal settlements is almost inherently participatory—or at least it should be. The reality, however, is that meaningful community participation in socio-economic development remains elusive in South Africa, as highlighted by the 2010/2011 publication on the state of local governance (GGLN 2011) and in statements by high-level politicians (GCIS 2011). Community protests occurring throughout the country, and the increasing number of cases coming before the courts, often relate to poor or non-existent consultation with communities around local development.[2]

In 2010, the Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF) approached the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) to investigate the non-implementation of a housing project that had been promised to the community of Slovo Park informal settlement since 1994, and to compel the government to upgrade the settlement. Over the years, community leaders had compiled a detailed history of the settlement, and recorded much of their correspondence with government departments and politicians. These included numerous memoranda and community resolutions as well as documents that had been generated as part of an official process that began in 2005 to upgrade the settlement, but which, six years on, had still not materialised.

This paper examines the attempts of the SPCDF to bring about development at Slovo Park informal settlement, the barriers to participation it has faced over the years, and the steps it is now taking outside of formal processes to proactively engage in upgrading the settlement. The first section provides some background on the Slovo Park settlement and summarises the community's attempts at engagement with development processes since 1994. This is followed by an examination of developments at Slovo Park during 2010 and 2011. The conclusion highlights several fault lines around planning and participation in upgrading, drawing on lessons that are relevant to Slovo Park and similar communities across South Africa.

THE BACKGROUND TO SLOVO PARK

Slovo Park informal settlement is situated in Johannesburg's Region G, next to the Nancefield Industrial Area between Nancefield, Eldorado Park and Bushkoppies. According to an informal survey conducted by the community in 2011, over 1 600 households and 5 000 people live in the settlement. It was first established during the early 1990s by people seeking a place to live closer to their jobs, and has since grown considerably. In terms of access to basic services, the settlement contains 1 050 ventilated pit latrines which were installed at each stand in 2005, plus four communal standpipes per informal street. Recently, the community began installing household water connections for themselves. The land on which the settlement is built is publicly-owned, and according to the City of Johannesburg's *Regional Spatial Development Framework 2010/2011* (RSDF), Slovo Park is in Category 1 of its informal settlement formalisation programme: that is, it has been earmarked for upgrading.

The 2010/2011 RSDF estimates the number of households in Slovo Park at 1 052. It notes that the settlement is located next to the Nancefield Industrial Area and that low-cost housing and informal

In 2009, Melani ran in the municipal by-elections as an African National Congress (ANC) candidate for ward councillor; however a Democratic Alliance (DA) candidate won. During the 2011 local government elections, Slovo Park was demarcated into a newly created ward, which was won by an ANC candidate.

settlements are competing with businesses for land. The RSDF notes that the area's informal settlements are located on prime vacant land and goes on to say that 'geotechnical studies have revealed dolomite in the area. Thus half of this sizable informal settlement (Slovo Park) will have to be relocated, as housing can only be provided for approximately 700 units on the developable land available' (City of Johannesburg 2010:78).[3] Among a list of key issues and priorities for the area as a whole, the RSDF includes 'the relocation of Slovo Park Informal settlement residents due to dolomite and subsequent use of the land' and the need to 'identify the availability of suitable land to fast-track the relocation of Slovo Park settlement from the high-risk dolomitic land' (City of Johannesburg 2010:125, 129).

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP

Throughout the country, informal settlements are routinely organised by informal committees or development forums. These settlement-level structures are usually democratically elected by the community and play an important role in the day-to-day functioning of informal settlements. They provide proof of residence to community members for various administrative purposes, regulate the influx of newcomers and the building of shacks in the settlement, interact with the local police around crime prevention, form partnerships with local businesses around employment opportunities, and engage with local ward councillors around service delivery.

Slovo Park's SPCDF is a well-organised and well-established forum which has pushed for upgrading of the settlement for over a decade. Elections are held annually and candidates can stand for a number of different portfolios including: health; sports, arts and culture; economic development and savings; housing; local economic development; safety and security; environment; youth; women; communication; poverty; and education. There are 36 representatives in total—four people from each block in the settlement are elected.

At the time of writing, SPCDF representatives supported different political parties, and according to the chairperson at the time, Mohau Melani, political affiliations are not seen as important. Rather, it is what the people want that is most important. Melani was first elected as chairperson in 2007 and also serves as an elected office-bearer in the Johannesburg structure of the Informal Settlement Network.[4] In 2009, Melani ran in the municipal by-elections as an African National Congress (ANC) candidate for ward councillor; however a Democratic Alliance (DA) candidate won. During the 2011 local government elections, Slovo Park was demarcated into a newly created ward, which was won by an ANC candidate.

Community meetings in Slovo Park are well attended, and it appears that there is buy-in from the majority of the community for the SPCDF. For example, the community offers financial support in the form of ad hoc donations when needed (for example, to hire busses for community members to attend marches). The elected representatives receive no payment. There are undoubtedly internal power dynamics and different agendas at play, including political ones. However, there is a genuine sense that the SPCDF has a mandate to improve the lives of those living at Slovo Park, and this is the driving force behind the efforts of the forum—not least

because of expectations and pressure from the community.

DEVELOPMENT DELAYED IS DEVELOPMENT DENIED

Since 1994, the Slovo Park community has been shunted from pillar to post regarding upgrading of the settlement. Although the SPCDF is at the helm of efforts to fast-track development, as of early 2012, almost no progress had been made, despite several sets of political promises, resources seemingly being allocated,[5] consultants being appointed, plans devised, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted and deadlines for the commencement of building set.

CONTROVERSY OVER HOUSING PROJECT IN 1994

According to the SPCDF, as early as 1994, there was supposedly a project to build 950 houses for residents in Slovo Park. This never happened and the money that was apparently collected for this purpose disappeared. Instead, houses were built the nearby Devland Extension 27. Allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds in relation to the project continue to plague the Slovo Park community and have never been resolved, at least in the minds of community members and leaders. The allegations directly influence the manner in which the community engages with current attempts at development at the site, and the collective view remains that 'there are 950 subsidies meant for us which were allocated elsewhere'. This claim has been repeated many times to government officials, politicians and consultants over the years, and SPCDF believes that development in Slovo Park has been protracted because of the need to cover-up corruption involved in the initial housing project.[6]

POLITICIANS AND PROMISES

Since 1994, politicians and government officials have made a number of promises and undertakings regarding development at Slovo Park at various meetings, *imbizos* and forums. According to the SPCDF, these have almost always referred to the building of the 950 houses. Most notably, on 25 July 2003, officials from the national housing department and Gauteng's provincial housing department attended a large community meeting in Slovo Park, where several commitments were made, including that:

* Slovo Park would not be relocated elsewhere
* 950 houses would be built in the area in line with the social compact of 1994
* Slovo Park would be demarcated into the Eldorado Park ward from Protea South and Lenasia (SPCDF 2009a).

Allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds in relation to the project continue to plague the Slovo Park community and have never been resolved, at least in the minds of community members and leaders.

DEVELOPMENT AT LAST?

In 2005, after ten years of promises, it appeared that development was eventually coming to Slovo Park: the Gauteng provincial housing department appointed consultants to manage the Slovo Park housing project. In 2004, a project management and engineering consulting firm had been appointed to conduct a feasibility study on development at Slovo Park. In March 2005, iNtatakusa Consulting produced a feasibility study that notes that formalisation of the settlement is possible, desirable and urgently required. The study recommended that 1 150 stands be developed as part of an *in situ* process but noted that a large amount of de-densification would have to be carried out and

'additional land must be identified to accommodate the surplus families' (iNtatakusa Consulting 2005:29). The report describes how the availability of vacant land for development and relocation of excess families is a development constraint and that 'there is vacant land adjacent that should be investigated.' The study concludes that the remaining households would have to be relocated to developments on vacant land nearby, and suggests a number of options.

Despite the numerous further promises by politicians and government officials, no concrete development took place. While official processes involving housing development are inevitably protracted, the community leadership was not satisfied with the excuses offered, and mobilised in various ways to push for development. Over the years, the SPCDF has lobbied their local ward councillors, the MMC for Housing, MEC for Housing, the mayor, the leadership of the local ANC branch, local parliamentary constituency offices, local members of parliament, the premier of the province as well as the president of South Africa.

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In early 2007, the community was introduced to a representative from Arcus Gibb, an engineering consulting firm, who told them that he and his team were at an advanced stage in the formal process of establishing a township at the settlement, and that this was due to conclude in early July 2007. He stated that geotechnical studies were still to be conducted on the area, and that these were to take place in May 2007. The community was told that development would proceed by September 2007, but that the number of houses being built would be reduced from 950 to 821 because of dolomitic conditions in the area. By July 2007, the community had heard nothing further about the geotechnical study, supposedly the last hurdle to development, and decided to protest. In the early hours of 10 July, Slovo Park residents blockaded the N12 highway near Eldorado Park, protesting about the lack of water, electricity and houses.[7]

In August 2007, a new consultant from Arcus Gibb approached the community, and said she had taken over from her colleague, and was extending the deadline for development to occur from September 2007 to November 2007. She further stated that the number of houses to be built would be 820. Shortly after this, yet another consultant arrived and told the community that only 660 houses would be built. It is understandable that at this point frustration levels at the settlement were extremely high.

On 11 September 2007, the community marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to 'introduce the community to President Mbeki' and to call for electricity, water and sewerage at the settlement. They presented a memorandum that includes long- and short-term demands for: the improvement of service delivery; the installation of long-overdue electricity access points; the installation of permanent taps in individual yards, flush toilets, tarred roads and pavements; the building of 2 500 five-room houses; and recognition of the township as a formal settlement (SPCDF 2007).

In early 2008, the SPCDF continued to engage with various government officials, high level figures in the ANC and technical professionals. There were overt expressions of dissatisfaction and disappointment with the ANC and political deployees to the executive council (MEC) and the mayoral committee (MMC), who had failed to ensure development at Slovo Park despite all the promises made to the community. The community leadership used both subtle and overtly political 'scare tactics' to lobby for development at the settlement. In April 2008, the community marched on the offices of the executive mayor and the speaker, and the SPCDF handed over a petition and a Memorandum of Accountability stating how their constitutional rights were being ignored and demanding socio-economic rights and the recognition of what they have called Nancefield Township (SPCDF 2008).

Throughout this fraught period, a formal process was, in fact, underway, and between 2008 and 2009 an independent environmental impact assessment (EIA) was conducted at the settlement (Nemai Consulting was appointed in July 2007 to undertake this process). A number of community meetings were convened with the consultants as part of the EIA's public participation process, and minutes of these meetings clearly show the disjuncture between the community and the consultants. While members of the community raised issues relating to the history of the project, the number of houses needed, the timeframes and false promises they had been given, the consultants could not sufficiently engage with these issues (see Tissington 2011:38– 45). At a meeting held in 2009, community members raised questions around why only 660 houses were to be built, where the remainder of the community would be housed, when building would commence, what other facilities were planned etc. Nemai Consulting seemed unable to engage with these

Throughout 2009 and early 2010, the SPCDF attempted to engage with politicians in government and high-level ANC officials around development at Slovo Park. According to the SPCDF, at all the meetings they attended during this period, they stressed that the community wanted services, and moved away from speaking about houses or units.

questions, and referred many queries to the ward councillor. The SPCDF then expressed its confusion as to what the EIA was supposed to achieve as there had been research conducted before at the settlement, and they questioned whether Nemai Consulting would investigate what happened to the promise of 950 houses so as to 'close the gap between what had been promised for the last 13 years and their appointment as consultants'.[8] In June 2009, Nemai Consulting made public their 'Environmental Impact Assessment Report: Slovo Park Housing Development'. Two potential layouts of the settlement were proposed, with the preferred and most up-to-date option yielding 629 stands (Nemai Consulting 2009:30–31).

Throughout 2009 and early 2010, the SPCDF attempted to engage with politicians in government and high-level ANC officials around development at Slovo Park. According to the SPCDF, at all the meetings they attended during this period, they stressed that the community wanted services, and moved away from speaking about houses or units. Stating their need for immediate relief in relation to the provision of basic services, they wrote to their local members of parliament noting their demands for 'electricity, water, sewerage, to prevent more shack fires from the community, hence saving the lives of the poor'. Their letter goes on to state, 'We are currently not aware how long we are going to maintain the pressure from the community members.

Houses, whenever they arrive, will be a bonus for the community' (SPCDF 2009b). Throughout 2009, the SPCDF attempted to raise the issue of development at the settlement with various politicians and government officials. In early December 2009, Slovo Park residents again turned to protest after the housing MMC failed to attend a meeting about development at the settlement.[9]

Interestingly, new hope was given to the SPCDF when Slovo Park was demarcated as a new ward after the 2011 local government elections. The ward was then won by an ANC candidate who lives in the area and, according to Melani, understands the plight of Slovo Park and the history of the Devland Extension 27 housing project. It appears that the councillor is onboard with the forum's efforts to seek legal assistance to compel the province to upgrade the settlement in situ.

DEVELOPMENTS AT SLOVO PARK IN 2010 AND 2011

Indeed, over the years, the SPCDF has engaged tirelessly with politicians and formal structures to try and secure the upgrading of their settlement. According to them, this approach, a political 'behind closed doors' one, has yielded few results. In 2010, the Gauteng housing department told the community that due to a number of problems that had arisen during the EIA process and geotechnical investigations, the layout plan had to be amended and the size of the development reduced still further to just 575 stands; and that the remaining households would have to be relocated to a development at Eldorado Park.[10] According to the project manager at Arcus Gibb, unforeseen planning and design issues, in particular, problems with the bulk sewerage connection are still stalling development at Slovo Park. According to him, costly

interventions are required to rectify the situation, which were not budgeted for initially, and are not provided for in the subsidy amounts. Bulk sewerage is a municipal responsibility of the City of Johannesburg. Thus, the Gauteng housing department has to find a mechanism to fund this, and until these bulk infrastructure issues are resolved, the township application has been suspended.[11]

According to the project manager, investigations were done into the possibility of purchasing land adjacent to the settlement to relocate excess households from Slovo Park, but it was discovered that there is a 100-year floodline on this land which makes it unsuitable for development. In terms of the Eldorado Park development, it appears that Eldorado Park residents are unwilling to accommodate Slovo Park residents in their area, and thus this option is still in a very early planning phase.

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Indeed, the SPCDF has been very proactive in soliciting assistance from various 'professionals' outside the state and formal structures. In addition to engaging legal NGOs around securing access to interim services at the settlement and pushing for upgrading, it also partnered with the Community Organisation Resource Centre to secure master's students from the University of Pretoria's architecture department to research and design an upgrading and development plan for the settlement,

and to build a community hall there. In July 2010, the residents of Slovo Park 'after 3 years of trying to engage Provincial Government about the provision of water, flush toilets and electricity realised that the State was not going to aid them' (SA SDI Alliance 2010). The community decided to 'help itself'. They conducted a skills audit and gathered all the plumbers in the community to assist with installing household water connections. Community members organised themselves into street clusters and worked out how they would pay for the main pipe and the fittings required to install household connections, as well as how they would reimburse the plumbers for their time. According to the SDI, of the 1 152 sites, approximately 1 050 have a standpipe on their site connected to the main water supply through this 'self-help' process (SA SDI Alliance 2010). SPCDF have since continued working with students and others on mapping the settlement using a GIS system, and are developing alternative plans for infrastructure and *in situ* upgrading, which they hope will tie in with planned litigation.

FAULT LINES AROUND PLANNING AND PARTICIPATION IN UPGRADING

The spider's web that is the Slovo Park case study highlights the serious gaps and deficits in official planning processes, which in turn raise serious questions about the ability of even well-organised, cohesive and mobilised communities to participate in the upgrading of informal settlements. A top-down, consultant-driven approach managed by the provincial government—with little to no engagement between local communities and their elected representatives—is a recipe for disaster. The Slovo Park story further highlights the following key issues:

* There is a lack of coordination and alignment between provincial and local government around settlement upgrading.
* Temporary, insecure situations become permanent at settlements and residents are unable to consolidate their living situations and invest in improvements.
* Local government structures are failing to use resources, knowledge and expertise available within settlements, which are vital to upgrading processes such as enumeration, re-blocking etc.
* Promises that remain unfulfilled (such the '950 houses'), the persistent lack of communication to explain why these promises have been broken or to commit to new goals, combined with the failure to directly address perceptions of corruption, all lead to a serious break down in trust between communities and government.
* Development targets shift continually, with little or no explanation from the responsible authorities, and occur in a context of a general lack of communication from government. Transparency in processes and timelines is necessary, and this information must be made available to community leaders and members.
* Community expectations are shifting: from a demand for housing to demands for basic services and tenure security, which aligns with the government's current agenda on incremental upgrading.
* Protest is increasingly likely when politicians and government officials make empty promises to communities year after year.

These issues are neither new, nor specific to this particular settlement. Throughout South Africa poor communities, often organised and proactive, struggle to access well-located urban land, decent services, security of tenure and the means to consolidate their informal housing into something better (see World

Given the government's target of upgrading 400 000 households on well-located land by 2014, the myriad barriers to achieving scaled-up and sustainable development need to be seriously and programmatically addressed.

Bank 2008). The Slovo Park case points to the following imperatives:

* to reform the urban land system and improve integrated planning
* to develop and implement pro-poor land strategies
* to push for *in situ* informal settlement upgrading and incremental settlement
* to pursue meaningful participation by communities and provide them with greater support and access to information
* to promote community-based development
* to harness the energy, expertise and 'social capital' of community members and leaders in development processes.

