



ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP MATTERS



PERSPECTIVES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ON
LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA



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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 together civil society organizations working in the field of local governance. The network offers a platform to facilitate knowledge production & sharing, peer learning, and advocacy towards the goal of strengthening participatory, democratic and developmental local governance in South Africa.

VISION

The creation of 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 organizations 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 municipalities and communities;
- * 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; and
- * Generate partnerships between civil society organizations, 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 interest of achieving the network's objectives
- * Sharing the benefits of membership of the network amongst active members
- * Building the capacity of the member organizations of the network

MEMBERS

The full members of the GGLN are:

Afesis-corplan

African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE)

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 for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)

Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA)

Isandla Institute

Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG)

Planact

Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD)

Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)

The Black Sash

The Mvula Trust

Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE)

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FOREWORD

The Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN) has welcomed the National Development Plan, if not as a blueprint for South Africa's development trajectory, then at least as a compass that points us into the direction of transformation. As a network of organisations concerned with vibrant and inclusive local democracy, it comes as no surprise that the recognition of social and political agency of (extra-)ordinary citizens is particularly well received.

Preceding editions of the GGLN's *The State of Local Governance* publication charted the way for this year's focus on active citizenship. The NDP's elevation of civic activism and agency in development processes echoes what member organisations of the GGLN have been advocating for many years: that people can and need to be in control of their own development, not in isolation of the state or other civic actors, but in direct conversation and, at times, contestation with these other actors. This requires the design of well-constructed, yet organic, processes that are able to mediate power, difference and diversity in a manner that brings forth transformative outcomes.

South Africa still has a long way to go before such robust systems and processes are in place, although emerging initiatives originating from both civil society and government, particularly around social accountability, community-based monitoring and collaborative planning, give room for cautious optimism. With government in general and in local government in particular suffering from 'bad image syndrome', more radical shifts in thinking and practice are needed to ensure that trust in local government is restored.

The production of the *State of Local Governance* publication is by far the most exciting and most daunting project for the GGLN Secretariat. For the network as a whole, it is truly a process of learning and engaging, reflecting and deliberating, which on the part of the Secretariat involves a fair amount of prompting, nudging, relinquishing and, invariably, laughing. It is a great honour to be at the nub of such a rich and rewarding initiative.

Mirjam van Donk

Isandla Institute / Chairperson of the GGLN Reference Group

Cape Town, March 2013

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First and foremost, the valuable contributions by member organisations of the GGLN have come about as a result of their commitment to an iterative process of writing and review. Our appreciation goes out to Afesis-Corplan, Black Sash, Community Organisation Resource Centre, Democracy Development Programme, Isandla Institute, Mvula Trust, Planact and the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa. We also acknowledge the contribution made by Edgar Pieterse of the African Centre for Cities.

The credibility of the State of Local Governance publication is partly due to the rigorous peer review and editing process. A special mention is due to Meera Ramjee who, once again, managed the writing and editing process with aplomb and grace. Her wisdom and experience served as great assets in the process of this project and is greatly admired and appreciated by all parties. Our gratitude is further extends to the various peer reviewers: Adam Andani, Annette May, Ronald Eglin, Lesego Loate, Kate Tissington, Mirjam van Donk and Sarah Watson. Kristina Davidson, the text editor, added great value in the quality assurance phase of the process.

A special word of thanks to the Reference Group whose members steer the GGLN processes. The Reference Group made a valuable contribution by selecting yet another relevant and powerful topic and provided invaluable guidance throughout the process ensuring a high quality output. The Reference Group consists of the following members: Rama Naidu (Democracy Development Programme), Mike Makwela (Planact), Nontando Ngamlana (Afesis-Corplan), Elroy Paulus (Black Sash), Kate Tissington (Socio-economic Rights Institute of South Africa) and Mirjam van Donk (Isandla Institute).

Ronald Mukanya, the former GGLN Coordinator, helped set the project on track, whereas Gabeba Gaidien, incumbent GGLN Coordinator, guided the production process through its final stages.

The processes that enabled the writing and production of this publication were supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and GIZ Strengthening Local Governance Programme. The GGLN is sincerely grateful for their ongoing support and critical engagement in the relevant processes of the network.

The GGLN Secretariat



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fifth edition of the State of Local Governance publication, “Active Citizenship Matters”, is dedicated to a subject considered a building block in the national government’s vision for the country. This publication explores how the notion of active citizenship can serve as an analytical concept to review the nature and quality of participatory local democracy in South Africa. It also considers it as a paradigm to inspire new models and practices that are relevant in South Africa’s development context. Nineteen years into democracy, the evident waning trust in local government in particular has reignited the debate around the role of civil society in the governance of the country. The National Development Plan acknowledges this positing active citizenship as a critical cog in the wheel of development, together with strong leadership and a capable state.

In the introduction to this publication, Mirjam van Donk stresses the importance of clarifying the definition and interpretation of the notion of active citizenship. The notion of active citizenship has widespread appeal, yet it is ambiguous and open-ended. She also alerts us of the easy slippage into normative notions of “good” or “becoming” citizenship. Emphasising the multidimensionality of active citizenship, she introduces notions of claim-making and enlarging political agency as indicative of a concern with the vertical relationship between civic actors and the state. The notions citizenship as becoming and as deliberation add a horizontal dimension, with citizens engaging with and among themselves. She further stresses the importance of a clear political vision of development and transformation, with citizenship being deeply contextual. She concludes with a call to radically transform dominant political culture to enable the vision of active citizenship to become a reality.