The Slovo Park example provides clear proof of community action and agency with respect to planning, enumeration, skills audit, water connections, litigation etc. This is not a passive community, waiting for development. In reality there is very little evidence of the apathy often blamed on communities who are seen as waiting for development to be delivered to them. There is a need for sustainable partnerships that can help to expedite development and ensure the improvement of living conditions for the poor during the interim periods leading to larger infrastructural development. This is what the Slovo Park residents are now trying to facilitate.

Given the government's target of upgrading 400 000 households on well-located land by 2014, the myriad barriers to achieving scaled-up and sustainable development need to be seriously and programmatically addressed. A different paradigm—complete with different laws, processes, timelines, priorities, attitudes and outcomes—needs to be developed to achieve the ambitious and imperative task of upgrading informal settlements and improving the socio-economic conditions of those who live in them. The following recommendations are put forward in an effort to assist stakeholders to achieve the necessary paradigm shift and to encourage community participation in local and provincial government:

* Proper feasibility studies of informal settlements and the land on which they are situated should be expeditiously undertaken by local government (assisted by provincial government where necessary); the active participation of communities in this process should be encouraged wherever viable, for example, in the enumeration of households.
* Access to interim services in informal settlements—particularly water, sanitation and refuse removal—is already mandated in legislation and policy; these services should be provided with the participation of community members and representatives.
* Local government needs to offer greater recognition of and support to community structures; similarly, government needs to act with integrity and understanding when dealing with community forums and communities that have been sent from pillar to post for years regarding improvements to their living conditions.

- Roles and responsibilities around land-use planning and regulation, integrated-development planning, housing programmes, and the provision of services, etc, need to be defined, rationalised and communicated to community leaders and social movements in a way that is accessible and facilitates further community participation in development processes.
- One-way, top-down communication with communities should be avoided, particularly when external consultants are involved (during EIA processes, for example).
- Plans that are not inclusive and do not accommodate all those living in settlements are not rational and are unlikely to be sustainable, and should be reformulated in consultation with communities—when too few opportunities are afforded to communities, corruption and graft around the allocation of housing occurs. This results in mistrust of government and can lead to violence.

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NOTES

[1] This target is included in the Outcome 8 delivery agreement on Sustainable Human Settlements and Improved Quality of Household Life (Department of Human Settlements 2010). Outcome 8 is one of 12 delivery agreements based on national priorities set by government in early 2010.

[2] See *Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA and Another v Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and Others* [2009] ZACC 31. www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2009/31.pdf. Retrieved 26 January 2012;
Ntombentsha Beja and Others v Premier of the Western Cape and Others 2011 (10) BCLR 1077 (WCC) (29 April 2011). http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2011/97.html. Retrieved 26 January 2012; and
Residents of Joe Slovo Community, Western Cape v Thubelisha Homes and Others [2009] ZACC 16. www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2009/16.pdf. Retrieved 26 January 2012.

3   Dolomite is the geological phenomena of sedimentary rock under land, which can result in the formation of sinkholes, making development both risky and expensive. About 25% of Gauteng's surface area consists of dolomite land, with much of this occurring in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni (see Storie, 2011).

4   The Informal Settlement Network (ISN) forms part of the South African SDI (Shack/Slum Dwellers International) Alliance, together with the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), the uTshani Fund and FEDUP. http://www.sasdialliance.org.za/blog/.

5   According to the City of Johannesburg's Draft Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Revision 2009/10), Slovo Park is on the list of the Gauteng department of housing's new Capex projects for 2009/2010, and has been allocated a medium-term budget of R14 832 00 (City of Johannesburg 2009:325).

6   For more on the problem of corruption in housing delivery in South Africa, see Rubin (2011).

7   See Lenasia Protests Turn Violent. *IOL News*. 10 July 2007. http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/lenasia-protests-turn-violent-1.361333. Retrieved 3 October, 2011.

8   Information contained in a dossier for 2007–2010, provided by Mohau Melani (copy in possession of the author).

9   See Burning Tyres Used to Block Roads. *IOL News*. 7 December 2009. http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/burning-tyres-used-to-block-roads-1.466937. Retrieved 3 October 2011.

10 This information comes from the minutes of a meeting of representatives from the Legal Resources Centre, Arcus Gibb and the Gauteng provincial housing department on 30 September 2010.

11 Telephonic interview with Arcus Gibb project manager, Vusi Radebe, on 19 April 2011.

TRANSFORMING MINDS AND SETTING PRECEDENTS: BLOCKING-OUT AT RUIMSIG INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

By Andrea Bolnick, Community Organisation Resource Centre and Ikhayalami

The South African government, according to the human settlements minister, Tokyo Sexwale, has built 2.3 million houses (Sexwale 2009). While this is indeed a notable accomplishment, the government, by its own admission, has failed to keep up with the scale of need. In addition, in recent years, the state has acknowledged that its existing housing-subsidy scheme is unsustainable.

PHOTO: CORC/IKHAYALAMI

IN HIS 2009 budget speech, for example, Sexwale went on to express the concern that 'previous studies by the Department concluded that continuing with the current trend in the housing budget would lead to a funding shortfall of R102 billion in 2012 which could increase to R253 billion by 2016' (Sexwale 2009). However, in line with the South African Constitution, housing subsidies cannot be abandoned entirely even if, as the minister pointed out, budget shortfalls are going to dramatically hinder the delivery of subsidised housing in the very near future.

Policy attempts had been made earlier in an attempt to shift state machinery towards a more incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading—that is, one that delinks land purchases, the provision of services and top structures from one another, thus allowing for a more flexible and

participative approach. The Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) was introduced into the National Housing Code in 2004. In 2007, some small but important amendments were made, such as emphasising *in situ* development as central and permitting relocation only where unavoidable. The UISP's aim is to upgrade informal settlements by providing households with access to basic services and tenure security.[1]

Convincing state institutions to alter their course regarding 'conventional' housing delivery proved no easy task, however, and the upgrading programme was initially largely ignored. Indeed, instead of using the flexibility and space that this policy allows to identify innovative solutions for informal communities, several municipalities used UISP funding to fast-track subsidies for conventional housing projects (Misselhorn 2008).

It was only in 2010, when President Jacob Zuma committed the state to upgrading 400 000 households in well-located areas, that all levels of government started trying to come to grips with the UISP. It has since become clear that, if the poor do not set precedents for the involvement of all stakeholders (including, most crucially, the affected communities and the state) in delivering basic needs and rights, the space that UISP opens up for innovation and flexibility could be quickly closed off by officials and contractors who tend to favour the top-down approach that they are more familiar with.

It is against this backdrop that poor communities, linked to the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), are pioneering new and innovative approaches to informal settlement upgrading. One such approach is known as 'blocking-out'. The term refers to reconfiguring informal shack settlements to enable safer and less congested environments as well as easier access for emergency vehicles. In designing a new layout, informal settlements can make

provision for future infrastructural developments such as improved roads, pathways, drainage, water and sanitation.

The first ISN blocking-out project, spearheaded by Ikhayalami and the Joe Slovo community, took place in the Joe Slovo informal settlement in Cape Town's Langa township, following a shack fire in March 2009. In this informal settlement, the project led to a total of 125 upgraded shelters being rebuilt in a rationalised layout. As a result of this success, the City of Cape Town's Informal Settlement Department (ISM) met with Ikhayalami, CORC and the ISN in April 2009. This signalled the beginning of a productive partnership between the ISN and the ISM that focused on ways of improving service delivery in informal settlements across the Cape metropole. The second blocking-out pilot project took place in-situ in Sheffield Road, Cape Town, where 167 upgraded shacks were reconfigured into a better layout with clusters and courtyards that enable the provision of sanitation within communally managed spaces. A group of ISN and Sheffield Road community members (known as the pilot team) anchored the planning and implementation of the project and became the first tier of what has become known as ISN's pool of community architects.

This paper presents a brief case study of the third blocking-out project in Ruimsig informal settlement in Roodepoort, Johannesburg, where there are 369 shacks and 422 families. The paper attempts to show how the community, which is well organised (and linked to the ISN) is incrementally upgrading their homes and settlement, with support from local government and the ISN (including Ikahayalami, CORC, the University of Johannesburg and an architectural firm, 26'10 South).

The Ruimsig project intends to set a clear precedent for community-led and 'people centred' approaches, so that *in-situ* upgrading of informal

settlements (and, when unavoidable, community-led relocation solutions) become the bedrock of all future delivery at scale. Such a huge undertaking could never be achieved by any one grouping alone. Thus numerous stakeholders are involved in a multi-pronged approach in Ruimsig. The most important of these are the affected community and the relevant local government structures, supported by, among others, the South African Shack/Slum Dwellers International Alliance[2] and the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP),[3] academic and professional institutions (in particular, the University of Johannesburg's Architecture department and 26'10 South Architects). The concluding section of this paper advances some key lessons and recommendations for replication.

These women-based, collectives, provide the community with financial management skills and serve as dependable community institutions for external actors such as banks, building-materials suppliers and local authorities to engage with.

THE RUIMSIG PROJECT
BLOCKING-OUT BEGINS

The Ruimsig project was conceived in 2010 after ISN leaders from Johannesburg visited Cape Town, where they saw the positive results of the blocking-out projects that had been completed in Joe Slovo and were being implemented in Sheffield Road. Keen to implement a similar blocking-out project in Johannesburg, ISN identified the relatively small settlement of Ruimsig. For years, the Ruimsig community had been uncertain about its future, firstly, because its borders fall between two municipalities—Mohale City and the City of Johannesburg—and, secondly, because the

settlement is surrounded by mushrooming middle-class housing developments. It was imperative for the community to start improving their own lives in partnership with the state.

It took a year of preparation before the first shack came down and the first upgraded shelter was built in line with the agreed new layout. Initial preparations included: ongoing and intense engagements with City of Johannesburg officials, both at the metro level and with the local authorities from Region C; and conducting a community-led household survey supported by CORC which included counting the shacks and mapping the settlement. The simple shack count provided the community, its leadership and the local authorities with vital information that had hitherto been unknown. The information garnered from the enumeration[4] and mapping processes was used to inform the design for a new spatial arrangement for blocking-out. Another crucial aspect of preparing the community for the blocking-out process was the setting up of internal savings collectives in the settlement. These women-based collectives, provide the community with financial management skills and serve as dependable community institutions for external actors such as banks, building-materials suppliers and local authorities to engage with.

ISN gathered technical-planning support for the project from the pool of community architects from Sheffield Road, Cape Town, as well as from the staff of Ikhayalami, 26'10 South Architects and architects and students from the University of Johannesburg's architecture department. It was agreed that the university would set up an informal studio in Ruimsig from 18 July to 1 September 2011, and that 8 appointed community architects and 16 master's students from the university would work closely together on designing the new layout of the settlement.

Initially the conceptual engagements were a little one sided in 'favour' of the students. However this was strategically counterbalanced when CORC facilitated a horizontal learning exchange to the blocking-out project in Sheffield Road, Cape Town, where four architecture students and five community architects from Ruimsig worked alongside experienced ISN community architects from Sheffield Road to design new cluster layouts in Sheffield Road. Witnessing the confidence and skill of the Cape Town community architects made a lasting impression on both the students and the Ruimsig community architects. The exchange cemented the realisation that the students are a fleeting reality passing though the shack dwellers lives, and that the shack dwellers themselves will have to implement the project and live with its consequences for years to come. Following this exchange, engagements were far more balanced and, if anything, conceptualising new design layouts tipped in favour of the community architects in line with the SA SDI Alliance's agenda. The work of the informal studio culminated in an exhibition at the Ruimsig stadium on 1 September 2011 where both students and community architects presented their work. City officials from Region C and the Johannesburg Metro attended the exhibition, as did a senior manager from the NUSP.

Between 3 September and mid October a level of urgency arose in relation to implementing the project. This came from the Ruimsig community and from the funders who were threatening to recall funding unless building began. This led to a number of productive meetings with Region C officials and the ward councillor where the community architects explained the processes of blocking-out. The City agreed to support the project, and on 25 September, a general meeting was held in the community with all tiers of local government endorsing the project. After this meeting, community savings scaled up

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considerably as people began to believe that 'blocking-out was really going to happen'. Now that there was official go-ahead, it became imperative that the community architects take the broad concepts that were designed together with the students and work out the detailed plans required for realigning the spatial layout of the settlement at cluster level. The community architects supported by ISN community architects from Cape Town undertook this with great dexterity—negotiating and realigning the spatial composition of the settlement.

Re-blocking and building began on 19 October and continued until 26 November 2011. In this first phase, 38 shacks were dismantled, upgraded and repositioned to decongest the densest area of the settlement. During this period, many challenges and contestations had to be faced, including:

* a handful of community members who had bigger 'stands' refused to downscale and comply with a more equitable framework
* a number of shack-lords tried to lobby against the blocking-out process
* some shebeen owners attempted to contest the validity of the community leadership structure and
* the traditionally conservative ratepayers association from the more affluent adjacent neighbourhood, expressed anger that the informal settlement was 'growing' at a rapid rate. This was dealt with through a meeting that was held in the settlement. After an explanation of the project, the ratepayers association supported the

upgrade and indicated their willingness to 'be good neighbours' to Rumsig's informal settlement community.

All of these challenges are being dealt with by the emergent partnership that consists of the Ruimsig community, the City of Johannesburg (Region C), the City of Johannesburg (head office), ISN, Ikhayalami and CORC. To facilitate the process, which is often fraught with difficulties and complexities, two ISN leaders, who were the backbone of the Sheffield Road upgrade, have visited Ruimsig numerous times to work with the community leaders and the community architects. Materials were procured and two Ikhayalami builders came to Ruimsig to support and provide training on how to build the upgraded shacks and adhere to principles of the improved layout that had been agreed upon.

ANALYSIS OF IMPACT

The impact of the Ruimsig blocking-out process has been considerable. People no longer live as unwelcome guests, disassociated from fellow shack dwellers but, instead, they have forged a neighbourhood and a community. People have managed to transform their own lives and this is restoring dignity. The community leaders and 'community architects' have acquired spatial-planning and problem-solving skills. At a broader level, through the ISN and horizontal learning exchanges(through which communities visit one another and learn by doing), the concept of blocking-out and related knowledge has been transferred to many other informal settlements, which now want to embark on similar upgrading strategies. Furthermore, this precedent-setting project has alerted the City of Johannesburg to the work of the ISN and to the value of building a stronger partnership with the SA SDI Alliance and similar

such civil-society organisations. At national level, the blocking-out projects at Sheffield Road and Ruimsig have garnered the support of both the National Sanitation Task Team and the NUSP. The project has transformed people's minds at the level of individuals, to community members, to the local authorities, broader social movements, as well as employees of provincial government and national agencies such as NUSP and the National Sanitation Task Team. It has been a transformative and precedent setting project at every level. With each and every transformation, it has become clear to all involved that this approach is powerful, accessible, transferable and replicable.

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ruimsig project has demonstrated that informal-settlement upgrading at scale requires the collaboration of numerous stakeholders, most notably well-organised settlement communities, linked to broader networks and the state. In addition, partners such as NGOs and universities can also play an important role. The blocking-out project in Ruimsig has begun to transform the mindset of local authorities, provincial government and tiers of national government and, equally perhaps more importantly, the urban poor. Through exchange programmes and urban-poor networks, a success story in one community can become a centre of learning for hundreds of others.

Key lessons learned in Ruimsig include:

* People living in informal settlements, represented by legitimate leadership, linked to broader networks of the urban poor are best placed to decide on intricate spatial arrangements within their own settlements.
* A simple reconfiguration of space with upgraded shacks drastically improves people's living

- conditions and restores dignity and hope.
- While people wait endlessly for a subsidised house, they can live in dignity where they are currently located without disrupting social cohesion or negatively affecting their proximity to work.
- Blocking-out enables emergency services to access areas more easily; this reduces the risks from fires and floods and facilitates the provision of other basic services.
- Capacitated networks of the urban poor such as the ISN that are linked to grassroots women's savings collectives provide the necessary skills, depth and breadth to make it possible to replicate this model at scale.

- This model opens the space for the state and organised networks of the urban poor to work collectively to co-produce solutions for the upgrading of thousands of well-located households, improving service delivery and incremental tenure security options. The model also has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to Output 1 of the Outcome 8 Performance Agreement which has been put in place by the Minister of Human Settlements and President Zuma (see Department of Human Settlements 2010)—the upgrading of 400 000 well located households, as well as improving service delivery and tenure security by 2014.

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NOTES

[1] Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code: Upgrading of Informal Settlements 2004.

[2] SA SDI alliance is a conglomeration of organisations made up of the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP), together with their support organisations, CORC (which includes Ikhayalami) and the Utshani Fund.

[3] The NUSP was established to support the National Department of Human Settlement in the implementation of the UISP.

[4] Enumeration is the process whereby household-level information is generated by counting, numbering and measuring the shacks. This is done by collecting data through a community-drafted questionnaire that address socio-economic and demographic concerns. The result is a settlement profile, which becomes a powerful negotiation tool for tenure security, livelihood opportunities, and spatial planning.

ADVANCING 'NETWORKED SPACES': MAKING A CASE FOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE TO DEEPEN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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The state of local governance in South Africa is failing to live up to its developmental mandate. Well-envisioned in the White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998:17), this sphere of government should 'work together with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives', and therefore 'democratise development'. However, citizens have lost confidence and trust in the system.

PHOTO: CORC/KHAYALAMI

THIS HAS been evident in the spate of community protests, which can be seen as a symptom of citizens' alienation from local government (COGTA 2009a:11). GGLN's (2011) State of Local Governance Publication, *Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction,* analyses this crisis in local government and notes that community discontent is, among other things, the outcome of inadequate and uneven service delivery, a lack of explanation for delays in responding to local needs, and partisan and divisive local politics. A key conclusion of the GGLN publication is that, although progressive in its orientation, the current edifice of public participation provided for by local government legislation is largely inadequate for facilitating meaningful and inclusive expressions of voice, particularly for the poor and marginalised.

The government's own assessment of local government, contained in the 2009 *State of Local Government in South Africa* and *Local Government*

Turnaround Strategy (COGTA 2009a; 2009b) reports, recognises this trend. Their analysis paints a picture of a system of local government that is unresponsive and unaccountable, fails to involve communities in their own development, and is characterised by poor political governance. The formal 'invited' spaces created by the state have proven ineffectual at empowering and articulating the voices of the poor. This has given rise to informal, 'invented' spaces in which organisations emerge to articulate community needs and aspirations (Ramjee and van Donk 2011). In responding to these challenges, the government's inclination has been to fix 'invited spaces', most notably the ward committee system,[1] and to address other governance issues by amending existing legislation, notably the Municipal Systems Amendment Act of 2011.

The 'invited–invented' dichotomy employed by the literature on participatory governance, and used to frame GGLN's 2011 publication, has been useful, if somewhat limited. It has been helpful in clearly demarcating where initiatives originate and, importantly, who sets the terms for public-participation initiatives. Arguably, the dichotomy rings true in the South African context because, to a certain extent, community-created 'invented' spaces have originated in response, or in opposition to, state-created 'invited' spaces. However, the trend has been to present the invited-invented spaces as a dichotomy rather than a dialectic—creating the risk of over-characterising these spaces as mutually exclusive and unlikely to co-exist or overlap.[2] This has also supported the tendency within participatory-governance discourse that focuses on opening up invited spaces to increased community participation, and on initiatives aimed at strengthening invented spaces.

While the 2011 GGLN Publication drew upon the invited–invented dichotomy, it also illustrated that this dichotomy offers an analytically somewhat blunt instrument when trying to understand the ways in which power dynamics shape these spaces and influence the outcomes of governance processes (such as planning, decision-making, etc). This paper proposes a revised schema that allows for differentiation of the key characteristics of each of these spaces within the wider governance system. Furthermore, it argues for 'networked spaces' that build 'communities of practice' between officials, professionals, civil-society representatives and community members to address specific social problems. Such government-initiated processes must be systematically and strategically designed to enable the combining of different knowledge systems and the negotiation of pronounced power differentials between stakeholder groups to produce credible and representative outcomes. International examples of such spaces have begun to emerge in recent years—perhaps the most well recognised examples are the participatory processes of decision-making and budgeting in Kerala, India, and Porto Alegre, Brazil, which have inspired similar processes in other countries (Heller 2008).

There is an unfortunate tendency for debates about the procedural design of democratic local governance to occur in isolation from the lessons that are being learned by policy makers and practitioners located within specific sectors or focusing on particular issues (such as participation in housing projects, for example). That is, much of the debate remains somewhat abstract, at the level of principle, or is directed at the creation of spaces for democratic participation (such as those relating to ward committees—see COGTA 2009b), without paying sufficient attention to the ability of these spaces to deal with substantive concerns. This division is echoed in the way in which many NGOs in South Africa are organised—with many having a

governance unit alongside other more issue-specific units (focusing on matters such as housing, for example). The danger is that we forego processes of mutual learning by artificially separating governance from issue-specific concerns and vice versa.

By outlining the need for networked spaces that are designed to create opportunities for diverse actors to build communities of practice around pressing social issues, this paper seeks to bridge the gap between so called process literature and that which speaks to the substantive concerns of local government, by outlining the need for networked spaces that are designed to create opportunities for diverse actors to build communities of practice around pressing social issues. The paper draws on diverse sources in order to contextualise, characterise and justify the need for networked spaces. The ideas mooted here were also presented to selected South African urban-governance practitioners, who helped to illustrate complexities that involved in setting up networked spaces, and some of their points are included near the end of the paper.[3]

DEFINING NETWORKED SPACES

A proactive approach to community involvement is not common amongst local councils, yet the reforms to the planning system and to local government generally increasingly require, and necessitate, both proactivity and systematisation of involvement as well as an implied need to build and sustain a widened network of stakeholder interests in local governance. The answer, in both the short and the long term, might be to see these new reforms as part of a process: *a process in which overt network building takes centre stage.* From this perspective, building the network in certain managed/controlled ways

through frameworks, practices, rights of access, best practice and capacity-building activities means that a range of interests can be enrolled and maintained in a new network of governance (Doak and Parker 2005: 36–7; emphasis added).

Successful participatory processes have the potential to create innovative and commonly held solutions to complex social problems. Reviewing evidence from successful experiences of mainstreaming direct participation into local government in Kerala and Porto Alegre, Heller (2008:170) argues that because local groups can work closely with the state and be jointly invested in achieving common goals, 'local government is often an area where alliances across the state–society boundary can develop and produce synergistic outcomes'. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that individuals and institutions entering these spaces represent complex and contradictory elements with differentiated interests and priorities (Oldfield 2008). These processes are, therefore, often deeply influenced by existing power relations and by complex negotiations that involve trade-offs and compromises between different groups. In the introduction to GGLN's 2011 State of Local Governance Publication, Ramjee and van Donk (2011:22) argue that one of the limitations of the state's response to problems with entrenching local participatory governance has been its focus on reforming existing state-created, invited spaces but that,

the debate about the weaknesses of the 'invited spaces' is largely silent [about the fact] that participatory governance involves prioritisation, negotiation, trade-offs and compromise. The

> temptation to remove or minimise these tricky and complex characteristics and sidestep contestation is perhaps understandable, but not particularly helpful if the intention is to strengthen local governance, (re)build trust in local government and facilitate the expression of voice, particularly by those who are marginalised.

Participatory spaces, therefore, represent a real opportunity to produce synergistic outcomes that cut across state–society borders. However, in order to realise this potential they *must be designed* to support the processes of prioritisation, negotiation, trade-offs and compromise described above. Furthermore, as Doak and Parker indicate above, at the heart of the success of such an approach is its ability to build novel and cross-cutting networks of state officials, politicians, professionals, and community groups willing to tackle commonly identified social problems.

The invited–invented dichotomy discussed earlier is drawn from Gaventa (2006) who sought to describe the different forms of decision-making spaces that typically occur within government. Rather than understanding them as a dichotomy, it is perhaps more accurate to think about them as existing on a continuum: from *closed spaces* where state decision making occurs behind closed doors, to *invited spaces* created by the state to involve citizens in decision-making, to *invented spaces* created by citizens to self-organise and formulate extra-state responses to issues (see Figure 1).

It is vital, however, to remember that these spaces all exist in dynamic relationship with one another; they are constantly shaped by struggles of legitimacy, contestation, co-option, transformation and resistance. And actors move fluidly between spaces; for example, 'invited spaces' need to be understood within 'institutional landscapes as one amongst a host of other domains of association into and out of which actors move, carrying with them relationships, knowledge, connections, resources, identities and identifications' (Cornwall 2003:9).

Citing VeneKlasen and Miller, Gaventa (2006) argues that, to understand how power operates, it is useful to differentiate it into three forms:

* *Visible power* involves the formal processes of deliberation and decision-making—participants in this form are traditionally able to identify how fair processes are and can contest the legitimacy of outcomes on this basis.

* *Hidden power* is wielded by those setting the political agenda behind participatory spaces—determining why particular spaces are created and the agendas they are given, is often how power elites retain control.

* *Invisible power* determines what is acceptable and possible in particular spaces—this power includes deeply entrenched social, cultural or ideological norms that seek to reinforce the *status quo*.

Reaching similar conclusions through a thorough review of international literature on the creation of deliberative spaces, Fung (2005:6) argues that three

Figure 1: Continuum of participatory spaces
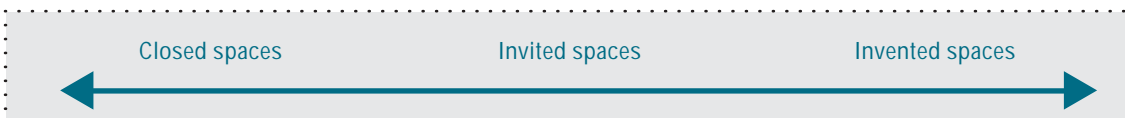
| Closed spaces	Invited spaces	Invented spaces

questions of institutional design are particularly important for understanding the potential and limits of various forms of citizen participation:

* Who participates?
* How do they communicate and make decisions?
* What is the connection between their conclusions and opinions on one hand, and public policy and action on the other?

Drawing on these different elements, and the critique outlined in the introduction about the limitations of the invited–invented dichotomy (and/or continuum), participatory spaces can be mapped along two axes (see Figure 2). One axis represents the degree to which the *terms of engagement* (including who participates and how decisions are made) in the spaces are *preset or dynamic*. In general, the terms of engagement are determined by the body or institution that creates the space or by the participants who occupy the space. As Cornwall (2008) and others have pointed out, while power is often exerted in hidden or invisible ways by those able to set the rules by which participation can occur, spaces can also be co-opted in novel or unexpected ways by participants. It is therefore more important to assess the degree to which the terms of engagement can be changed and negotiated by participants, than to focus only on their initial design. The second axis, as pointed out by Fung (2005), represents the *degree of influence* that participants in these spaces are able to exert on the actions of government and on the outcomes of these participatory processes. Participatory spaces hold little value if they function simply as 'talk shops' and have little influence on the ultimate outcome of planning and decision making.

Figure 2: Locating networked spaces in relation to other participatory spaces
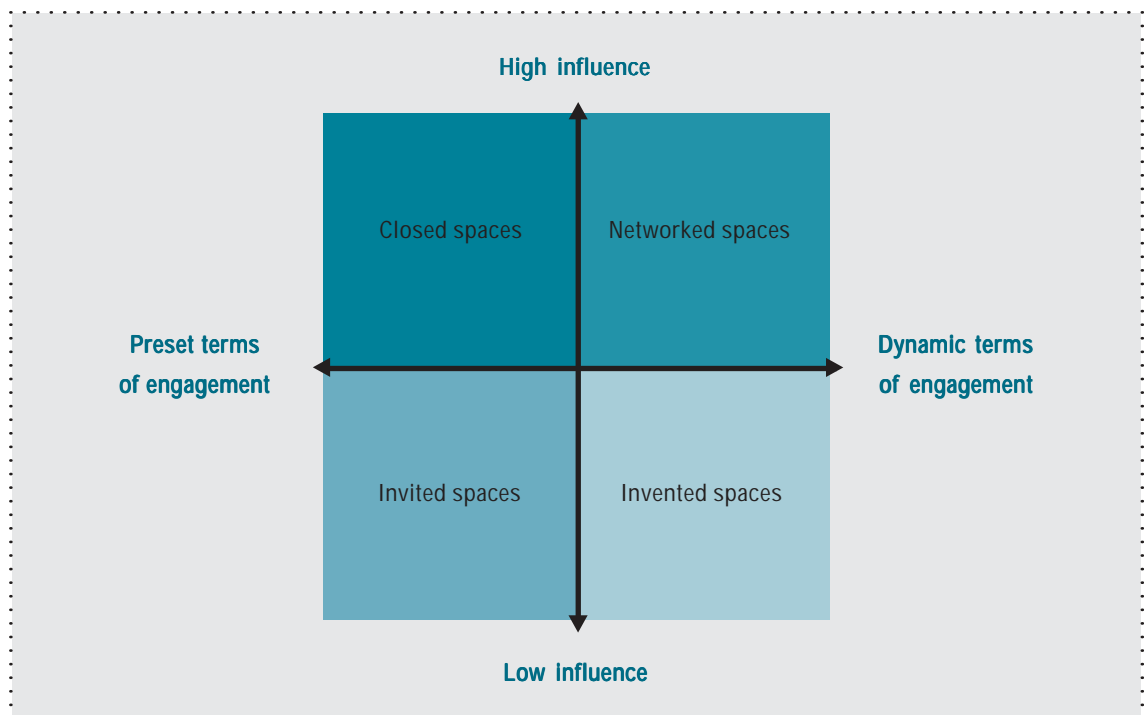
We think it is important to be as clear as possible about the characteristics of each of these spaces:

* *Closed spaces* within the state tend to be exclusive, focus on technical decision making and follow clear rules and procedures. They, therefore, have a high level of influence on planning and decision making. For example, mayoral committee or executive-management meetings typically occur without public involvement.

* *Invited spaces* are state-initiated spaces that follow specific rules to enable citizens to give input into plans and/or decision making. They are intended to expand opportunities for public input on processes of governance (as opposed to spaces where their participation has to be linked to representation on a particular stakeholder group). Invited spaces are, therefore, often considered to be 'consultative', and tend to have limited influence on planning or decision making. Typical examples are consultative meetings about proposed integrated development plans (IDP) or izimbizos aimed at reporting back to communities.

* *Invented spaces* are created outside of the state, sometimes by groups of citizens, social movements or other civil-society formations, with the intention of enabling people to come together to discuss, debate and resist plans and decisions emerging from government or, alternatively, from segments of the community (Gaventa 2006). These spaces typically include extra-state community mobilisation, the activities of social movements and processes of community protest but, because politicians and officials treat them with suspicion, they tend to have (with notable exceptions) an uneven history of successfully challenging state-driven processes (Mitlin 2008; Isandla Institute 2011).

It is worth acknowledging that invented spaces are not necessarily democratic utopias, without their own sets of power politics and problems—they can be exclusionary, marginalising community members already on the fringes, and can be highly problematic if they resort to violence (Ramjee and van Donk 2011).

* *Networked spaces* are carefully designed to enable the building of *communities of practice* between the state, consultants, civil society and communities to generate pragmatic solutions to social problems through processes of *knowledge sharing and capacity building* and the explicit *negotiation of priorities and trade-offs*. They tend to be project based or issue specific, have clear 'rules of engagement' that are negotiated and agreed upon by all participantsm and *enable participant control of processes and outcomes*. An example in the South African context is that of incremental upgrading of informal settlements which involves the establishment of participatory spaces and networks of practitioners able to navigate both technical challenges and the politicised processes involved in priority setting, planning, decision making etc. In line with the point emphasised by Cornwall above, these spaces should function to strengthen other existing participatory spaces because of the networks, levels of trust and knowledge-sharing that occurs through them.

While we believe that this conceptual mapping of the different spaces offers an important contribution to overcoming some of the limitations with the invited– invented dichotomy, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the proposed schema. For example, there are occasions when invented spaces can successfully shift the priorities of politicians or officials. Also, some may argue that

existing spaces and forums, such as IDP representative forums and ward committees, be recognised as networked spaces. However, in our view, while the ward system and IDP representative forums were created with the intention of functioning as networked spaces, and are currently being revised to further incorporate some of these key characteristics, they currently function as invited spaces. That is to say, they are often experienced as procedural and exclusionary spaces that have little real power over local government planning and decision making (Ramjee and van Donk 2011; Smith and de Visser 2009).

This points to the discrepancy between the intention that lies behind the creation of many participatory spaces in South Africa and the reality of the ways in which they function. Furthermore, we would like to emphasise that the proposed networked spaces should not crowd out or replace other forms of participatory space. While it is tempting to make the ideological argument that direct democracy is always desirable (and therefore that all state-created spaces should all fall in the upper-right quadrant), we have tried to provide examples of structures that are appropriately located in their respective spheres.

The centrepiece of networked spaces is their ability to build communities of practice, which, as indicated in the definition offered above, enables the combination of different forms of knowledge (technical versus cultural, for example) to produce novel and practical solutions to social problems. However, typically there are very real constraining factors to the full participation of poor communities in joint planning spaces. This is because

the capacities expected of participants in structured participation exercises—the ability to engage, usually in English, with technical issues in settings where the degree of technical background expected, the ambience and the way in which meetings are run, [all] combine to make these forums at which the voice of the poor cannot be heard, even if they happen to get to the table (Friedman 2006: 14).

In a comprehensive review of the role of the technocrat in development, Wilson (2006) argues that, while this is still the norm in many places, there has increasingly been a shift in the normative expectations about how knowledge is produced and used—from a 'knowledge elite' that is expected to know the answers, to a 'learning elite' that seeks knowledge from and about beneficiary communities (see Figure 3). Wilson calls for a further shift towards genuine attempts to partner with communities, to learn *with* them how to tackle social problems. It is this form of learning that we believe networked spaces should seek to promote.

Figure 3: Continuum of knowledges

Knowledge elite	Learning elite	Community of practise
'knowing'	'learning from/about'	'learning with'

Source: Adapted from Wilson (2006)

This involves recognising that communities have important contributions to make to such processes *and* that the *process of producing knowledge is an important part of determining its usefulness.* It is widely held that (social) knowledge does not exist in abstract—constructivism—and that, after Foucault, knowledge is always an expression of power. Thus, De Souza (2008:330) asserts that

> Since 'knowledge is power', even oppressed groups can exert some kind of power on the basis of their knowledge…For social movements it means that the more they use their 'local knowledge' (knowledge of the space, of people's needs and 'language') in terms of planning by means of combining it with the technical knowledge produced by the state apparatus and universities (in order both to criticize some aspects of this knowledge and to 'recycle' and use some other ones), the more strategic can be the way they think and act. This kind of knowledge (and of power) should not be underestimated, even if social movements obviously do not (and cannot) 'plan' the city as the state apparatus does it.