The paper by Edgar Pieterse encourages an innovative approach to engaging the community in the development process with great emphasis on recognising the role of civic actors in a more formal capacity. Based on South Africa’s development priorities, he argues for the recognition of the social sector as a formal entity in community development. Furthermore he explores how to utilise the barriers which contextualise community environments as opportunities to engage citizens in a practical model of development. He makes a particularly strong case for contextualising citizenship, which in South Africa’s context means taking into account the perennial challenge of unemployment and poverty. The paper concludes by emphasising the importance of a solid institutional architecture that will create and strengthen community-government partnerships and interface structures.

Isandla Institute builds on the arguments in the preceding paper and emphasises the critical role of citizenship academies as mooted by the National Planning Commission. The paper conceptualises citizenship academies as “learning spaces” to be initiated by municipalities in partnership with local civil society or learning institutions. While the citizenship academy incorporates a strong focus on community empowerment, particularly in relation to practical planning, dialogue and project management at neighbourhood level to inform local government development processes, the ultimate goal would be to facilitate a structured and sustained dialogue between communities and local government in the form of communities of practice.

The next three papers reflect on the experiences of, and opportunities for, active citizenship in the context of informal settlements. Each of these papers presents examples of proactive citizenship which demonstrate the readiness of some communities to tackle the most critical issues pertaining to their rights.

The Planact paper is a sobering reminder of the way community politics work. It illustrates how issues of power and representation can be highly contested in communities and how a well-intentioned NGO can find itself caught up in these political dynamics. It further shows that deep distrust of the state, often borne out of real and painful experiences, obscures any meaningful engagement about the essence of community development.

In its paper, the Socio- Economic Rights Institute of South Africa broadens this perspective to power dynamics which influence the relationship between grassroots community and local government structures. The paper outlines the struggle of the Thembelihle Crisis Committee to be acknowledged by the relevant local government structures in various decision-making processes directly impacting the people of this community. This case study offers critical insights into the elements that mould a united community; more importantly, it reminds the reader that community trust can only be gained through sincere and transparent engagement at the grassroots level.

The Community Organization Resource Centre's paper concretises what co-production of development means. It reflects on the significance of formal partnerships between local government and organisations of the urban poor, and illustrates the dynamics of establishing and sustaining such partnerships in Cape Town and Stellenbosch. It makes a strong case for community-led partnerships that are based on innovative micro-initiatives by the community in addressing the challenges of informal settlements.

A silver line running through most papers is that government cannot approach community engagement in the development process as a checklist exercise. The process has to be a sincere, thorough and consistent, and dialogue at the right level, inclusive of all relevant parties, is a key success factor.

The Democracy Development Programme (DDP) focuses on dialogue as a critical methodology to exercise and sustain active citizenship. It suggests that while dialogue is critical in the process of the development process, the quality of any dialogue process is determined by the approach that is taken. The paper reflects on the use of this methodology in different communities and its transformative potential. The paper further makes an argument for civic education that encourages a willingness to participate on the part of the citizen in the development process which will enable a shift in the mindset of the latter, i.e. from subject of the discussion to active participant. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that all stakeholders in the dialogue process share in the ownership and accountability of the development process.

The civic education theme is picked up by Afesis-Corplan, which explores the main barriers in fostering and sustaining active citizenship. The paper also explores the role of the NGO sector in facilitating dialogue between local government and the community. This issue is closely linked to the classism, which hinders constructive dialogue between community and government. The community will not engage freely in a process with stakeholders if the perception is that government will consider them inarticulate due to the level of their education. The paper concludes by recommending civic education, nurturing community leadership and supporting political champions to shift the status quo to a more inclusive process of community engagement.

The final two papers present practical models for community-based monitoring and instilling vertical accountability in government. The Black Sash Trust presents its Community Monitoring and Advocacy Programme, which offers a tried and tested model for building the capacity of ordinary citizens to take ownership of their development processes by playing a role in monitoring public services. The paper offers critical learnings in the methodology of the project and a key outcome of the process is the level of ownership expressed by community participants in the form of requests for additional information and training to monitor key government services not included in the scope of the project.

The Mvula Trust outlines the Citizens' Voice Model as a platform for rural women to develop and communicate their development agenda with local government. The paper highlights the effectiveness of creating targeted platforms related to critical services within a given community context. Water and sanitation services are critical in the rural context and this model explores the success of an initiative that connects primary users and managers of these services with local government structures to ensure constructive dialogue and, ultimately, better development outcomes.

Active citizenship is a critical cog in the wheel of development as specified in the National Development Plan. However, the ideology of engaging the citizen in the development process to encourage ownership of their rights and responsibilities is defined by the context of a given environment. In the absence of a strong political vision and political will to sincerely facilitate a process of community engagement, willingness on the part of civic actors alone cannot foster a spirit of cooperation in local governance. At the same time apathetic and insincere leadership at community level will lead to the disintegration of communities and further isolate the people, especially those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Clearly, active citizenship matters; but the development trajectory of the country is unlikely to change unless the political, contextual and multidimensional nature of active citizenship is recognised.



CITIZENSHIP AS BECOMING

By: Mirjam van Donk, GGLN Secretariat / Isandla Institute¹

In many respects, South Africa has an active and vocal citizenry, but an unintended outcome of government actions has been to reduce the incentive for citizens to be direct participants in their own development. To prevent this practice from being entrenched, the state must actively support and incentivise citizen engagement and citizens should:

- ✦ Actively seek opportunities for advancement, learning, experience and opportunity.*
- ✦ Work together with others in the community to advance development, resolve problems and raise the concerns of the voiceless and marginalised.*
- ✦ Hold government, business and all leaders in society accountable for their actions.*

Active citizenry and social activism is necessary for democracy and development to flourish. The state cannot merely act on behalf of the people – it has to act with the people, working together with other institutions to provide opportunities for the advancement of all communities. (The Presidency 2012: 37)



PHOTO: MACHIEL ERASMUS, VPUU

THE NATIONAL Development Plan (NDP) views active citizenship as one of three 'cogs' that need to work effectively to keep the wheels of development going in a

desirable direction. The other cogs are strong leadership and a capable state (or effective government). The emphasis on active citizenship, or civic activism, has

been widely welcomed, particularly by organisations working at the coalface of community development, human rights and participatory local democracy. The assumption that prior to November 2011, citizens have not been ‘direct participants in their development’ would be incorrect. Since well before the launch of the NDP, citizens have been participating in matters that affect their socio-economic wellbeing and expressing their views on the nature and pace of development, and on the quality of governance. The most visible expression of this participation appears to be community-based protests, which are becoming more commonplace, particularly since 2009 (Municipal IQ 2013). What is especially worrying is that violence and the destruction of public property increasingly define these protests.² However, as Von Holdt et al. (2011) remind us, non-violent protest actions often precede violent protest. Such actions are ‘the smoke that calls’ because, when they prove to be ineffective in getting recognition for the concerns and demands raised, collective violence becomes a way of attracting attention and ensuring responsiveness from those in leadership positions.

However, to suggest that protest – as a form of ‘insurgent citizenship’ (Holston 1998) – is the only strategy citizens engage in to exercise citizenship would be highly unfair to local communities. Countless civic structures and organisations, involved in community development, social welfare, human rights, civic education and social mobilisation, are operating below the radar of people in powerful positions and a sensationalist media. As contributions from Planact, SERI and CORC in this publication illustrate, smart (and sometimes perhaps not so smart) forms of civic activism predate November 2011, more often than not in the face of a seemingly unresponsive, uncaring, callous or even intolerant and aggressive state. The SERI paper shows how a local community organises itself into a representative structure that engages in a variety of

strategies and tactics to exert agency, lays claims on the state (at times even holds back an aggressive state), develops the community and even contests elections. The Thembelihle Crisis Committee (TCC) is emblematic of thousands of community structures working to improve the lives of the poor, to mobilise local communities, to demand better services and leadership from their municipalities. No one can deny that the TCC has been active in a manner envisaged by the NDP, but the storyline here differs from the narrative suggested by the NDP. Whereas the NDP notes that government actions have inadvertently reduced the incentive for citizens to be involved in their own development (The Presidency 2012: 37), the TCC case study shows how government *inaction* and perceived intolerance become an incentive for citizens to get more involved and exercise political agency.

BOX 1. HOW THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP) DEFINES ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The NDP reflects the following conceptions of active citizenship:

1. Active citizenship is related to rights, equalising opportunities and enhancing human capabilities.
2. There is a strong correlation between active citizenship, government (routine) accountability and responsiveness. Reference is made to the two-way communication between government and citizens as well as the need to ‘hold government to account’ and ‘speaking out when things go wrong’ (as a civic duty).
3. With direct reference to local government, citizen participation needs to be mainstreamed and citizen priorities need to shape municipal planning. The NDP notes that: IDP processes need to be municipality-led; participation in IDP processes needs to be deliberative and engage communities in prioritising and making trade-offs; and, local government needs to engage people in their own spaces, rather than expect them to come to governmental forums.

WHAT IS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?

It is perhaps in recognition of these local struggles for recognition, agency, accountability and responsive leadership, and for more equitable development outcomes that the NDP forefronts active citizenship as a key driver of development and social transformation. However, although the NDP gives some pointers as to what active citizenship means, it stops short of defining the notion (see Box 1). The notion clearly has a “feel good” factor, which adds to its appeal across sections of society. This is similar to other worthwhile and intrinsically “good” concepts in development literature, such as sustainability, empowerment or resilience, which reveal a morass of widely divergent, possibly contradictory (or even irreconcilable) perspectives when one scratches the surface.

Likewise, active citizenship is a contested notion, imbued with different meanings and connotations. As the papers by DDP, the Black Sash and the Mvula Trust note, political theory distinguishes between an individualistic conception of citizenship (liberal, or libertarian notion), a communitarian conception focusing on group identity and the common good, and a civic republican conception, which emphasises civic morality and participation (Jochum et al. 2005). This collection of papers reflects an interpretation that transcends the individualistic conception of citizenship, one that is embedded, and finds expression, within communities that engage in political struggles. This is politics with a small ‘p’, from the Greek notion of *politikos* meaning ‘of, or relating to, citizens’ (in other words, civic) rather than ‘for citizens’. It is concerned as much with rights and responsibilities as with decision-making processes and development practice.

Thus, active citizenship, as quoted in the DDP and the Mvula Trust papers, is both an active process and a status associated with holding rights. This understanding is echoed in other conceptions of active citizenship, which are not mutually exclusive but

overlap at times. The different terminologies – “claim-making”, “enlarging political agency”, “becoming” and “deliberation” – help to elucidate different concerns and points of emphasis.

Active citizenship is a multi-dimensional image that includes vertical relationships (citizens engaging with the state) and horizontal relationships (citizens engaging with and among themselves). The notions of claim-making and enlarging political agency reflect a particular interest with the vertical relationship between politically and/or geographically defined communities and the state (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Active citizenship as a vertical (two-way) relationship



The notion of *citizenship as claim-making* finds particular resonance in South Africa, where such a large part of the population face daily livelihood struggles and live in deprived and desolate environments. This conception is particularly evident in social movements that ‘have emphasised the constitution of active social subjects – the ability to become political agents – as the crucial dimension of citizenship. [...] Thus consciousness, agency and the capacity to struggle are seen by them as evidence of citizenship, even if other rights are absent’ (Dagnino 2005: 155).