The process of bringing 'knowledges' into contact with one another, in productive spaces where participants seek to produce concrete outcomes, provides opportunities for improving outcomes as well as creating room for communities to reassert their agency in planning and decision making about their environment.

However, Wilson (2006:518) argues that the successful combining of 'knowledges' and working relationships, especially across deep power differentials, requires that participants develop a sense of *trust*:

> When it is largely absent, people are more guarded in what they say, less prepared to expose themselves and explore difference. In such circumstances it is difficult to see how a transformatory dialogue might emerge from the engagement between actors. By contrast, its presence within an engagement can be gauged by willingness to expose oneself before others, push the boundaries of what one knows, explore radical ideas together, and to embrace disagreement where necessary. In these ways trust between actors suggests the potential for 'learning with' to go beyond the purpose of reinforcing and tweaking existing practice.

In South Africa, where the relationships between local government, civil society and many local communities have long been antagonistic, the pursuit of trust is a difficult goal. While there is generally an observable decline of trust in public institutions and elected leadership, even more concerning is the fact that local government ranks lowest among all spheres of government in terms of trustworthiness (IEC and HSRC 2011). A report from the National Treasury (2011) further argues that the lack of trust in local government is reflected not only in public-opinion surveys and increased public protests but also in the emergence of militant ratepayers' associations. A possible first step in repairing this trust is to generate a set of institutional relationships and 'rules of engagement' that have broad buy in—rather than trusting one another, the different stakeholders are thus given an opportunity to build trust in 'the process'.

However, as noted above, these rules of engagement are only likely to be successful if they are genuinely responsive to the needs and practices of participants, particularly those disadvantaged by

technical or formal processes. It is worth emphasising that this goes far beyond providing capacity-building processes that teach communities how to interact with bureaucratic processes within the state. As Cornwall (2008:62) reminds us:

Equipping people with the skills to negotiate within a system that continues to disadvantage them may give them some tools but, as Audre Lorde observed, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. Learning the language and styles of argumentation of the white, middle-class men who have traditionally dominated public institutions may give people from other social groups some advantage. But

this in itself may do little to change these institutions and make them more inclusive of diverse forms of expression, styles of reasoning and testimony, and forms of dialogue and negotiation. For this, much more far-reaching changes to the political system are needed.

The ongoing redefinition of the rules of engagement and 'knowledges' emerging from the networked spaces must be able to substantively shift the way in which state institutions operate (for example, by making state policy responsive to new practices emerging from these spaces) and impact on planning and decision making. Suggestions for how to institutionalise these elements in the design of networked spaces are outlined in Box 1.

BOX 1: CREATING PRODUCTIVE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Creating forums to facilitate learning is an imperative part of constructing a functional community of practice. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) suggest that the efficacy of such spaces can be improved by the following key pragmatic features:

* Communities of practice tend to be dynamic with different stakeholders introducing and negotiating different interests, goals and modes of engagement, so they must be *designed to evolve naturally.*

* The success of such groups is, however, often dependent on finding a *regular rhythm or pace* for meetings, engagements and activities to sustain interest in, and the vibrancy of, the community.

* Communities of practice will *inspire and require different levels of participation*, each of which should be accommodated. These will include a core group that typically takes a leadership role and participates intensely, a subsection that are active participants but do not take on leadership roles, and a peripheral group that remains relatively passively involved but who will learn from their involvement.

* Such groups must not become an exclusive or inward-looking; instead their evolving ideas *should be brought into open dialogue with outside perspectives.*

* Communities of practice should seek to create *both public and private community spaces for interaction.* While many of the activities should be done in public spaces for all to see and share, there may be appropriate moments for members or sections of the community to meet separately to

consolidate perspectives (planners have long recognised the need for marginalised or vulnerable groups to have independent spaces so as not to be drowned out by the wider group, see for example Fraser 2008).

* There should be regular opportunities for participants in such forums to have *explicit discussions about the value and productivity of their involvement in the group.*

* The activities of communities of practice need to *combine familiar structures and ideas with radical or exciting opportunities to stretch the thinking of the group.*

Given the complexity of the discussion above, it is perhaps useful to be explicit about the key elements that would make up networked spaces. Extending the work of Doak and Parker (2005) about participatory governance in the UK, we suggest that networked spaces have a number of distinct characteristics, which can be assessed using the (not very indigenous) acronym 'SQUIRREL' That is, they have:

* a plan for how to **Sustain** dialogue and interaction

* a clear plan to ensure **Quality** of engagement

* a plan to ensure the **Upkeep** of community resources or initiatives by participants once the initial funding has ended or the original leaders have moved on[4]

* **Integrated** different documents and processes relating to community involvement in local governance (they meet statutory requirements, for example)

* **Resources** available to support community involvement[5]

* clear, commonly-held **Rules of Engagement** that are agreed upon by all participants, facilitate negotiation and account for the impact of power differentials

* ensuring there is proactive **Leadership**, representivity and accountability amongst all stakeholders.

With these formal elements in place, the possibility of parties 'coming to the table', sharing knowledge and building a sense of co-ownership in relation to the outcomes of their interactions is maximised.

THE POLITICS OF NETWORKED SPACES: CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Although the concept of networked spaces is fairly new to the South African context, it is becoming increasingly popular. This is illustrated by the emergence of new forms of participatory spaces such as incremental upgrading programmes in informal settlements, local-level planning committees, area-based planning mechanisms, etc.

As noted earlier, we believe that one of the key shortcomings of current debates about participation in South Africa is the artificial divide between those focusing on democratic local governance and those focusing on more sector-specific or issue-specific issues. Part of our attempt to bridge this gap is illustrated by the diversity of sources we used to build our argument in the preceding section. Our characterisation of networked spaces found resonance with several urban-governance practitioners, who we interviewed to ascertain or illustrate the complexities involved in setting up more formalised networked spaces in the country.

The following are the key issues to emerge from our discussions:

* There is a need to create a better model of public participation, which is community driven and run jointly with the state. It appears that there is an increasing disjuncture between the outputs of the (local) state versus people's expectations.

* The creation or formalisation of networked spaces should not result in the cancellation or disbandment of the existing public-participation mechanisms in the country. Different situations require different participatory approaches and networked spaces should be created only to fill existing gaps and to improve the quality of public-participation discourse.

* The success of networked spaces is dependent on a number of factors. First, both issues of capacity and process are very important and these have to be well planned in advance. Second, there must be an overall plan initially to *build* the structure and then to focus on sustaining dialogue and interaction.

* There must be a functioning level of trust amongst the participants. This is very important to secure, especially against the backdrop of low and declining trust in the local state in South Africa; an issue acknowledged by the state as noted earlier. Success will be guaranteed once all parties involved resolve to make a collaborative effort to find solutions.

* There is a need for real commitment from the (local) state, politicians and officials with regards to investing substantive resources (intellectual, financial, time, commitment, etc) in the process. *Resourcing* is essential to help nurture community involvement in these structures. This is an indispensable requirement that will contribute to the success of this model.

* Networked spaces require a cadre of officials who are there to serve and listen to citizens. They also require mature community leaders who will ensure that communities do not work in silos—in other words, that participants are not interested only in their own development—as often occurs if they fail to link their quest for development to that of others. Networked spaces, like any other form of participatory space, will likely be associated with increased competition over power and resources. Further, such spaces also contain a risk of 'elite capture', as they will mirror South African politics (both locally and nationally). To make networked spaces stronger, participants in these structures should be wary of gatekeeping as this is a barrier to quality public participation. Gatekeeping has, arguably, rendered other spaces in the continuum of participatory spaces in the country, meaningless. Excellent *leadership* is therefore needed in order to sustain the *quality* of engagement in networked spaces.

* Networked spaces will inevitably be filled with various forms of contestations about the different types of knowledge each stakeholder possesses. Contestation of knowledge cannot be wished away. In fact, it should be encouraged as strong democratic structures can sustain themselves through robust contestation of knowledge (a battle of ideas), and over time this helps to strengthen relationships and structures. *Rules of engagement* and codes of conduct should be drawn up and agreed upon from the onset in order to guard against unhealthy forms of contestation.

As indicated by the words italicised in each of the points made above, the feedback we received echoes and validates the 'SQUIRREL' points as usefully summing up the key characteristics of networked spaces.

CONCLUSION

The task of building democratic and developmental local government requires the creation of a range of participatory spaces that enable citizens to engage in meaningful ways in processes and decisions that affect their lives. This paper argues that existing spaces have a number of limitations that prevent the genuine deliberation and knowledge sharing that results in pragmatic solutions supported by government officials and community members alike.

We therefore propose the creation of networked spaces that are explicitly designed to navigate these tensions and contradictions in order to build communities of practice. These, in turn, should produce novel and co-produced solutions to specific problems facing communities. While recognising the ongoing need for other spaces (closed, invited and invented), we believe that networked spaces will strengthen the democratic potential within the local-government system, and have the potential to be an important step in producing synergistic outcomes through public participation—an ideal that lies at the heart of the South African vision of developmental local government.

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NOTES

1 In 2011, the Department of Cooperative Governance began reviewing the ward-committee system, with the intention of publishing a concept paper and/or guidelines in 2012.

2 The Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Yunus Carrim, also made this point in his speech, 'Towards a Dialectic of Invited and Invented Spaces' at the Cape Town launch of GGLN's 2011 State of Local Governance report.

3 Practitioners consulted include Seth Maqethuka, City of Cape Town Municipality, Western Cape; Nontando Ngamlana, Afesis-Corplan, Eastern Cape; Herman Pienaar, City of Johannesburg, Gauteng; and Mark Misselhorn, Project Preparation Trust, KwaZulu-Natal.

4 This aspect is included to acknowledge the importance of building a wide base of support and strong community 'buy-in' during the life of the project. One clear indicator of this is the degree to which the different participants are each committed to ensuring that the gains achieved during the project are not lost once the forces responsible for its initiation have dissipated, for example, the ongoing upkeep of a public space after the initial budget for creating it has been exhausted. There are no preconditions for what form this may take—so, in this example, the creation of a line item in the city budget to pay for the upkeep or the formation of a voluntary group by local community members or business owners are all acceptable outcomes.

5 This is an often-overlooked aspect of approaches that plan to adopt a participatory approach—often little time and/or funding is allocated to the social facilitation of these spaces (Isandla Institute 2011). However, these spaces require resources and skills to mobilise and facilitate, and that groups or individuals often need to be reimbursed for the associated costs.

A CASE FOR PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Mike Makwela, Planact

Participatory budgeting (PB) has emerged as a key innovative model for improving governance practices within municipalities, particularly in terms of strengthening the voice of local citizens in local development planning, resource allocation and monitoring. In a context of growing concerns with governance practices in South Africa, especially at municipal and provincial levels, this paper puts forward the concept of PB as a potentially valuable means to improve governance, deepen the participation of citizens and create a sense of ownership in local communities in respect of municipal affairs.

PHOTO: GIZ - SLGP

REFLECTING ON work in practice, the paper begins with a description of what constitutes PB, and a discussion of the importance of PB along with an indication of its associated risks. A number of preconditions need to be in place if PB is to be successfully implemented, and these are touched upon briefly. Then the paper shares emerging lessons from a pilot PB project implemented in Makhado Local Municipality, which is situated in the northern part of South Africa's Limpopo Province.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING: AN INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL TREND

PB is not a new concept. It was implemented in the municipality of Porto Alegre in Brazil as early as 1989 when the Workers' Party won a local-government election with a campaign centered on democratic participation by local citizens. At the time, the municipality was bankrupt and dysfunctional. Levels of inequality and frustration

with lack of government transparency were high while levels of public participation were low. In order to address this situation, the new government experimented with different mechanisms, focusing particularly on reviewing social spending priorities and citizen participation in governance. As a result, PB emerged, and its implementation in Porto Alegre has become known as the 'classic' PB model (Langa and Afeikhane 2004). The success of PB in Porto Alegre's challenging context was encouraging, and PB gradually spread to similar jurisdictions both inside and beyond the borders of Brazil—PB has been adopted by well over 1 400 municipalities worldwide with many local variations. More recently, PB has been explored on the African continent. Despite several challenges faced by African countries such as poor infrastructure, inadequate skills and knowledge in budgeting, the high cost of organising PB processes as well as traditional norms and values limiting women's participation, various countries have implemented PB with a degree of success, demonstrating the potential of PB to produce positive results in African contexts too. Figure 1 shows the spread of PB across the world, including successful projects in Uganda, Senegal, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.[1]

Figure 1: The spread of participatory budgeting across the world
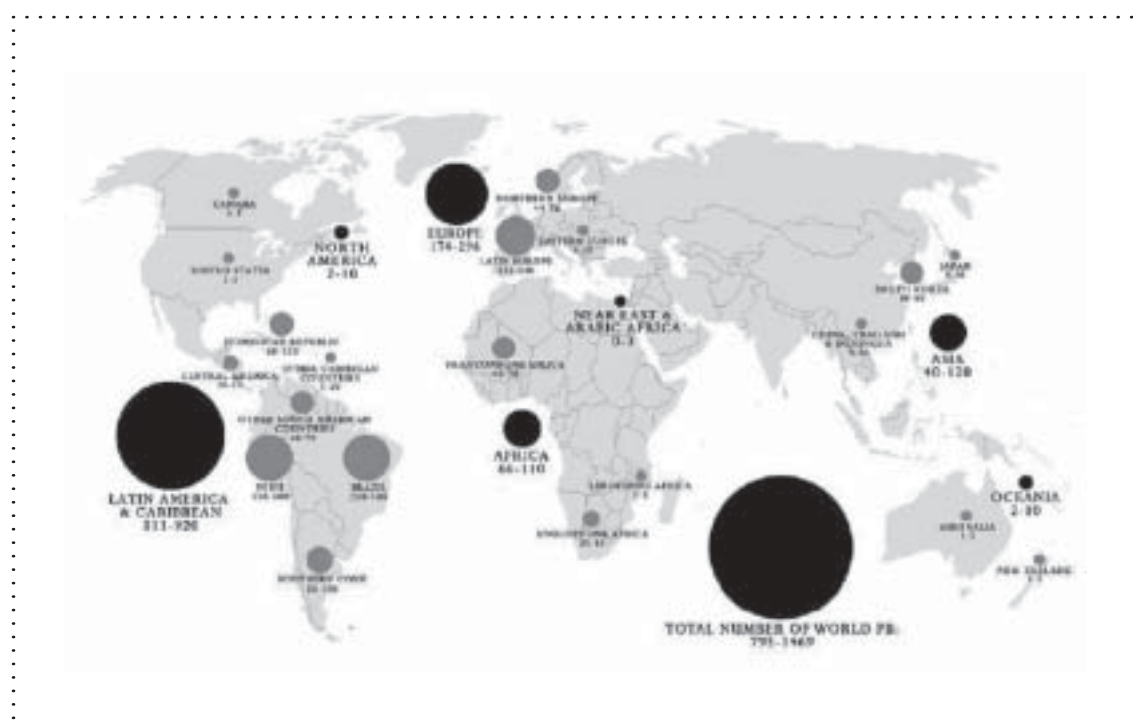
Source: GIZ 2010:10

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

PB is essentially a tool to enhance participatory democracy by directly involving citizens in decision making with regard to prioritising the needs of a specific area and ensuring that these are reflected in resource allocation decisions. It has been described as combining 'direct democracy and representative democracy, giving the population the opportunity to discuss and decide part of the budget and—through it—some public policies' (Allegretti 2011:17).

The following definition provides a useful basis for understanding the general elements of PB:

It is a process in which a wide range of stakeholders debate, analyze, prioritize, and monitor decisions about public expenditures and investments. It is a process whereby communities work together with elected representatives (councillors) and officials to develop policies and budgets in order to meet the needs of the community. Forums are held throughout the year so that citizens have the opportunity to allocate resources, prioritize broad social policies, and monitor public spending. In the process, discussion and debate can take place on what the needs and priorities are and decisions are taken on how funds should be allocated. Even after the passage of the budget and the commencement of the fiscal year, the participatory meetings remain active. The meetings review and evaluate the projects implemented. Government and citizens initiate these programmes to promote learning and active citizenship, achieve social justice through improved policies and resources allocated, and reform the administrative apparatus (Langa and Afeikhane 2004:3).

Traditional budget processes follow a top-down approach, whereby municipalities determine their budget allocations without consulting local citizens. In the South Africa context, the processes leading to the adoption of municipal budgets have often been described as technical in nature, and as being driven by officials rather than by ordinary citizens. The tight timeframes imposed on municipalities to adopt their budgets and accompanying service-delivery implementation plans, also make it extremely difficult to include substantive participation by citizens in the process. The result is budgets that are not 'owned' by the communities they are intended to serve (Van Donk and Pieterse 2006:123).

PB, on the other hand, requires a paradigm shift. According to Matovu, (2011:10), PB involves 'a shift in the traditional thinking that budget preparation, execution, and monitoring was a preserve of the municipal treasurer and heads of departments' to a participatory process characterised by dialogue, negotiation and persuasion. This shift also changes the roles of municipal staff to that of facilitators of public consultative processes designed to increase citizen participation. PB also allows for back-and-forth deliberation processes between community-level and municipal structures, including 'horizontal communication' between different wards and neighbourhoods. It thus encourages decentralisation such as geographic and thematic (sector) forums at neighbourhood and ward levels, thus widening and deepening public participation.