The notion of *citizenship as enlarging political agency* equally refers to the ability to claim rights, with the additional strong emphasis on holding the state accountable. This conception is particularly prevalent in the NDP, which posits a strong correlation between active citizenship, government (routine) accountability and responsiveness. It also underpins the Community Monitoring and Advocacy Programme (CMAP) of the Black Sash and the Citizens' Voice Model of the Mvula Trust, which are elaborated on in their respective contributions.

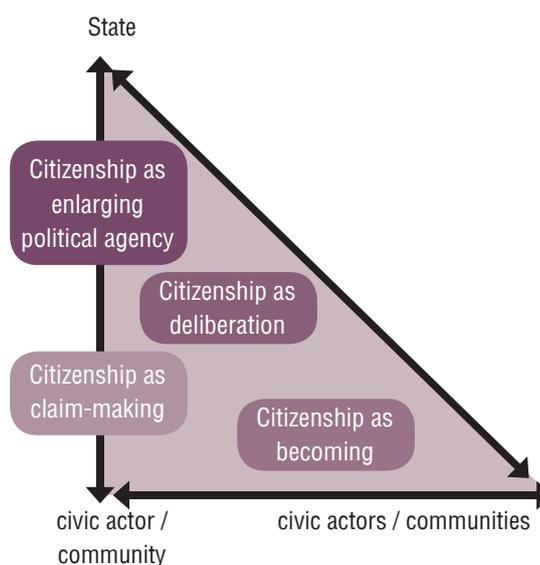
The inclusion of the notions of *citizenship as becoming* and *citizenship as deliberation* adds a horizontal dimension to the concept of active citizenship. Citizenship as becoming puts particular emphasis on citizenship as process – 'it is extended as it is acquired in spaces of participation' (Cornwall et al 2008: 34).

The age-old idea of learning by doing becomes 'learning citizenship through practice'. A distinct, yet complementary notion is citizenship as deliberation, which emphasises the relationships between different political and/or geographic communities and the idea that negotiation is at the heart of the process. In this conception, citizenship is about 'the lived experience of negotiating positions' (Cornwall et al. 2008: 34). The importance of deliberation is also acknowledged in the NDP (The Presidency 2012: 438), which highlights that 'participation in IDP processes needs to be deliberative and engage communities in prioritising and making trade-offs'. Similarly, contributions by Afesis-corporan, CORC, DDP and Isandla Institute highlight deliberation as a key feature of democratic practice.

With the addition of the horizontal dimension – civic actors engage with and among themselves – a multi-dimensional image of active citizenship emerges, as illustrated in Figure 2.

This publication brings the horizontal dimension to the fore quite explicitly, without romanticising poor communities as virtuous, altruistic and homogeneous.

Figure 2. Active citizenship as a horizontal and vertical relationship



The paper by the Mvula Trust openly comments on the fractured nature of local communities and the associated challenges in presenting a coherent, collective front when engaging the state. Similarly, but in different ways, the experiences described by Planact and SERI remind us that power is not only embedded in the (vertical) relationship between state and communities, but is also ubiquitous in community dynamics. In particular, the Planact paper highlights the messiness of community politics and how well-intending NGOs somehow end up in the middle. The paper acts as a useful reminder that community politics often emulates and is deeply enmeshed with existing political structures and contestations – as so powerfully reflected in Harber's (2011) account of Diepsloot. Similarly, the SERI paper illustrates the challenges and dynamics of community politics and what this means for a community structure seeking to represent the interest of the community.

The papers by Isandla Institute and DDP suggest that dialogue and learning within and among communities is at least as important as with the state,

and both are needed for facilitating and sustaining communities of practice.

Short of theorising the notion of active citizenship, this section has sought to provide some definitional pointers. Definitional clarity of concepts is important in ensuring that we mean the same thing when we use similar words. The definition or interpretation adopted also has implications for how the current situation is read and what is proposed as a solution of sorts. More often than not, it also has implications for what is considered “good” or “becoming” citizenship.

“BECOMING” CITIZENSHIP

When unpacking the notion of active citizenship, it is easy to slip from active citizen to good or becoming citizen. The implicit normative underpinning of “good” participation has allowed the state (and other actors) to dismiss protests as an invalid expression of agency. After all, a good citizen can be expected to adhere to preset norms and standards of engagement. Yet, when civic actors experience such norms and standards as restrictive and exclusionary and use other strategies and tactics to make their voices heard, they can be branded “bad” or “improper”.

What constitutes a citizen whose conduct is becoming will depend on the chosen conception of citizenship. The neo-liberal view is one of individual integration into the market, while the middle-class one is merit-based individual agency. Both conceptions are problematic in the South African context of high levels of poverty, structural unemployment and rising inequality. A third conception stems from a paternalistic notion that sees those who are poor and marginalised as victims of circumstances, incapable of self-expression and in need of capacity development. Many other conceptions of citizenship undoubtedly exist, but what is important here is the failure to recognise anything that falls outside the chosen conception as modes or acts of citizenship.

Thus, prejudicial values and attitudes hamper the ability of others, including the state, to view marginalised groups as fully fledged citizens. As the CORC paper suggests, people living in informal settlements are perhaps regarded as the antithesis of active (read: good) citizens, as their place and very presence in the city is, more often than not, contested, if not denied. The experiences of other informal settlements communities narrated by SERI and Planact underscore this point. The paper by the Mvula Trust focuses on another majority population that, notwithstanding progressive policy and institutional arrangements, finds itself on the margins of socio-political society: women. Not only are the gender-blind or inherently male-biased norms and standards of engagement stacked against them, at best women are seen as victims of circumstance, in need of capacity development.

This idea – that people need to be capacitated before they can truly be regarded as active citizens – is very dominant in South Africa. Of course, people become disempowered and further marginalised without the right information, skills, competencies, attitudes and instincts. Indeed, the papers by Afesis-Corplan and DDP highlight the important role of civic education in supporting and sustaining agency and civic activism. However, emphasising capacity building can obscure the underlying normative (read: prejudicial) positioning, implying one of three views, that:

1. Local communities or marginalised groups are incapable of understanding and expressing their needs and aspirations.
2. Civil actors must reach a certain stage of development before they can express themselves (correctly) and should be using the appropriate channels before they can be considered active citizens. This would allow for a dichotomy to emerge between active and passive citizens, with a higher status attached to those that have reach this particular stage of development.

3. The terrain of engagement has been set, and the acceptable modes of expressing agency are predefined. In other words, the people will have to change, adapt and be capacitated, as the modes and structures of engagement are fixed. This is not very different from the prevailing fixation on citizens using set structures (most particularly the ward committee system) and processes to express their voices and make claims.

Hickey and Mohan (2005) provide a useful summary of how development theory and practice over the past few decades has reflected different interpretations and emphases of participation, as a right and obligation of citizenship. They conclude that participation is not merely a technical project method, but a political empowerment methodology aimed at enhancing capabilities. This view of participation ties in with the notion of citizenship as becoming, of learning through practice, of transforming and democratising the political process in ways that progressively alter the realities of inclusion and exclusion.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

What is called for is an explicitly political approach to development, one that is simultaneously profoundly contextual. After all, citizenship is lived, enacted and reconstituted in particular contexts. Yet contextualising meanings and practices of citizenship goes beyond the rights inscribed in the Constitution. Rather, it is about the micro-politics of everyday life, where groups are simultaneously distinct and overlapping.

The South African context is characterised by high levels of poverty, informality and structural inequality:

- ✳ About two million households living in informal dwellings in informal settlements and backyards (News24 2012).

- ✳ The South African Child Gauge 2012 estimates that six out of 10 children live in poverty, and many of them cry themselves to sleep because they are hungry (Hall et al. 2012).
- ✳ About one in nine South Africans is infected with HIV.
- ✳ According to the expanded unemployment rate, just over one in three South Africans (36%) is jobless.
- ✳ 61% of job seekers do not have matric.
- ✳ Over 50% of youth aged 15–24 years is unemployed. Approximately one third of this age group is not in employment, education or training, which is likely to put more pressure on the labour market (Statistics South Africa 2013).
- ✳ Inequality is entrenched and South Africa is amongst the most unequal countries in the world.

In addition, the psychological impact of South Africa's violent history of oppression on its people manifests in various socio-economic ills, including extreme levels of violent crimes, especially toward women and children, and high levels of suicide and substance abuse. The deep fissures permeating society, and the difficulty to accept disagreement and dissent, stem from this reality of woundedness and deep-seated distrust of self and others. The psychological state of South Africa as a whole, and its marginalised communities in particular, is precarious at best.

The context sketched above provides the canvass against which agency and identity is formed, claims are made and citizenship as status is assessed. The sense of patriotism underpinning the NDP demands that all South Africans recognise these realities, which can in fact serve to drive and channel their civic activism. Yet to make the ambitions of the NDP a reality requires a political vision of development and participation. In his paper, Edgar Pieterse laments the absence of a clear political vision for animating and sustaining deep citizenship, in a context characterised by poverty,

unemployment, inequality and spatial dysfunctionalities, and levels similar critiques at both the ruling party and organised civil society. Taking a similar view, Hickey and Mohan (2005: 15) challenge NGOs to develop stronger ‘political forms of participatory thought and action’, which will require ‘moving beyond the locality with empowerment involving multi-scaled strategies and networks’. Edgar Pieterse refers to this as ‘network politics’, which need to be imbued with ‘(non-violent) militancy, coupled to a politics of proposition and co-production’.

Citizenship is a notion that links agency, politics, culture and place (Hickey and Mohan 2005), and contributions to this publication focus on all or some of these dimensions. The papers by Afesis-corplan, the Mvula Trust and DDP recognise culture and identity as an important aspect, whereas the papers by CORC, Isandla Institute, Planact and SERI reinforce the significance of place. Edgar Pieterse adds work as a fifth dimension, by explicitly bringing to the fore the South African context of high levels of poverty and structural unemployment. This addition resonates with the papers by CORC, the Mvula Trust and the Black Sash, which focus on the role of communities as (co-)producers of development and (in the case of the Black Sash) as project implementers.

What is clear is that citizenship as becoming is both profoundly political and deeply contextual. In the words of Cornwall et al. (2008: 35), ‘Citizenship is less an identity than something that is **performed, affirmed and reconstituted** in different ways in different spaces. It is intimately linked with the ways people come to constitute themselves as social actors and their vistas over the social terrains of which they are part’ [emphasis added].

WHAT ABOUT THE STATE

All papers in this publication recognise that the state has played, and continues to play, an important role in enabling certain modes and experiences of citizenship to emerge. The Afesis-corplan paper is cognisant of

the state’s weak capability to engage communities in a meaningful, inclusive manner, which leads to consequential outcomes. Particular mention is made of the pervasive compliance culture in local government that is hindering, among others, meaningful participation. The papers by Planact and SERI illustrate civic activism *despite* the state and in many instances *against* a state experienced as aloof, indifferent and aggressive. Underpinning these and other papers is the recognition that a paradigm shift is needed, towards fundamentally different values, attitudes and political culture, which is a theme particularly highlighted in the SERI paper.

The papers by the Black Sash and the Mvula Trust both highlight accountability as a defining feature of a developmental, responsive and capable state, whereas the DDP paper emphasises government’s role in promoting community building and active citizenship (a notion further concretised in Isandla Institute’s description of a citizenship academy).