PB is not a 'once-off 'event focused solely on the goal of adopting a budget, however. Rather, it promotes the ongoing mobilisation of residents to monitor the expenditure and progress of implemented projects throughout the financial year. The 'rules of the game' are clearly defined by community and government representatives; in other

words all decision making processes and the election of delegates to represent communities in PB processes are transparent. The PB process begins at local community meetings, where priorities in specific thematic areas (infrastructure, housing, open spaces, transportation etc.) are debated and decided. The participants at these meeting elect representatives to carry their priorities forward to broader area-based meetings through a bottom-up process. For example, each neighbourhood or ward will refine its thematic priorities and elect representatives to take these to a broader area-level discussion (such as regional discussions that include representatives from all the wards in a specific region of a municipality). Each regional assembly then finalises priorities and elects representatives to take the discussion to the participatory budget assembly which takes place at municipal level, and brings together representatives from all the regions within the municipality. After deliberations at this level, the priorities are presented to the local municipal council for consideration and approval (See Figure 2).

Other key elements of PB have been identified as follows (see GIZ 2010):

* It is important to emphasise that the participatory budgeting process must go beyond simply prioritising the needs of a community, and should make recommendations on actual budget allocations.

* The process has to be a repeated (in a continual cycle) and not seen as a 'once-off' event— experience has shown that it is not a 'quick-fix' and, in some instances, it might take two or more years to come to fruition because of the back-and-forth process entailed.

* The process should include deliberations within a framework of set meetings or forums.

* Accountability is required, not only for the decisions taken during meetings, but also for their implementation throughout the budget cycle.

PB employs a bottom-up approach to enhance direct citizen involvement in budgetary decision making processes through debate and deliberation. However, the process is time-consuming and requires commitment from a variety of stakeholders. The ongoing involvement of citizens in structuring the process, debating priorities as well as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of decisions taken are key to successful PB processes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

PB is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the budget is the most important means of ascertaining whether a municipality is using public funds for the purpose of service delivery. Therefore, PB offers the opportunity for improved service delivery through increasing accountability. Secondly, PB attempts to include and empower traditionally marginalised groups (such as the poor, women, youth, and people with disabilities) in local governance and, more particularly, in the budget process. It therefore has the potential to broaden and deepen public participation in decision making with regard to public spending and to create a sense of ownership within the municipality in respect of local development. Thirdly, transparency is central to PB since the process involves the municipal administration sharing financial information with local citizens, thus potentially dispelling citizens' mistrust linked to corruption and the misuse of public funds. If citizens are rooted within the budget process from the beginning, and continually observe the

implementation of the budget, they also develop a degree of appreciation and understanding when officials encounter difficulties linked to implementation.

BENEFITS

Several benefits can be derived from the implementation of PB:

* The voice of citizens in local decision making is strengthened, hence deepening local democracy.
* Municipal budget processes are democratised, which encourages transparency and accountability.
* Citizens develop a better understanding and awareness of how municipal budgets are prioritised, spent, and accounted for.
* Opportunities are created for ordinary citizens to learn to negotiate among themselves, and with the government, over the distribution of scarce resources.
* Priorities can be better matched to available resources.
* Communication and information sharing are enhanced between and among citizens and the local government.
* A sense of social cohesion is created as citizens and local government develop an understanding of each other's interests.
* Citizens are able to challenge the dominance of public representatives in allocating public resources and the authorities are forced to adequately consider the opinions of the community.
* Citizens can be involved in proposing solutions to the challenges of raising income to fund development initiatives.
* Revenue collection can improve.
* Interest in participatory monitoring and evaluation of projects is strengthened.

The case of Singida in Tanzania offers one example of how these benefits have manifested (see Matovu 2011). Key benefits gained from Singida's PB process included a better rapport between the local council and other stakeholders; improved accessibility of council staff to the local community; services that were more responsive to community needs; a reduction in inequality and exclusion; and improved revenue collection.

POSSIBLE RISKS

While PB can yield many progressive outcomes, there are some risks associated with implementing it. As in every politicised space, more vocal participants may try to persuade others to vote in favour of 'their projects'. Another possibility is that knowledge disparities between the poor and the wealthy may affect the quality of their participation and subsequently influence the final budget priorities; in other words, elites may hijack and control the process. In addition, traditionally involved actors (such as ward councillors) may fear that their role in the budgeting process will become a mere formality, thus diminishing their power and a lack of political will may result. Political changes of administration can also disrupt PB processes.

In South Africa, changes in the administration as well as in the political composition of councils have been highly disruptive, often monopolising the focus and energy of local councils and detracting from the pressing service-delivery and development needs of communities (Woolridge 2007). It is therefore necessary to ensure that PB is entrenched in a municipal community and cannot be easily derailed by changes in the council or administration. In addition, community needs may surpass available financial resources, particularly if information is not clearly communicated and direct citizen involvement is limited. In this regard, it is important to ensure

that PB does not simply become a 'wish-list' exercise—comparable with how the drafting of IDPs has sometimes been described (SALGA 2011:7; DPLG 2008:3). All participants need to be consistently reminded about the parameters of the PB exercise.

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to keep in mind that there is no precise or exact model for PB. To be successful, the process must be structured in response to the particular local environment of each municipality. Nevertheless, some critical systems and processes always need to be in place.

PB requires political will and commitment involving the full support of both political and administrative leadership of the municipality. This was successfully demonstrated in the case of Porto Alegre, Brazil, mentioned earlier, where the newly elected mayor was fully committed to the PB process. The political and administrative location of PB within a municipality is important as it can easily be 'swallowed' by the bureaucratic administration. To receive the political attention it deserves, it is recommended that responsibility and oversight for PB is located in the offices of local mayors. In the South African context, it is important that stakeholders such as the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the national treasury supports PB. This is particularly necessary given the time-consuming nature of PB. National and provincial stakeholders need to develop a level of understanding and appreciation of the processes that municipalities must pursue and possibly allow a degree of flexibility in or change current budgetary cycles and deadlines. This is especially true in the beginning phases of PB implementation.

At municipal level, municipalities must be prepared to set aside a percentage of their capital budget for greater citizen control. They must also be open to scrutiny and willing to develop greater accountability and responsiveness. Citizens must be consulted and consensus reached with all stakeholders on the broad categories or themes for budget priorities. Representatives of community structures such as the civic organisations, community-based organisations, NGOs and ward representatives should form part of the preparation team so that a range of ideas can be incorporated into the implementation plan. To avoid unreasonable demands and expectations from the local citizens, it is important to maintain transparency and to make the local citizens aware of the funds available and the constraints facing their local municipality. Citizens might be more willing to assist in finding solutions to financial challenges if they made aware of the problems faced by their municipalities and could be directly involved in addressing these (Shah 2007).

In a workshop on PB held in Cape Town in 2011, participants emphasised the importance of demystifying the budget processes and allocations. This requires that information be presented in an accessible manner so as to ensure understanding among a range of people (GGLN 2011). Both officials and community representatives require training on aspects of planning, implementing and monitoring PB processes, including on participatory governance legislation, PB principles and methodology, budget literacy, facilitation and negotiation skills, as well as planning and monitoring skills.

Ultimately, to be successfully implemented, PB requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, and needs to take local circumstances into consideration. Political and administrative will and transparency have been key factors in the successful implementation of PB in various contexts.

Transparency and accessibility facilitates greater and more meaningful community participation.

KEY STAGES IN SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESSES

PB processes generally involve a number of key activities often including preparatory, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation activities. Essentially, the following key steps are included:

* the initiation of the PB process by key political leaders and municipal managements to ensure that the municipal authorities commit to the process
* conducting situational analyses to obtain information about the current situation in the municipal area or sub-area
* raising awareness and building capacity among officials and civil society regarding the concepts, principles and processes involved
* setting guidelines for discussion and decision-making processes
* implementing the process through a careful diagnosis and prioritisation of community needs; this should involve a series of discussions at a range of levels which can include sector or theme-based forums (for example on housing, infrastructure, health, etc.) and area-based forums (at the level of neighbourhood, ward, region, etc.)
* monitoring and evaluating the process and the outcomes of all decisions.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

PB processes have yet not found significant direct expression in the South Africa even though its benefits for deepening democracy have been widely observed in various international contexts. Given the widespread loss of public trust in authorities and politicians, particularly with regard to financial maladministration and mismanagement at municipal and provincial levels, service-delivery challenges, and ineffective public-participation practices, it has become even more important for South Africa to urgently consider innovative ways of improving governance (Skenjana and Kimemia 2011).

Taking into account the local-government legislative framework, which supports public participation and engagement, as well as the range of potentially supportive organisations and the level of interest in civil society, it is clear that South Africa has the potential to successfully implement PB. A range of progressive legislation—including the South African Constitution (1996), the Municipal Systems Act (2000) and the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003)—compels the government to engage communities in matters of governance, and particularly in budgetary processes. Despite this requirement, municipal budget processes leave much to be desired. Municipal budgets are highly technical and difficult for ordinary citizens to understand. Furthermore, the link between integrated development planning (IDP) processes and local budgets seems weak, and communities have often expressed the concern that they have little influence on the prioritising of needs and the related budget allocations (Guwa 2008). Thus, South Africa has a vibrant civil society that is willing to engage and could easily support PB processes, but it will require a concerted effort from government and civil society to meaningfully and systematically go beyond rhetoric and work towards implementing more effective budgeting practices.

For PB to work in South Africa, a number of aspects need to be considered to ensure that the processes employed suit specific local contexts. Ideally, PB should build on systems, structures and processes that work well or have the potential to

support PB effectively. Aspects to consider include: the size of the municipality; institutional capacity; the municipal revenue base; demographics; spatial and socio-economic conditions; existing institutions of public participation (such as ward committees); and the active engagement of civil society. In addition, the budget cycle (including the IDP process and the development of medium-term expenditure frameworks) needs to be taken into account, at all levels and as a priority, to ensure that PB strengthens and builds on existing planning processes.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN MAKHADO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Where PB has been successfully implemented, it has proven to be one of the most effective developmental tools available to municipalities, contributing to good governance and accountability at the local level. In light of the challenges in South Africa and the potential benefits offered by PB, it is useful to consider its implementation in the South African context. Thus, the paper now discusses a pilot PB process being implemented in Makhado Local Municipality, and outlines the activities conducted during the pilot project's preparation and implementation phases, as well as the lessons learned to date. The main objective of the pilot project is to provide an opportunity for practical demonstration of the potential value of PB through a methodology that allows for mutual learning, improved participatory governance within the municipality, and sharing lessons learnt more broadly as a means to influence broader institutional implementation.

Makhado Local Municipality is situated in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province and includes four administrative regions namely Dzanani, Vuwani, Waterval and the Makhado region. The municipality is predominantly rural with most of its citizens engaged in subsistence farming. Its estimated population is 495 261 (Makhado Local Municipality 2011:4). The municipality has a low revenue base and is confronted with serious service-delivery backlogs. The site was considered appropriate for the pilot process for two reasons. Firstly, the municipality had already embarked on a process of attempting to significantly improve its performance in terms of public participation and budget allocation. Secondly, the municipality had been actively engaged in a project to determine the perceptions of its constituents in order to identify specific priorities for improvement (see Idasa 2011).

During 2010, the municipality engaged in a process of consulting community leaders and various organisations with the aim of understanding and addressing key challenges. This included obtaining feedback from the Idasa study on the prioritisation of community needs, which had already pointed to the need for a more inclusive budgeting process.[2]

Discussions were then held between representatives of the municipality, Planact, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit-Strengthening Local Governance Programme (GIZ-SLGP), to identify areas in which additional support could be offered to the municipality. PB was seen as a logical and welcome follow-up to the previous work done by the municipality. The three organisations then entered into a partnership, and embarked on a process of implementing a PB pilot project in one of the municipal regions, namely the Makhado region—with the intention of expanding the project to other regions based on lessons learned from the initial pilot project.

The Makhado region, which consists of seven wards, was selected as the specific pilot site because

it has a combination of rural and urban characteristics and a diverse socio-economic profile. Its size was also manageable for the pilot and its central location was seen as ideal in terms of facilitating the necessary processes.

The pilot project was based on the understanding that the PB process is not only the responsibility of the council in meeting the needs of residents. It is equally about community members fulfilling their rights and responsibilities as active, engaged citizens. Furthermore, PB was regarded as an opportunity to move beyond the 'wish-list' approach of the existing IDP process and to foster greater transparency, accountability and social cohesion.

The pilot project was designed to have three-phases, namely, a preparatory, an implementation and an evaluation phase. By the time this paper was written, the preparatory and implementation phases had been engaged in, and are discussed below.

PREPARATORY PHASE

The first step in the preparatory phase entailed a process of information gathering at two levels: an analysis of public participation within the municipality based largely on the 2011 Idasa study; and research on PB practices in a range of international contexts. This information was drawn on to formulate and propose a comprehensive implementation plan for piloting PB in the context of the municipality's Makhado region.

The organisational framework included a project steering committee (to advise on and monitor the process) and an implementation team (made up of municipal and community representatives to implement the project and to carry it forward beyond the pilot phase). From the start, the steering committee was made up of representatives of the municipality, Planact and GIZ-SLGP, and it is envisaged that this will be expanded to include representatives from the community and key provincial and national government entities as well as civil-society organisations. The steering committee meets quarterly, and more regularly when necessary, to plan and advise on ways to improve project activities.

To begin with, the steering committee and implementation team participated in a capacity-building workshop using simulation exercises to demonstrate a PB process and the potential challenges involved. A 'training of trainers' approach was used to ensure that the implementation team is able to transfer skills to a broader range of stakeholders. Specific materials have been developed in this regard, including an *Implementation Handbook* and a *Facilitator Guide* (Planact et al. 2011). The project then started informing other local residents about the project and encouraging them to get actively engaged in the pilot, and in local governance more broadly. To raise awareness about the project, the implementation team also visited the offices of traditional leaders in Kutama and Sinthumule. The awareness-raising process will be taken to other wards through roadshows, pamphlets, and community-radio programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

From November 2011, the project started to focus more specifically on the implementation phase, which has been adapted from the classic Porto Alegre model. The key feature of the model is that it follows a bottom-up, decentralised approach. It includes back-and-forth deliberations among sector groupings (bringing together representatives from civil-society structures focusing on specific issues, such as housing, education, gender) followed by area-based meetings (including the ward, the region, and the municipal levels). At each forum, delegates were elected to take forward the priorities identified for discussion at the next level, and to report back to

the constituency they were elected to represent. Delegates will undergo training to ensure their understanding and active engagement in the successive deliberation and report-back processes. Ward committees will assist in facilitating thematic sector forums in each ward in the pilot site. This is intended to give ward committees a more meaningful role in the planning and budgeting process.

The first thematic sector forum meetings took place in three villages covering one ward in December 2011. The meetings involved community members identifying their priority needs with regard to infrastructure and electing community representatives to take the village-level priorities to the broader ward-level discussions. Key issues raised by community members included the need for clarity on the alignment of IDP and PB processes.

The village meetings were followed by a ward assembly, which brought representatives of the three villages together to debate and prioritise the needs of their ward. This made community members more aware of the importance of monitoring and lobbying for better services and for increased accountability from specific departments, as well as of what community members could do to improve conditions themselves. The whole process was regarded as empowering: participants identified a clear role for ward-committee members and community development workers in assisting with and facilitating further discussions; they also saw the need for training on financial literacy and municipal budgeting processes, as well as on encouraging community members to take responsibility for influencing decisions.

Figure 2: Implementation structure for the pilot PB process in Makhado Local Municipality, 2011–2112
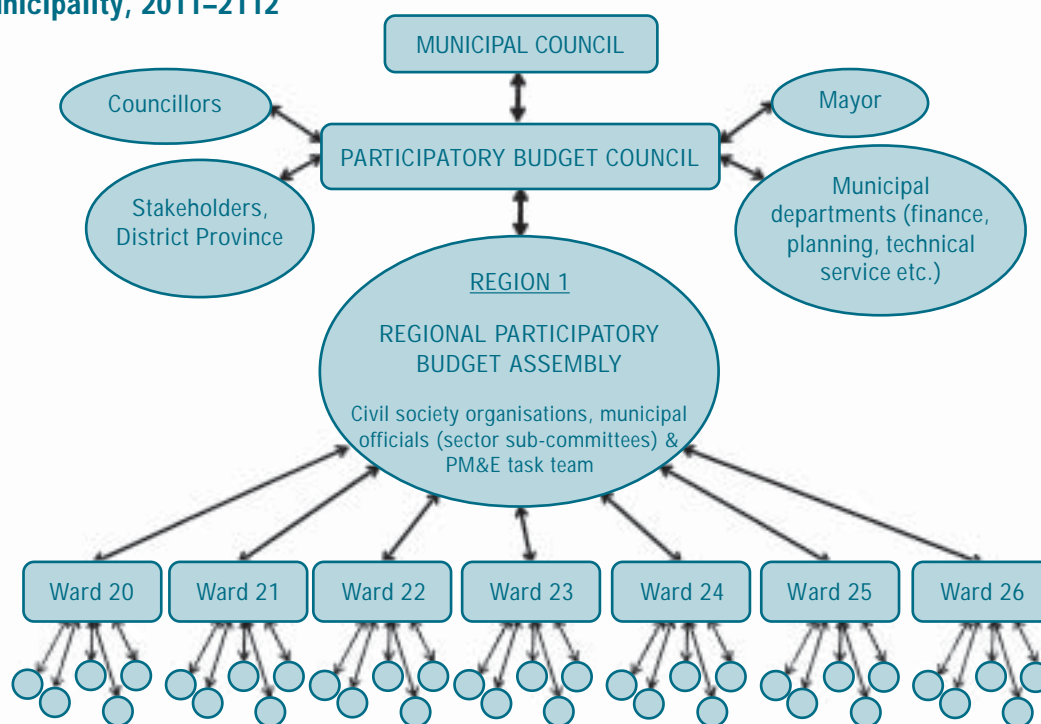
Source: Planact et al. 2011

The pilot project seeks to complete at least one full PB cycle between November 2011 and June 2012. This is in no way intended to replace or duplicate the IDP and other budgeting processes already taking place in the municipality. The project will, in fact, be aligned to the IDP process to ensure that it enhances current practice by including citizens' direct participation in the formulation and monitoring of the municipal budget. Further monitoring and evaluation will occur throughout the project implementation phase and will focus on the process, challenges, outcomes, impact, and recommendations for improvement.

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed structure of the PB pilot project in Makhado.

LESSONS LEARNED

The partnership between Planact, GIZ-SLGP, and Makhado Local Municipality provides a positive platform with regard to demonstrating the potential value of PB at the municipal level, and to use the lessons learnt to further encourage interest and influence broader implementation. However, the nature of such a partnership needs to be clarified and agreed upon at the early stages of the project to ensure that all partners understand and commit to contributing their different resources to the process.

From the start, it was important to recognise and emphasise the centrality of the municipality in owning and being fully committed to the process. The role of the mayor (as political head of the municipality) in showing a keen interest in and support for the project has, without doubt, facilitated the progress of the project significantly. This echoes the experiences of similar international projects, where the role and support of the mayor has been a significant force in driving the project forward.

The role of external support organisations, including Planact and GIZ-SLGP, has been instrumental in providing technical support to the municipality, including intense process of research, information sharing, materials development, capacity building, as well as strategic, institutional and process-development support.

The preparation phase of a project such as this needs adequate resources and time to ensure that the basis of the project is effectively established. Effective capacity building is extremely important to ensure that the role-players are able to transfer knowledge and skills. Capacity building can also take the form of learning exchanges and interactions between different civil-society organisations, municipalities, and other key stakeholders at provincial, national and international levels. The partners have thus far, for example, benefitted from the work of the Built Environment Support Group in terms of its direct interactions with international experts from Senegal, Portugal and Zimbabwe. The support of the Good Governance Learning Network, in creating platforms for engagement between its members and key stakeholders in national government, as well as the GIZ Decentralisation Programme in sharing lessons learnt from the experience of Dondo Municipality in Mozambique, have all enriched the process.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation throughout the project is extremely important since it can help to address challenges as they arise and provide the basis for influencing and scaling up the project. This includes effective analysis and documentation of the processes, as well as strategic, broad dissemination of lessons learnt and recommendations.

Financial resources can present a major challenge to the effective implementation of the

project and therefore resource mobilisation is a critical aspect of the process. So far, the partners have proceeded according to a phased approach based on resources available. It is clear however, that the implementation phase will require financial investment from the municipality and additional financial support from external stakeholders to ensure that the pilot project is able to effectively meet its objectives.

The partners are committed to making the project a success and to sharing the lessons learned with other stakeholders such as policy makers and development practitioners.

CONCLUSION

PB is a mechanism for promoting effective participatory governance. It has the potential to transform socio-economic and development conditions within a municipality in a manner that realistically prioritises local needs in the context of limited resources. It is both a technical and political tool since it involves issues of power, accountability and empowerment. In South Africa, civil society and government entities need to be willing to experiment with innovative approaches such as PB, to develop mechanisms that work effectively and can enhance participatory governance and development.

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NOTES

[1] A range of case studies focusing on implementing PB in various African contexts are discussed in *Participatory Budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion with Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa* (UN-Habitat 2008).

[2] In compiling their Local Governance Barometer Idasa researchers used Citizen Report Cards to obtain information from citizens in several municipalities across four South African provinces. The report card measured citizen satisfaction levels regarding municipal services and governance. For further details, see IDASA (2011) and Qwabe and Mdaka (2011).

REFLECTIONS ON GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE-DELIVERY SURVEYS IN KHAYELITSHA, LANGA AND DELFT

By Lisa Thompson, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy

Public discourses on development seldom question the need to link democratic governance and development policies to effective public participation (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). Discussions on development and participation often centre around getting forms of participation 'right'—ensuring that legitimate community voices are heard, and hoping that giving people some sort of input (if not necessarily decision making power) on policies that affect their daily lives, will lead to resources being allocated more fairly (Newell and Wheeler 2006).

PHOTO: HOUSINGISAHUMANRIGHT

MANY NORMATIVE assumptions are built into the discourses on participation and development. Perhaps the most apparent is the splitting of concepts into false dichotomies, with the most obvious of these being the view that 'participation = democracy' versus 'non-participation = ineffective governance and development policies'. This dichotomous presentation of action or inaction in relation to democratic outcomes is not always useful to an understanding of the challenges involved in the lived realities of the poor. In 2005, the African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE) published an analysis of citizen mobilisation on issues of governance in Khayelitsha based on a series of case studies (Thompson and Matheza 2005). This qualitative study revealed quite high levels of community engagement both at grassroots level and with local government leaders, but it was difficult to understand from the study what was working and what was not.

The case studies had made it clear that critical approaches to participation were correct in arguing that many assumptions about participation are projected downwards onto communities, especially when it comes to the formulation of development policies. Furthermore, ACCEDE's qualitative research into aspects of service delivery, such as water provision and forms of mobilisation to ensure basic socio-economic rights, yielded useful insights into the daily lives of the very poor who were severely deprived of resources (Thompson and Matheza 2005). However, one of the limitations of qualitative research is that it is impossible to generalise based on focus-group discussions and key-informant interviews alone (although it should be noted that not all community-based research employs analytical and methodological caution when it comes to generalising). Thus, the ability to generalise from ACCEDE's case-study findings was very limited. This created two general problems, one analytical and the other policy-related.

Analytically, the case-study research made it impossible to extrapolate with any confidence about participation and service delivery in, for example, Khayelitsha as a whole, even though frequent fieldtrips showed that the case studies resonated with the realities of many of the urban poor. The policy-related problem was the impossibility of speaking to policy-makers with any conviction about service-delivery problems when attempting to influence the drafting or implementation of participatory development policies. In the world of development policy, correct aggregate data is seen as essential and most other kinds of information tend to be dismissed as anecdotal—as one specialist in survey research is fond of stating, 'case study work is high on validity and low on generalisability, with survey data it is the other way round'.[1]

For all these reasons, ACCEDE decided to extend its study and to include a quantitative dimension. We began with biennial surveys in selected poor urban areas in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Through the collation of data on different aspects of governance, democratic spaces and their links to development, we hoped to get a more accurate sense of 'who participates and in what fora'. As much of the earlier research drew on key-informant interviews, we became aware of discrepancies in information given over time by different community organisations as well as local government officials and ward councillors. For example, there is a tendency for community leaders in street committees and their organisational centre, the South African National Civics Association (SANCO), to assign inflated importance to their own processes of engagement and influence in governance processes. Similarly, councillors and community leaders often portray any form of opposition to themselves, or to local development policies, as being instigated by troublemakers with few legitimate grievances. This makes it difficult to determine the extent to which the average person in the street participates in governance processes or protests on a day-to-day, or even on a monthly or annual basis (Thompson and Conradie 2011).

The successive rounds of survey data thus helped to verify various niggles we had had about the accuracy of our qualitative data, and enabled us to present a much more accurate picture of participation, as well as the 'governance gap' between 'invited' and 'invented' spaces.[2] The governance gap refers to the degree to which forms of community organisation remain distinct from more formal channels of participation, and is discussed further in the final section of this paper.

SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Due to resource constraints, the design of the survey instrument, as well as the scope of the rollout, we were initially limited to areas where qualitative research had already taken place for at least a year. Thus, the first survey was undertaken in 2006; the second in December/January 2008; and the third was undertaken between April and July 2011. In each round, different areas with distinct identities as poor urban areas (or 'townships') were chosen (Thompson and Nleya 2010). The 2007 survey included areas in KwaZulu-Natal (eThekwini and Msunduzi) (Piper and Nadvi 2010). For the sake of brevity and specificity, only the data from the 2011 Khayelitsha, Langa and Delft surveys is discussed in this paper, with reference to certain similarities and differences to data from previous surveys. It is interesting to note that the data, which was collected both before and after the 2011 local elections, shows high levels of participation but no significant difference in terms of the low levels of faith shown by the community in the competency and honesty of local-government representatives.

ACCEDE's survey instruments drew on the internationally acclaimed Afrobarometer template so as to have a broader reference point against which to examine our own data. Afrobarometer includes a wide variety of questions aimed at encapsulating aggregate perceptions of the effectiveness of government leaders and as well as of the custodians of representative democracy, such as ward councillors (see Note 1). Through the lead organisation, IDASA, the Afrobarometer surveys are rolled out biennially to measure the state of democracy in Southern Africa. This instrument was tweaked for our purposes to include specific questions around forms of participation in governance fora (both governmental and community-based). Other aspects such as trust in leaders were

also included, as were a series of questions to gauge livelihood status. The next section briefly examines socio-economic issues, perceptions of government competence, forms of participation and understandings of agency, as well as citizens' ability to influence participatory fora. The data was collected just prior to the 2011 local government elections in Khayelitsha and Langa, and post-elections in Delft. It is worth noting that the socio-economic problems have remained consistent over the three survey periods.

Despite these figures, overall, perceptions of competence in government have decreased somewhat between 2008 and the 2011 surveys. The data presented below shows a marked lack of faith in local government representation for all three areas. This is significant, as the total population for these areas represents a significant majority of the urban poor in Cape Town.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN KHAYELITSHA, LANGA AND DELFT

While our qualitative data showed that unemployment, housing and high crime were issues dominating daily life, the survey statistics provided an enlightening ranking of these issues.[3] In 2011, in all three areas surveyed, respondents ranked crime as the highest priority problem. There are, however, variations in the data between the areas. For example, services and housing were more frequently cited as problems in Khayelitsha, whereas in Langa and Delft, where there are larger proportions of residents living in formal housing, more respondents rated job creation and unemployment in their top three most pressing issues. The Delft survey shows a higher percentage of community concern relating to the prevalence of gangs, and drug and alcohol abuse (see Table 1).

Table 1: Ranking of community concerns, 2011

What are the three most pressing issues facing you/your community in 2011?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Crime/criminals/criminal activity/lack of safety/ hijackings/ rape/break-ins/ robbery/theft/murder	52	44	51
Services			
No toilets/insufficient toilets/too far/unsafe/	1	3	6
unhygienic/poor sanitation	16	13	3
Water/water supply/water gets cut	8	5	2
Electricity	11	3	6
Roads/road accidents/dangerous roads	6	1	1
Drainage/blocked drains/stinking drains	5	1	1
Street lights broken/no street lights	3	–	2
(Aggregate)	(50)	(26)	(21)
Housing	39	36	6
Job creation/Unemployment	19	35	17
Pollution/dirt/rats/flies	15	7	4
Gangs/gangsters/gang violence	3	–	4
Drug/alcohol abuse	5	7	16
Close down taverns/taverns close too late	1	–	2
Noise/disturbances at night/community conflict	1	–	1
(Aggregate)	(9)	(7)	(21)
Poverty/Poor living conditions	7	4	3
Fire/house or shack very flammable	3	–	–
Flooding	1	–	–
HIV/AIDS/health concerns/TB/illness	1	2	1

Note: a) The percentages in this table refer to the number of respondents who ranked a particular issue as one of their top three problems. b) The – symbol in this and other tables in this paper indicates that the number of responses was not statistically relevant.

Table 1 highlights the accuracy of our qualitative data, and serves to illustrate the degree to which there are differences in perceptions between communities. It has been useful to be able to refer to these aggregates to back up what may otherwise be seen as anecdotal evidence or as only partially representative focus-group views.

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents do not rank local government interventions highly when it comes to addressing the problem of crime in their respective areas. The overwhelming majority of residents surveyed rate local government as performing 'badly' or 'very badly' in this regard. This is a useful finding in relation to statements on the part of government that have implied that dissatisfaction with policing is a phenomenon common mainly among middle-class 'white' communities (see Thompson and Nleya 2010 for further discussion of this point).

Table 2: Views on local government's handling of crime

How well or badly would you say your municipality has handled crime over the past year?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Badly/Very badly	84	84	73
Well/Very well	16	16	26
Don't know	–	–	1

To better understand the links between socio-economic welfare and attempts to improve socio-economic rights and quality of life through service delivery, the survey instrument probes satisfaction with the delivery of services in some depth. The survey also asks questions about modes of participation, including protest action, to better understand how individuals and communities engage. The quantitative data yields a picture of greater satisfaction with service delivery, but a decline in confidence in effectiveness of local leadership. Focus group and key-informant interviews present a more positive picture of service delivery, especially, but this is unsurprising when articulated by leaders themselves (Thompson and Conradie 2010; 2011).

Leaders' confidence in the ability of both local government and community governance structures to effect change in service delivery led researchers to question whether protest action was being fairly portrayed or understood by the media. As discussed in Thompson and Nleya (2010) and in Thompson and Tapscott (2010), protest action in the form of toyi-toying and (sometimes violent) demonstrations has received a great deal of press coverage, and areas such as Khayelitsha have even been labelled 'protest prone'. Evidence from past fieldwork was corroborated by the 2011 survey data, which shows that protest is not often used in solving grievances. This is illustrated clearly in the levels of participation in a variety of invited and invented spaces, as well as the low levels of engagement in protest action (see, in particular, Table 12).

In relation to service delivery, Tables 3 and 4 illustrate a marked improvement in perceptions of service delivery in all three areas in comparison to

previous (2008) data. However, Langa has significantly lower levels of satisfaction with service delivery and higher expectations of what municipalities/local government can achieve. Fieldwork in Khayelitsha has shown high expectations of local government pertaining to housing and the upgrading of health facilities (such

as hospitals). However, these are provincial-government competencies which are often mistakenly understood by communities as local-government responsibilities. Electoral promises by political parties and councillor candidates add to this confusion, with councillors bearing the brunt of raised and unrealistic expectations post-elections.[4]

Table 3: Service-delivery satisfaction

Overall how satisfied are you with the delivery of services in your area?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Fairly/Very satisfied	62	50	79
Not very/Not at all satisfied	38	51	22

Table 4: The municipality's ability to solve service delivery problems

How much of the problems in your area do you think your municipality can solve?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
All of them	35	41	91
Most of them	16	13	6
Some of them	29	22	2
Very few of them	10	17	–
None of them	5	6	–
Don't know	5	<1	1

The survey also attempted to gauge degrees of satisfaction with forms of democratic representation at grassroots level as these pertain to development issues. Qualitative data collected through focus groups and key-informant interviews was not overtly critical of councillors' ability to solve problems. But the survey data reveals the dissatisfaction with the performance of ward councillors much more starkly—this may be due to respondents' awareness that their input into the survey was confidential and

anonymous. The data underlines the inadequacy of communication between local government and communities in terms of representative democracy at grassroots level, as well as the problematic nature of the relationships between political representatives and communities in relation to encouraging participation. As can be seen from Table 5, councillors received low scores in relation to encouraging communities to participate, dealing with complaints and information sharing. In the eyes of

respondents, participation does not necessarily lead to any real input into local-government decision making. Our qualitative research shows a common perception of participation—it is regarded as a form of information sharing that has little to do with substantive community input, as if community

'buy-in' simply means 'keeping everyone informed'. There is some focus-group evidence of councillors encouraging communities to assist in the prioritising of certain decisions, but the survey data shows this to be the exception rather than the rule.

Table 5: Perceptions of the ward councillor's ability to deal with community development issues

How well or badly would you say your ward councillor is handling the following:	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Allowing citizens like yourself to participate?			
Badly/Very badly	75	62	47
Well/Very well	20	32	38
Don't know	5	5	16
Making council's programmes known to ordinary people?			
Badly/Very badly	70	60	46
Well/Very well	24	35	38
Don't know	7	5	17
Providing effective ways to handle complaints about councillors or officials?			
Badly/Very badly	74	59	47
Well/Very well	20	36	36
Don't know	7	5	17

Similarly, Table 6 indicates a general disillusionment with the degree to which councillors behave ethically and/or fairly with regard to resource

allocation generally, and illustrates an overwhelming lack of confidence in the competence of councillors.

Table 6: Perceptions of competency, honesty and fairness of councillors

Are your local councillors:	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Able to perform their tasks?			
Not at all/Not very competent	66	62	46
Experienced in managing public-service programmes?			
Not at all/Not very competent	73	62	47
Concerned about the community?			
Not at all/Not very caring	78	68	54
Honest in handling public funds?			
Not at all/Not very honest	79	71	54
Fair in allocating services?			
Not at all/Not very fair	81	70	50
Fair in allocating employment opportunities?			
Not at all/Not very fair	86	73	52

Although the qualitative data had shown some community concern with the effectiveness of local representation, the quantitative data plainly underlines communities' lack of faith in the councillors in these areas. This appears to account for much of the 'governance gap'. In other words, there appears to be a very real failure to include ordinary citizens in formal invited spaces in such a way that their inputs are perceived as meaningful. Figure 1 affirms this by illustrating that, despite a carefully designed process of communication spearheaded by local government and driven by local sub-councils, the degree to which the average resident is even aware of participatory processes related to the development of local integrated-development plans (IDPs) remains minimal.