The CORC and Isandla Institute contributions consider both sides of the equation – the state and civic actors. The CORC experience illustrates a different modality of engagement between the two sides, one that is about building trust, co-production and co-ownership of both process and development outcomes (and in the process serves as a useful reminder of how long such processes take). The paper by Isandla Institute points out that both the state and civic actors need new capabilities in order to reframe development as a collaborative, yet political project. For communities of practice to emerge and flourish will require evidence-based and contextually suited knowledge (‘cunning intelligence’) and political judgement, moral vision and emotional sensitivity (‘practical wisdom’).

As mentioned, Edgar Pieterse posits that government lacks a clear political vision of how to animate and sustain deep citizenship. His paper outlines an alternative conception of citizenship empowerment that

centres on the notion of community work and is made possible through a host of community–government partnership and interface bodies.

THE PROVERBIAL ELEPHANT

Before concluding, it is important to pause and identify a particularly deafening silence in this collection of papers. While the Afesis-corplan paper gives some recognition to the important role of political champions, overall there is little reflection on the role of political parties and the nature and quality of (party) politics.

The pessimistic reading is that many of us have become disheartened with the politics of the day. This comes through in the Planact and Afesis-corplan papers, which reflect concern with the perceived/real trend of community activists and leaders who, once they find themselves in elected office, become part of the gatekeeping and elite problem. Arguably, the value of community activists entering the municipality is that this could be seen as the next vanguard of the struggle for responsive governance and improved development outcomes. Sadly, the Afesis-corplan paper and the Planact paper in particular show the risk of ‘personifying’ active citizenship and the perceived embodiment of this notion by leaders, who can then become gatekeepers or see themselves as the “true” custodians of community aspirations and development initiatives. This resonates with the ‘vanguard logic’ that characterises the dominant political culture, most notable in the ANC (Pieterse and van Donk 2013). This ‘vanguard logic’ forecloses dynamic opportunities for civic engagement and ‘fails to appreciate that deep participatory democracy must embrace independent and open-ended institutional systems of agonistic deliberation, contestation, social agreements and review’ (Pieterse and van Donk 2013: 120).

The NDP has also been less pronounced on how to deal with political society, preferring to take a more

common sense and managerial approach on how to deal with the vagaries of political society, more especially political parties. Yet, the dominant political culture is not in favour of civic activism and active citizenship as put forward in the NDP and in this publication. The question is whether we can afford to leave “fixing” or transforming the political culture to the experts, i.e. political parties. Without a radical shift in political (and institutional) culture, none of these critical issues – embracing agency and civic activism, negotiated politics and indeed effective local government – will become a reality.

The positive reading is that by virtue of focusing on politics with a small ‘p’, this publication is reclaiming political space that has erroneously been left to political parties to occupy. After all, civic activism is political, regardless of how it is expressed. Ultimately, the papers seek to make a contribution to a transformative politics of development, informed by a robust and unashamedly political vision of participation.

CONCLUSION

The notion of active citizenship has widespread appeal. Yet, it is ambiguous and open-ended. Clarifying the definition and interpretation of active citizenship is important, in part because it is easy to slip into normative dichotomies of “good”/“bad” citizens, or “becoming”/“unbecoming” conduct. Active citizenship is multi-dimensional, involving vertical engagements between civic actors and the state and horizontal relationships among civic actors. It is also profoundly political and deeply contextual. The challenge to the South African government, political parties and civil society alike is to develop a radical political vision and transformative methodologies to animate and sustain modes of active citizenship that are relevant to the developmental challenges of the country.

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NOTES

- ¹ I would like to thank Tristan Görgens for being a repository of useful readings, and Kristina Davidson for immensely valuable suggestions to improve the readability of this paper.
- ² Municipal IQ records the highest number of service delivery protests in 2012 since 2004, with over three quarters being violent in nature (Municipal IQ 2013).



RETHINKING THE PURPOSE AND MODALITIES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN CITIES

By Edgar Pieterse, South African Research Chair in Urban Policy and Director of African Centre for Cities.

Service delivery protests are now a common feature across the urban landscape of South Africa. In the wake of the Marikana calamity, protest and often violent ruptures are seemingly becoming the preferred way of expressing dissent, sending shock waves through the political establishment and causing a measure of introspection. These trends are symptomatic of a much deeper crisis of citizenship and lack of political imagination.



PHOTO: EDGAR PIETERSE

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE in South Africa seems stalled. Radical civil society interest groups are keen to use the current social ferment to expose the perceived neoliberal and rapacious tendencies of the ruling party. They are hoping for much greater swells of disconnect that will signal the prospect of the emergence of “true” socialist opposition. Developmental activists, social movements and NGOs are keen to interpret the current conjuncture as an opportunity for genuine grassroots participation and control over development processes,

instead of the perceived cronyism that mark the performance of municipalities in most places. Dyed-in-the-wool, democratic ANC loyalists are hopeful that the times represent a wake-up call for the ANC to stop wasting precious political capital with the electorate and introduce greater accountability and efficacy in how the party “leads” development (national democratic revolution) at all levels of society. At the core of this project is a deep belief in the ANC’s inherent capacity for democratic renewal and moral leadership because

of its historically “proven” record for championing the interests of the poor.

These political communities – among others of course – are simply not able to establish a public agenda or vision for how to extricate our society from the deep mess it is in. This is due to the absence of a clear political vision of how to animate and sustain deep citizenship in a context of extreme structural problems such as chronic unemployment and inequality, etched in distorted spatial patterns of residence, mobility and economic activity.

South Africa is richly endowed with a variety of institutions, capabilities and people that can be used to produce vibrant and liveable neighbourhoods across the country. The purpose of this paper is to substantiate this contention. First, a sketch is given of the central problems that need to be confronted and addressed in order to bring a new and fresh approach to life. One problem is the under-performance of the local participatory democratic systems. A second problem is the crisis of work or, rather, large-scale structural unemployment. This issue is dealt with as part of the discussion on the elements of an alternative approach to integrated community development systems that can generate rich social ecologies of work, citizenship and cultural expression. Thus, the second part of the paper explores structural unemployment, the imperatives of place-making and social confidence, and the practical and institutional implications of operationalising it.