Figure 1: Awareness of integrated development plans
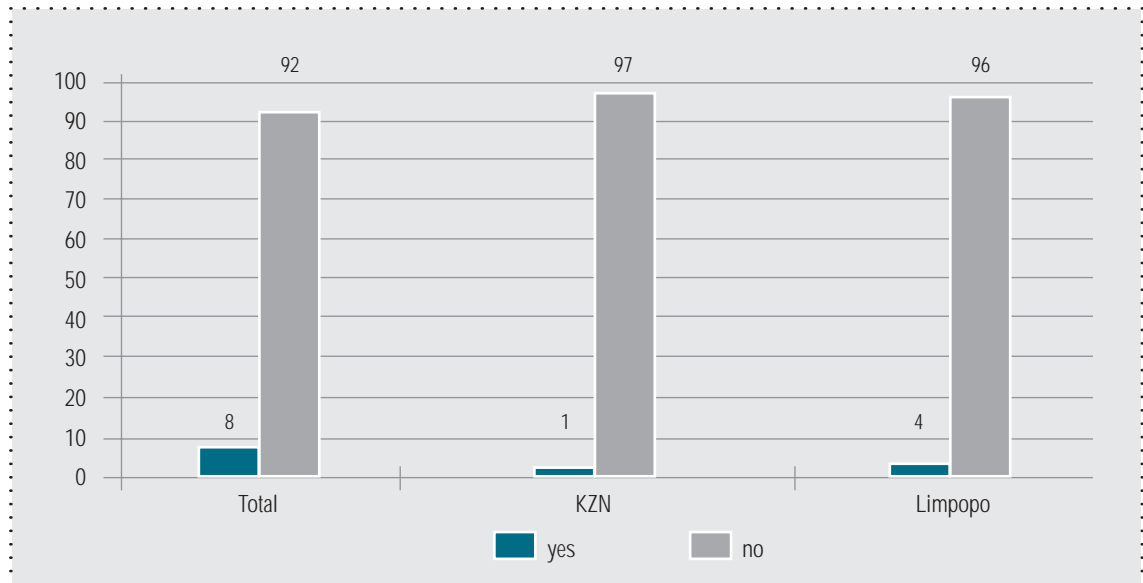
Note: The survey question asked was: 'Have you ever heard of an integrated development plan?'

Table 7: Attendance at public meetings

About meetings:	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Have you ever attended a meeting organised by your ward committee?			
Yes, often	59	65	52
Yes, once or twice	18	18	24
No, never	23	17	22
Have you ever attended a meeting organised by your street committee?			
Yes, often	66	71	54
Yes, once or twice	18	16	21
No, never	16	13	21
Have you ever attended a meeting organised by your school governing body?			
Yes, often	58	65	62
Yes, once or twice	8	13	21
No, never	34	22	16

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN INVITED AND INVENTED GOVERNANCE SPACES

The survey revealed high levels of participation in public meetings—both invited and invented, see Table 7. This data is particularly useful when contrasted to perceptions of agency (or rather the lack of it) shown in Tables 10 and 11.

The data in Table 7 refers only to public meetings (that is, not committee meetings of elected representatives), and is consistent with our qualitative data in that it shows that most residents attend information-sharing sessions held in their communities (Thompson and Conradie 2010; 2011).

In contrast, Table 8 shows that most survey respondents are not involved in participatory spaces on a regular basis. The most committed form of involvement or participation is through the religious groups. Many attend street-committee meetings that are open to all—that is, meetings to which everyone in a street (or micro area) is invited via loudhailer. Table 8 shows that there is very little involvement in the regular (usually weekly) organisational and problem-solving meetings held by street committees. It can be deduced that the actual composition of street-committee membership and direct involvement tends to vary very little over time. This presents a somewhat different picture from the information gathered from SANCO members, who often claim a very broad level of community support, trust and commitment in street committees (Thompson and Conradie 2011). This is not reflected in the quantitative data, however (see Table 8). Similarly, Table 9 shows that political deliberation with ward councillors over issues pertaining to communities is a rare occurrence for most people in the three areas surveyed.

Table 8: Levels of involvement and participation in organised groups

Participation in organised groups (this question covered any level of involvement from leaders and members to non-members who attend meetings)	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
A religious group	64	58	61
A political party	30	19	7
A community policing forum	5	1	1
A street committee	6	1	1
A school governing body	6	1	2

Table 9: Levels of consultation on a day-to-day basis with ward councillors

Do you ever get together with others and to make your ward councillor listen to your concerns about matters of importance to the community?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Never	61	57	82

Tables 7, 8 and 9 reveal that general confidence in the practical 'working dimensions' of democracy have decreased. Protest action is not the first form of mobilisation, and it is clear that there is a range of participation in both invented and invited spaces (Thompson and Nleya 2010). This is confirmed by the responses shown in Table 12.

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF AGENCY AND CHOICE

Tables 10, 11 and 12 usefully reveal the links between participation and agency. The data indicates that the degree to which individuals feel they are able to influence local aspects of governance is generally low, and that most respondents feel that politicians or government are unwilling to listen to them. It is important to underline that most respondents have empirically tested the meaningfulness and/or effectiveness of participation if the data on levels of participation in public fora can be taken at face value. Perceptions of a lack of agency in such spaces may indicate the likelihood of participation decreasing over time.

Table 10: Perceptions of personal agency in relation to local government

When there are problems in how local government is run in your area/neighbourhood, how much can an ordinary person do to improve the situation?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Nothing	36	34	40

Table 11: Perceptions of personal agency in relation to government and political leaders

Strongly agree/agree	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
People like me do not have any influence over what the government does	61	60	56
Politicians do not care much about what people like me think	87	90	93

Tables 10 and 11 show that perceptions of personal agency, as measured by the power to influence outcomes, is higher at local government level and very weak in relation to government and political leaders. How much of this personal agency is translated into community mobilisation appears low when the data is placed alongside engagement in community organisations. Our qualitative data also shows that SANCO remains enmeshed in the political infighting that has dogged the African National Congress (ANC) in the Western Cape, and that the organisation is still struggling to define a community role distinct from its relationship with the ANC (Thompson and Conradie 2010).

Table 12 is consistent with data presented by Thompson and Nleya (2010) which shows that overall levels of community involvement in protests in large poor urban areas is very low. It underlines that most citizens are more likely to use invited or invented spaces (initially perhaps) than protest action as a way of resolving issues or grievances. However, given the perceptions of lack of agency noted in table 11, this picture could change in future. The figures also indicate that protest action is more prevalent in the more poorly serviced and under-resourced areas, especially those where there are fewer formal houses, such as in Khayelitsha and Langa.

Table 12: Participation in protest action

Have you taken part in a protest or demonstration in the last twelve months?	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
No	89	91	99
Yes	11	9	1

Table 12 also confirms our qualitative findings on the involvement of communities in protest action. As argued elsewhere, there appears to be a continuum of action, with high levels of participation in public meetings of both the invited and invented types. While there is dissatisfaction with these spaces, protest action is certainly not a norm (Thompson and Nleya 2010). As a street-committee leader emphatically stated recently, 'we don't protest, we discuss things' (Thompson and Conradie 2011:52).

LIES, DAMN LIES AND STATISTICS? WHAT THE SURVEY DATA TELLS US ABOUT PARTICIPATION

While survey data has its limitations, in that it cannot provide in-depth responses to specific questions and cannot reflect on the real 'texture' of participation—particularly as these relate to power relations within different spaces of participation—it does provide a more encompassing picture of community

perceptions and repertoires of action in the governance sphere. In this sense, while surveys cannot replace the richness of qualitative fieldwork, they can be a useful means of obtaining a broader understanding of citizen action at grassroots levels.

However, much of the data requires further corroboration and investigation, and there is always the danger of conjecture and false assumptions based on reading too much into simple facts. For example, trying to understand power dynamics in different participatory spaces on the face of the data presented here, and without any additional qualitative data, would be unwise. Our qualitative fieldwork has shown time and again how complex and shifting these dynamics can be.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of survey data is the ability to generalise the results with greater confidence than is possible with qualitative information. As can be seen from the data analysed in this paper, clear trends relating to citizens' participation can be drawn. By providing actual attendance levels, the data provides a clear picture of which participatory spaces are used (and given that the survey is repeated, of how the value of these spaces to communities can change over time). The data also rates levels of competence and effectiveness of elected local representatives, as well as that of local and national government.[5]

By collating the survey data, ACCEDE has compiled citizen scorecards rating local government for the different areas, which have been well received by senior management within the City of Cape Town. Over time, the combination of survey data and qualitative data has helped to iron out questions and inconsistencies of information pertaining to methodology, with the result that we have obtained a much sounder understanding of the links and gaps between governance and participation. The 2011 data clearly shows that far greater innovation is required in the invited spaces of participation in order to ensure a more effective inclusion of citizens. It also suggests that closing the governance gap between invented and invited spaces through more effective participation is a major task that lies ahead. The promise of democracy contained in South Africa's electoral processes has yet to find resonances in the way in which the ordinary citizens of Khayelitsha, Langa or Delft perceive their local-government representatives and the forms of participation they purport to encourage via policy initiatives such as IDPs.

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NOTES

[1] Pers. com. Robert Mattes—Professor Mattes is director of the Centre for Social Science research at the University of Cape Town. He is also a founder and lead researcher in IDASA's Afrobarometer governance survey. See www.idasa.org for more information on the Afrobarometer.

[2] The understanding of invited and invented spaces is consistent with the definitions provided in previous GGLN State of Local Governance (SoLG) reports referring, on the one hand, to more organised, government created spaces for participation, and on the other, those created by communities themselves.

[3] Our sample size was 300 respondents per area. This was determined after consultation with leading Afrobarometer researchers to ensure compatibility with Afrobarometer data and to ensure adequate sampling size. The margin of error on approximately 300 households is between 5 and 6%, well within internationally accepted norms for research surveys.

[4] Interview with Councillor Mlulami Velem, 10 October 2011.

[5] The data on perceptions of national government is not included here due to space constraints.

THE BLACK SASH COMMUNITY MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROJECT: AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE FOR ACTIVE CITIZENRY

By Elroy Paulus and Gouwah Samuels, Black Sash[1]

The Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) was conceptualised by the Black Sash and launched in 2010 in a bid to help improve government service delivery, with a particular focus on poor and vulnerable communities in South Africa. The project is based on principles enshrined in Section 195 of the South African Constitution that 'services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably, and without bias,...[that] people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making,...[and that] public administration must be accountable'.

PHOTO: BLACK SASH CMAP

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The basic premise of CMAP is that service-delivery norms and standards impact significantly on government credibility. Put differently, effective service delivery is a fundamental part of the relationship between a government and its people. CMAP, which was developed with the financial support of the European Union and the Open Society Foundation of South Africa, aims to establish how poor and marginalised citizens across the country experience various services delivered by government departments and agencies. This is achieved through short, 15 to 20-minute questionnaires administered by CMAP monitors to 'users' of government services as well as to government officials at various sites.

CMAP is underscored by the belief that people are not (merely) passive users of public services but active holders of fundamental rights. We see this as an innovative strategy for enhancing active citizenry. To this end, hundreds of CMAP monitors have been

nominated by approximately 270 community-based organisations, NGOs and NGO networks including community-based advice offices, HIV and Aids-support groups, women's groups, local- economic-development projects, and welfare and faith-based organisations across South Africa. The monitors have been trained to maintain a regular and disciplined presence while monitoring public service-delivery points in all of the country's nine provinces, and to use the information they generate to engage in local advocacy. A range of rights-education materials produced by the Black Sash, as well as a degree of direct assistance, are available to monitors who engage in local advocacy work. There is also scope for linking a rights-education component to the questionnaires, and there are plans to explore this as the project develops and expands.

CMAP has developed separate questionnaires for the recipients of services and for government employees responsible for providing services. The questionnaires have been standardised and are used to monitor the services delivered by the following government departments and agencies;

* South African Social Assistance Agency (SASSA) pay- and service points
* primary health care facilities
* service points for the Department of Home Affairs
* and municipal offices for basic services delivered by local government.

Essentially the questionnaires record perspectives on the quality of services with regard to time wasted, the means of transport and distances travelled to access services, venue security, etc., as well as adherence to the government's Batho Pele principles for transforming service delivery. CMAP monitors use the questionnaires in face-to-face interviews with recipients of services and government employees at the offices mentioned. The perspectives of officials

are considered as important as those of citizens because they are able to identify the critical gaps and challenges they face in providing services. At the time of writing, the questionnaires were written in English, but CMAP monitors are trained to ask the questions in the language of respondent's choice.[2]

By training monitors to administer the surveys and to assess and report on the quality of service delivery in specific government departments across South Africa, CMAP aims to:

* help to train a large number of citizens to actively monitor, assess and report on the quality of services delivered by specific government departments to their communities in rural, urban and peri-urban areas across South Africa
* develop a system that enables civil-society organisations and community members to hold government accountable for the quality of service delivery
* combine monitoring with advocacy to help build a culture of accountability (that is, a culture of rights with responsibilities) among both communities and government officials.

The choice of which public services to monitor was based on the need to help realise the rights granted in Section 27(1) of South Africa's Constitution, namely that: 'Everyone has the right to have access to health care services…sufficient food and water,…and social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance.'

Along with the Social Change Assistance Trust (which was the primary implementing partner in the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape provinces), the Black Sash has attempted to broker formal permission for our monitors to access service-delivery points in various municipalities in all nine provinces. Thus far, we have been successful in

gaining access to some, but not all, government departments and agencies. We have, however, established a good working relationship with SASSA and are working towards developing a similar relationship with the health and home affairs departments.

SASSA's endorsement had a number of additional important benefits, not least of which included fostering a broader interest in the project; it also served as a morale booster for monitors and ensured that constructive feedback was given to officials.

BENEFITS

CMAP gives people living in South Africa an opportunity to hold the government accountable for service-delivery promises it has made. At the same time, it gives government departments and agencies independent, 'real-time' data from the communities they serve.

At the time of writing, 3 081 questionnaires from CMAP monitors had been captured. This data has yielded reports for all provinces, and at least one report for each of the types of services monitored is near completion. Of the questionnaires captured so far, the largest number (68%) come from SASSA pay and service points. This can be attributed to the fact that SASSA's national office granted formal permission for the monitoring of their service sites. This permission, which has not necessarily been granted by all the other government departments and agencies monitored, enabled CMAP monitors to more easily gain access to service sites and to formal interviews with officials. SASSA's endorsement had a number of additional important benefits, not least of which included fostering a broader interest in the project; it also served as a morale booster for

monitors and ensured that constructive feedback was given to officials.

Furthermore, of the returned questionnaires, 26% came from Gauteng, followed by Limpopo (19%), the Western Cape (12.4%) and the North West Province (7.8%). Overall, the more questionnaires that are returned, the greater the validity and impact of the reports that will be generated. This will, in turn, enable the Black Sash to obtain official responses from government departments and agencies, as has been the case with SASSA in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. As yet, the Black Sash is awaiting formal responses from the other provinces and departments to which reports have been provided.

In order to provide a better sense of the benefits that CMAP offers, some of the findings of the CMAP SASSA Report for KwaZulu-Natal are cited below.[3]

Some of the key findings were:

✳ The stipulated opening and closing times of most service points were complied with.

✳ 32% of interviewees at pay points arrived before 06h00, compared to 23% at service points.

✳ 20% of respondents at pay points and 42% at service points felt that the shelter provided for beneficiaries waiting to be served, was completely inadequate.

✳ 70% of the pay-point officials reported that there were not enough clean toilet facilities; 80% also felt that the availability of seating was a problem.

✳ Half of the respondents at pay points used public transport to reach these points, 3% used their own or a rented car, and 47% walked; on average, pay-point beneficiaries travelled a distance of 7km and paid R18.75 to access the service.

✳ The issue of safety and the presence of well-resourced security personnel or police were of greater concern to beneficiaries and officials at

the pay points than at the service points.

* An alarming number of beneficiaries had to return to the service points more than once for the same reason; on average they had to do so four times.[4]

A report containing these and other findings was circulated to all of SASSA's districts and units in KwaZulu-Natal for input and comment. Their regional office then responded formally, and made a range of commitments, including to:

* increase the use of radio advertising to communicate with beneficiaries about the opening hours of service and pay points

* move non-compliant pay points to better resourced facilities where beneficiaries can sit indoors; to this end they undertook to negotiate with municipalities, NGOs, churches and other stakeholders make sure that suitable buildings would be available (by the time they responded formally, 173 pay points had already been moved)

* help strengthen 'stakeholder participation [with] community leaderships, pay point committees, [and the] SAPS [South African Police Service]'.

This is but one example of the level of detail included, both in reports to government, and to a lesser degree, in formal responses from government departments. On the whole, local-government responses have been constructive from the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, but less so from some of the other provinces.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS ADDRESSED BY CMAP
Broadly speaking, the CMAP process is beginning to address the lack of constructive dialogue that has characterised discussions around service delivery in

recent years. Prior to this, while communities strongly expressed frustration and anger that spilled over into violence in some places, government responses have been characterised by a denialist or a 'this is not within our mandate' approach. However, the CMAP reports that are sent directly to by government departments and agencies are gradually being acknowledged as offering constructive and supportive criticism of the quality of the services rendered, and as broadening understandings (especially among the poorer, more marginalised and vulnerable members of the public) of the functions, powers and limitations of government departments.

Internal challenges facing CMAP include the literacy and language-proficiency levels (especially in English) among some monitors, especially when required to translate some of the more nuanced terms in the questionnaire. The distances some monitors have to travel—with no stipends or reimbursement—is another constraining factor. CMAP monitors therefore mainly monitor places close to their places of work or residence, and where they are known and respected. The question of stipends for monitors remains a challenge. Payment for monitoring has the potential to undermine one of the aims of the project, which is to cultivate active citizens, who are willing to contribute to improving conditions within their communities without expecting financial rewards. However—genuine out of pocket expenses do need to be reimbursed, and allowance needs to be made for these.