IS PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY MISFIRING?

The South African local government system is designed to ensure participatory planning, responsive service delivery, active redistribution and a sensible balance between the short and long-term. Development plans and processes must be subjected to stringent environmental and heritage considerations, which also require active citizen input and oversight (Pieterse and van Donk 2008: 2013). A layer of civil society organisations (CSOs) –

membership-based and NGOs – exist to ensure that these legislative and policy imperatives are adhered to. Yet, it is a public secret that effective citizen engagement and empowerment is the exception to the rule, and that most municipalities fail to facilitate participatory governance adequately.

WARD COMMITTEES

One of the main reasons for this failure is that the ward committees have generally been ineffective and often impede community empowerment. Academic reviews suggest many reasons for this, but for current purposes a few factors can be highlighted (Ballard 2008: 168–188; Bénit-Gbaffou 2010: 286–300). The territorial catchment of ward committees makes them unwieldy. Ward committees are too big for ordinary citizens to know their ward councillor well enough to feel any sense of connection. Exacerbating the situation is the strong allegiance of ward councillors to their parties rather than to their constituents. This tendency is understandable given the fierce power games within most political parties. As senior party members, ward councillors who do not play their role in the factional games of their sponsor are unlikely to advance within the party and will see any prospect of more senior political deployment evaporate.

Moreover, this tendency is reinforced by the limited influence of the ward councillor in the routine affairs of municipalities (Smith and de Visser 2009). Executive mayors and mayoral committee members dominate most urban governments. Given the size of most municipal councils, and the day-to-day pressures that obsess mayoral committee members, ward councillors have very little hope of gaining any insight into the “big” strategic decisions of the municipality. However, when communities and citizens are unhappy with municipal performance the ward councillors are the first in the line of fire, sometimes literally. So, politically ambitious ward councillors quickly figure out that the most important

challenge is to survive tenure relatively intact within the party in order to improve their chances to move across to the proportional representatives list or possibly even ascend to the mayoral committee.

Ward committees also have very little power because of the limited resources at their disposal. While many municipalities have been experimenting with ward budgets for locally determined priorities, the amounts have generally been too small to warrant institutional innovations such as participatory budgeting. Also, when resources are at play, it simply serves to reinforce the dysfunctional dynamics that make ward councillors party-facing as opposed to community-facing. In other words, irrespective of political persuasion, ward councillors have to work very hard to earn and keep their place in the party machinery (Oldfield 2008). This means working a number of angles with people and institutions that matter in terms of party dynamics. In practice, ward councillors are far more likely to choose ward committee members from community organisations who they feel can advance their cause in the party. This is inevitable in a predominantly list-based electoral system. Thus ward committees in their current form are unlikely to play a meaningful role in advancing substantive citizenship and community empowerment.

ROUTINE PARTICIPATION

The Constitution and various pieces of legislation are clear: in principle and pragmatically, municipalities are expected to enrol the beneficiaries of services in almost every act of service delivery. The assumption is that the quality of the service is likely to be higher and more durable when the target constituency is involved in defining the approach to service delivery and possibly in the delivery systems and monitoring. However, most municipalities are clearly lousy at ensuring effective participation.

The most obvious manifestation of participation is the widespread practice of convening various kinds of

gatherings to solicit the views of community members and organisations about the needs or shortcomings in their area. Such gatherings frequently take on a ritualistic character, where leading politicians and ward councillors patiently listen to people queuing in single file behind a microphone to tell their story. After a good few hours the complaints and anger morph together, and a general sense of dissatisfaction characterises the mood. The most senior politician present then stoically has the last word and uses the remaining airtime to reassure residents that they have heard their complaints, they are determined to address them and they will do better next time. Undoubtedly at those moments these politicians are sincere and steeled in their resolve but, of course, in the glare of daylight the next day, it is pretty much business as usual... The bureaucracy has an endless capacity for absorbing any amount of political decisiveness and grinding it into frustrated ambition. Moreover, politicians are quickly distracted by the pressures of their diary, endless meetings and other commitments. Political office is replete with symbolic gestures, which chew up time and energy.

Municipalities often do a little better at the service interface. Some services, such as primary health care, parks and recreational facilities, and waste management can involve interface institutions comprised of community representatives who play an active role in the delivery of the services. This practice is more widespread than commonly acknowledged and could be used as a resource while figuring out collectively how best to institutionalise and deepen integrated community development.

UN-STRATEGIC CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The limitations of South Africa's local democracy are usually placed at the door of political parties and municipalities, but this is only part of the story. As much of a problem is the lack of creativity and of a relational understanding of urban politics.

It is common knowledge that CSOs are in crisis, accused of being denuded, incapable of holding rapacious politicians to account and out of touch with the sensibilities of ordinary people. Although that kind of analysis is overstated, civil society is not performing its democratic mandate very well. Many issues are at play. One, many CSOs have a poor understanding of how the state *actually* works. As a result they cannot be effective in holding state bodies to account, or influencing their priorities, or working with them to achieve development objectives. It then becomes easy to adopt a simplistic stereotypical view of the state as interminably corrupt, and/or neoliberal, and/or devoid of capacity. In this caricature mode, CSOs can remain on their moral high horse and lament ad nauseam the failures and betrayal of the state and ruling party without taking co-responsibility for change, given that our constitutional democracy makes us all equally responsible for our country's development prospects.