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IN CONCLUSION

Each of the CMAP reports produces a plethora of recommendations. These include recommendations from local monitors, and can range from making officials more identifiable to policy recommendations to deal with red tape. In many ways, CMAP is a pilot project on a national scale. There is great variation in the challenges, accomplishments and successes from province to province, and even from district to district. We are encouraged that the Presidency, through the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, has recognised and shared this project with other government departments, thereby providing some formal and significant affirmation of this work.[5]

INVESTIGATING THE HOUSEHOLD-FOOD-SECURITY MODEL IN THE EASTERN CAPE

By Artwell Chivhinge and Rooks Moodley, Eastern Cape NGO Coalition

Section 27 of South Africa's Constitution states that every citizen has a right to access sufficient food and water. In reality, however, a large number of citizens live in a state of constant food insecurity. The Integrated Food Security Strategy of South Africa *(IFSS) (Department of Agriculture 2002) defines food security as physical, social and economic access by all households at all times to adequate, safe and nutritious food and clean water to meet their dietary and food preferences for a healthy and productive life.*

PHOTO: ECNGOC

AS BONTI-ANKOMAH (2001) argues, this definition implies that individuals will either produce enough food through their own efforts, or that they will be able to access markets where they will be able to afford to buy food. Food security is obviously of critical importance for any country. Hunger and starvation can quickly lead to uprisings, civil war, political instability, migration, and cause significant long-term economic damage.

This paper examines the Household-Food-Security-Model (HFSM), which has been piloted in rural and peri-urban households in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province since 2009. The HFSM is a pro-poor development model that aims to address the food challenges faced by households that can be regarded as 'insecure' in terms of their access to adequate and safe food and water. By equipping households with knowledge and skills relating to small-scale and

subsistence farming, as well as other means of ensuring food security, the model aims to alleviate food insecurity in the province, one household at a time. Although still in its pilot phase, the HFSM offers a number of crucial lessons: these suggest that citizen involvement in meeting basic needs is critical, and that there are creative and constructive ways in which communities can participate in development. The HFSM also shows that the participation of households in ensuring their own food security is highly likely to contribute to alleviating poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, and other socio-economic challenges faced by communities throughout South Africa. Indeed, the model shows that focusing on households provides a basis for sustainable and lasting development.

The paper begins by painting a picture of the state of food security in South Africa. This is followed by a description of the model and its impact in the Eastern Cape. The paper ends with a discussion of the challenges linked to the model and makes a number of recommendations.

FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Poverty and food insecurity in South Africa dates back to the 19th and the 20th centuries, when colonialism and apartheid barred black South Africans from owning land and running their own agrarian businesses. Poverty and food insecurity increased because black people no longer had the means to produce enough of their own food (Department of Agriculture 2002). The consequences of those policies continue to shape the lives of most South Africans. Access to adequate food is routinely beyond the reach of the country's many unemployed people and poverty-stricken households.

Like many other countries, especially in Africa, South Africa is battling with food insecurity, ill health,

poverty, unemployment and crime. According to Statistics South Africa (2011), South Africa's population in July 2011 was 50.59 million, and 13.5% of the population (6 829 958 people) were living in the Eastern Cape. Furthermore, the 2002 IFSS reported that households in the Eastern Cape were among the poorest in the country (Department of Agriculture 2002:22–23). Poverty in the Eastern Cape is exacerbated by weak disaster-management systems, inappropriate farmer support and a general lack of purchasing power—about 70% (almost 1 million) of the 1.33 million households in Eastern Cape spend less than R1 000 a month, and only about 100 000 households spend more than R3 500 per month. Most households in South Africa depend on income from salaries, but in the Eastern Cape more people rely on government grants than on salaries (Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council 2011:3). Additionally, poor households tend to spend most of their money on food and are acutely affected by food price increases.

It is important to note that efforts have been made to alleviate food insecurity. In 1994, for example, the state's Reconstruction and Development Programme prioritised food security as a way of addressing the plight of the disadvantaged, especially black South Africans. This saw increased government spending on school-feeding schemes, child-support grants, and free health services, pensions for the elderly, land reform and farmer-resettlement programmes.

More recently, the government, through the Department of Agriculture, has supported the Massive Food Production Programme whereby communities make their land available to the government. In return, the government provides farming inputs and pays workers a wage for their labour. After harvesting, the communities receive an agreed percentage of the produce and the

government takes the rest. Unfortunately, the programme has been one of the more unsuccessful attempts to address food security. Mosilo Kuali of Alfred Nzo district in the Eastern Cape shared her views on the model. This is what she had to say:

> My family was part of the government's Massive Food Production Programme in our community in Matatiele. The government came and addressed people, got the land from the people and promised to share the maize with the owners of the land. The government bought fertilizers, chemicals and also hired a tractor for ploughing. All the labour was paid for by the government. I got angry when all the owners of the land were offered 10% of the maize harvested and the government took the maize away. We did not get any feedback on what had happened to the maize taken by the government. I was hurt that our soil was ploughed and destroyed by chemicals. The 10% allocation of the maize was too small and the model was disempowering. The households were left poor and did not improve their lives. The Household Food Security Model is suitable way to promote self- reliance. Other people on the Massive Food Production Programme ended up burning their maize fields out of frustration and anger when they realised how much they had lost in comparison to the efforts they put in.[1]

While Ms Kuali points to the weaknesses of the programme, the experience proved to be a wake-up call for many households, renewing their commitment to working on their own land and benefiting fully from what they produce.

Other government interventions have also had their challenges. For instance, the school-feeding scheme in the Eastern Cape lost large sums of money because it relied on intermediaries. This changed when the government decided to give the money directly to schools. Now, instead of being ineligible for large tenders linked to supplying a provincial or district-level feeding scheme, households that are actively involved in producing food in an area can provide their local schools with food. Besides boosting the nutrition of school children, and having a positive impact on their school performance, this brings obvious benefits to the households involved, and this, in turn, is of benefit to the wider community.

Thus, it is critical that programmes aimed at improving food security focus not only on national, provincial or even community-level interventions. Food security needs to be established at household level, and householders need to be at the centre of building a purposeful and beneficial food-security system, using a bottom-up approach whereby households participate in contributing to their own food security. The positive impact on households will improve food security at community, ward, municipality, district and provincial levels. If all households were targeted with growing some of their own food, the availability and affordability of food would improve.

Such a situation has the potential to instil a sense of independence, self-reliance and to encourage sustainable livelihoods and living patterns. In other words, households can be seen as the entry point for education and the development of skills, values and attitudes. They can also be viewed as the foundation of social, economic and spiritual development. Households are therefore an excellent target for development interventions if a lasting and sustainable impact is to be made on people's lives. In this regard, the HFSM is an effective and sustainable programme. Well-trained, empowered and self-reliant, the households that form part of the pilot

programme participate in decision making, planning, and implementation of food-security interventions. Households feel motivated and empowered by being able to secure their own food, and this offers a basis for a true and meaningful development.

THE HOUSEHOLD-FOOD-SECURITY MODEL

The HFSM offers households in rural and urban communities the necessary skills and knowledge to meet their food, nutrition and livelihood needs. It achieves this through the formal training of a number of students who then impart their knowledge to households that are exposed to food insecurity. Households that participate in the programme are mobilised and empowered to break the cycle of poverty and food insecurity. Freed from this yoke, these households then influence their neighbours and knowledge, skills, information and experience are gradually transferred and shared throughout communities.

The HFSM is being piloted in the Eastern Cape district municipalities of Alfred Nzo, Amathole, Cacadu, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi, and O.R. Tambo and also in parts of the Nelson Mandela metropolitan municipality. The South African Institute of Distance Education initiated the programme in partnership with the University of South Africa, which offers the programme as an accredited course (at NQF Level 5).

The programme was introduced to the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition in 2009, which in turn invited its member organisations to become involved in designing, planning and analysing how the model could be rolled out in the province. Writers, facilitators and mobilisers were selected, and together they visited communities in these districts to find out whether they wanted to take part in the programme. The communities then identified and selected possible students, and encouraged other community members to support the project by, for example, raising awareness about the model, linking students on the programme to households and, importantly, obtaining political support for the programme.

During the 12-month programme, each student works with five households in his or her community, and studies the following six modules, transferring the knowledge gained to the households:
* Introduction to household food security
* Introduction to methods of working with households
* Sustainable natural resources use
* Food behaviour and nutrition
* Optimising household food production
* Food resources management

The HFSM is being piloted in the Eastern Cape district municipalities of Alfred Nzo, Amathole, Cacadu, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi, and O.R. Tambo and also in parts of the Nelson Mandela metropolitan municipality.

The HFSM has a number of strengths. First, it targets the household instead of the wider community. Second, the programme works closely with community members, NGOs and government departments on designing the training, as well as on monitoring and evaluating the model. Third, a new set of students is recruited each year—the more participants that are recruited, the more households will ultimately be reached. Fourth, households receive the support and skills development that they need to move beyond the dependency and survivalism of food insecurity. Fifth, the improvements in householders' lives that are already evident have encouraged policy makers and

The households acquire practical skills such as growing their own vegetables, soil care, composting, pest and disease control, and different ways of processing the food they grow.

development practitioners to consider new perspectives on development. They are beginning to focus less on commercial food initiatives and support mechanisms and this is, in turn, beginning to change the mindsets and attitudes of influential people and gatekeepers, persuading them to accept and appreciate households as a key starting point for ensuring food security. Essentially, each household involved in the programme is equipped to understand issues around food security, nutrition, health, environment, and their livelihoods, as well as to assess and analyse their livelihoods and take the necessary steps to improve their lives. The households acquire practical skills such as growing their own vegetables, soil care, composting, pest and disease control, and different ways of processing the food they grow.

THE IMPACT OF THE MODEL ON HOUSEHOLDS

Thus far, the model has managed to transform households in the following ways:

* More than 60% of the households that have participated in the model have improved their food security by growing vegetables or being involved in projects that generate income.
* Households have enjoyed producing their own food, and some have sold the surplus and earned extra income ranging from R300 to R800 per month.
* Both individuals and neighbourhoods have benefited, and overall community health and well being has improved.

* Food production has improved the physical, mental and emotional health of the individuals involved, leaving a lasting positive impact on them as well as on the physical and social space of their communities.
* Urban communities particularly value the community-building benefits of the model and growing their own food.

THE IMPACT OF THE MODEL ON STUDENTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The impact on students and local communities include:

* In 2009 and 2010, 560 students were registered and working in approximately 22 sites in Eastern Cape with the support of 16 tutors, and gained knowledge, information and skills related to food security.
* Since each student works with five households, 2 800 households were reached and assuming an average of six people per household, approximately 16 800 people benefited from the programme.
* Over 20 young people obtained employment as a result of their involvement in the HFSM.
* Students who have completed the programme are looking for ways to proceed with their studies and have asked for a Level 8 food-security course to be offered in the near future.
* Students and tutors in the Amathole, Chris Hani, Alfred Nzo and OR Tambo districts are replicating what they learnt in the programme by establishing community vegetable gardens, supporting schools to establish gardens and mobilising their communities to ensure their own food security.
* Land that had lain fallow for years because people had lost interest in farming is now being used productively.

- A new batch of skilled people is being groomed in communities to mentor, train and support community farming initiatives.
- The participatory and interactive nature of the programme has helped some of the NGOs involved in the HFSM to improve and strengthen their food security-related programmes.

THE IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government supported the programme by paying for its community development workers (CDWs) to register as students on the programme. The programme has helped CDWs to significantly improve their skills and to contribute to the food production, preparation, storage and processing skills within households and communities. The support of the local government in the Eastern Cape is evidence of the confidence that local government has in the HFSM. This will go a long way towards involving and empowering more and more households to participate in the process.

CHALLENGES LINKED TO THE MODEL

Key challenges identified in the implementation of the HFSM are:

- Even though students' fees were subsidised (R100 per module per student), some still found it difficult to pay the R600 needed for course fees.
- The Eastern Cape is vast and, until there are trained people in every community, it will be expensive to monitor and support the implementation of the model.
- The costs of the programme increased as a result of inflation and fuel-price increases, and the programme did not have enough funds to meet some demands for support and monitoring visits.

- Some students, especially unemployed youth, dropped out of the course—resources used on them were wasted and the impact that it was hoped they would make was lost.
- Most people have limited access to land and those who do have access seldom hold title deeds. Thus, those who have realised the importance of farming, and have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills, still face the challenge of securing access to land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are offered for anyone planning to replicate the HFSM in other areas. They are drawn from feedback given by students and tutors who participated in the programme, as well as from other stakeholders such as NGOs.

- According to Freyne et al. (2009), food security should be promoted in both urban and rural areas because food insecurity is not only relevant to rural areas; the model should therefore be extended to urban and peri-urban areas too.
- Students on the programme should be linked to an NGO or CBO; continuous supervision and monitoring from a tutor and an NGO is likely to increase the impact of their work.
- Organisations involved should plan to provide internships or work placements for students who complete the programme.
- Learning materials should be translated and simplified for the different literacy levels found in communities. Posters, learning aids and DVDs should be developed and participatory-learning methodologies should be improved to fit the target audience.
- A more advanced course should be introduced for the students or others who would like to further their studies of food security.

* The government needs to provide funding as well as political and technical support to households that benefit from its land-redistribution programme so that they remain food secure; the HFSM could be scaled up to meet this need.

* Interventions that are aimed at increasing income security (such as social grants) need to be maintained to reduce the vulnerability of households while longer-term measures such as the HFSM are put into place and become established.

* Additional funding is needed to effectively implement the model throughout the Eastern Cape and other provinces in South Africa.

* The HFSM aligns with the government's policies and strategies on food security. The government should therefore consider investing in the model and linking it with relevant policies and strategies in government departments such as Agriculture, Social Development, Education, and the sphere of local government.

* Establishing and strengthening partnerships will help in replicating and scaling up the model so that it can have a lasting and widespread effect.

The HFSM has shown that there are huge benefits for households and communities that participate in addressing the problem of food insecurity. Focusing on the grassroots provides a sound basis for sustainable development as it ensures that the impact is felt in every household. The HFSM presents many opportunities to transform the food security situation in South Africa, both in urban and rural areas, because it addresses issues relevant to household food security, nutrition, and capacity enhancement. The successes, challenges and lessons learned should be used to improve and refine the model to meet the needs of food insecure households in South Africa.

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NOTE

[1] Interview with Ms Mosilo Kuali conducted by ECNGOC, 18 October 2011.

CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that participatory local governance in South Africa is in need of revitalisation. As various contributions in this publication have highlighted, current institutional mechanisms to promote participation and pro-poor development are frequently weak, often do not function in the way they were intended, lack strong accountability features and have been appropriated by the politics of the day. Patronage politics, weak leadership, weak capacity (both human and financial), mismanagement and corruption continue to be challenges undermining the ideal of inclusive, participatory local governance. In addition, the mindsets and attitudes of public officials leave much to be desired and there is little routinised public accountability in the system. The solution to a local government system that is in distress lies in a combination of institutional, political and community-focused interventions, primarily aimed at addressing the underlying governance challenges. Thus, tackling the 'governance deficit' head-on is critical to reinvigorate participatory local governance.

Critically, participatory local governance should have a substantive meaning and exert influence on planning, resource allocation and implementation. Instead, the practice in many municipalities is seemingly one of 'going through the motions' and ensuring compliance with the technical legislative requirements which, ironically, are designed to facilitate substantive public participation in terms of both process and outcomes. This negates the fact that communities are different and so are their experiences, needs and dynamics. Both in design and in administrative practices, a blanket approach to citizen engagement in municipalities does not encourage citizens to exercise their civic duty and actively engage with the state. Participation in local governance is a human right, and its realisation lies in the creation of meaningful spaces for citizen engagement and expression of voice, beyond those provided for by current legislation.

The central call of this publication is to 'put participation at the heart of development//put development at the heart of participation.' Needless to say, the relationship between public participation and developmental outcomes is not a simplistic one. There are many different, often contradictory and conflicting, voices and interests that need to come into conversation with each other and with 'hard' constraints related to finances, capacity and environmental realities, amongst others. But as the introduction to this publication highlights, it is exactly that conversation – the opportunity to engage in what Amartya Sen (2009) calls 'public reasoning' about development alternatives – that ought to lie at the heart of participatory local democracy.

This requires a shift in the dominant paradigm, coupled to a fundamental shift in power relations. Both the state and communities need to appreciate the intrinsic value of engaging each other in planning, implementation and monitoring of local development and embrace the notion of active citizenship. The state should no longer act (or be expected to act) as a

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deliverer of development, making communities passive recipients and beneficiaries of the development process. Rather, both groups need to view each other as development actors and co-producers of development.

To breathe new life into this revamped notion of participatory local governance, innovative ideas and practices need to be explored and tried out. This publication has offered a number of insights and methodologies related to community-led initiatives for engagement with the local state and for local development, collaborative planning, social accountability tools and other models for community involvement in local development. It is by no means exhaustive in its analysis or in the tools and methods presented, but it is nonetheless a valuable offering for anyone open to exploring innovative approaches and models that aim to enhance participatory local governance. The contributions are based on existing practices and emerging areas of work of member organisations of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN). Individually and collectively (including through the production of this *State of Local Governance* publication), member organisations of the GGLN seek to contribute to the advancement of participatory, democratic and developmental local governance in South Africa.

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