In a pluralistic democracy, which has a variety of tools to influence policy, hold government accountable, and support the delivery process, CSOs need to up their game radically. It is incumbent on all CSOs to be informed and expert, where possible, on the issues that concern them. They have to be able to traverse the theoretical, policy, institutional, and fiscal dimensions of the problems. They have to work with a rigorous theory of change that informs the roles they and other actors in the institutional networks need to play to effect change. Such a perspective must be rooted in sound research and a theoretically informed understanding that can then give birth to a multi-dimensional strategic politics. Such a politics simultaneously addresses: the potential oversight role of parliamentary processes (at all spheres of government); the direction-setting function of macro policies, such as white papers and other supporting policy pillars; the institutional levers that live in the strategic plans, budgets, asset registers and human resource policies of sectoral departments and specialist

agencies that give effect to policies; the capacity of citizens and civil groups that have a stake in the issue; and the public domain where the issue gets framed in the public mind.

Obviously, individual organisations cannot have such widely distributed capacities. Thus, *network politics* are needed that work through various types of alliances and interdependencies. In a media-saturated era, CSOs must work in a distributed and symbolic manner. This kind of positioning and sensibility does not blend very well with dogmatism or moral certitudes but requires a principled politics that is comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, incomplete solutions, and an ethic of generosity and cooperation. This is not an argument for tame civic practices. On the contrary, when injustice and inequality runs as deeply as in South Africa, (non-violent) militancy is warranted, coupled to a politics of proposition and co-production. For better or worse, in our emergent democracy, civil society and the state are inextricably linked and inter-dependent.

AN ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTION OF CITIZENSHIP EMPOWERMENT

As stated earlier, South Africa is richly endowed with resources, talent and institutional opportunities to effect citizen empowerment through integrated community development. However, a coherent vision is lacking about what community development involves and how to create an effective institutional ecology to substantiate the vision.

How does citizen and community empowerment get established and expanded? Some useful clues are provided in the prescient analysis from the Second Economy project (Philip 2010: 105–132) a few years ago, combined with the comprehensive treatment in the National Development Plan. Both of these analyses underscore that the biggest obstacle to citizen empowerment is structural unemployment and the marginalised spaces of the urban poor, especially youth,

which trap them in poverty. A first step in elaborating a theory of change to achieve citizen empowerment in the realm of everyday life must start with an account of why un- and under-employment remain at crisis levels.

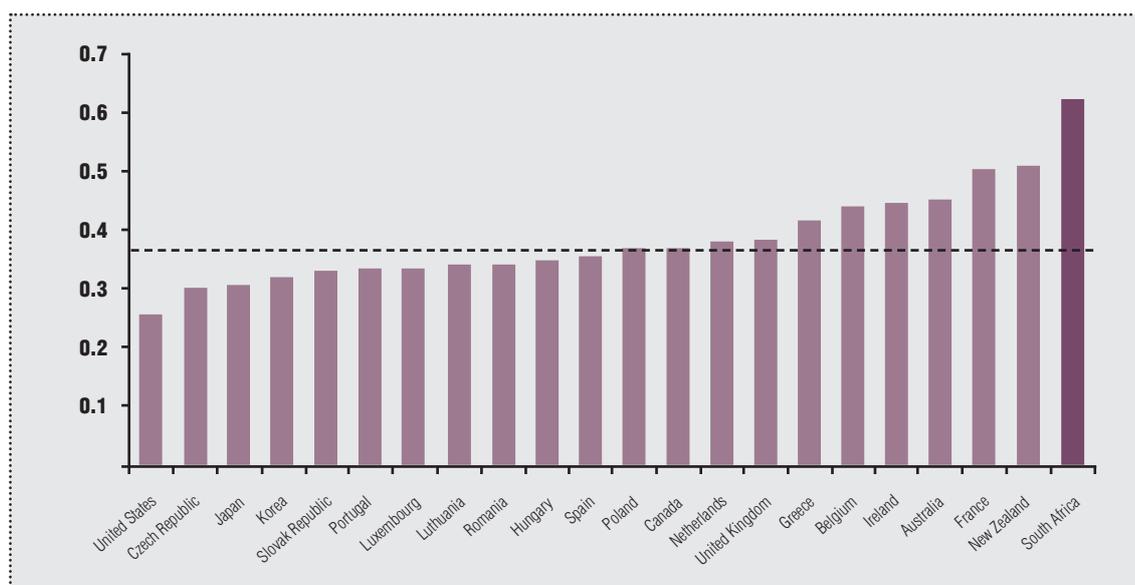
STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

The drivers of high unemployment are manifold, but the following stylised account provides the essence of the problem. First, between 1970 and 2000 the economy grew too slowly to keep pace with labour force growth. Second, from the 1970s deindustrialisation took root (coupled with increasing capital-intensive production), beginning the long-term process of a skill-intensive industrial structure in a predominantly services economy. For example, between 1970 and 1995, two labour-intensive sectors of the economy (mining and agriculture) shed 46% of their work force, or a net job loss of 1.4 million workers. Third, the apartheid-era education system was designed to distort the education attainments of black South Africans and the long-term

effects of this system remain evident in contemporary education patterns and outcomes, which are profoundly mismatched with the needs of the predominantly post-industrial labour market.

Fourth, in more recent years the relatively high starting salary¹ of formal employees is undoubtedly discouraging firms to expand its labour force. Figure 1 compares the starting salary level in South Africa to that of OECD countries (which have, importantly, much higher rates of GDP per capita). The relatively high starting salaries are related to the collective bargaining system, which tends to be driven by the cost structure and financial depth of large, highly unionised companies but makes taking on new workers very expensive for micro, small and medium sized enterprises.² In most functional territories (space economies), SMMEs provide the rump of employment opportunities, and so in South Africa, one could argue ‘the labour market is almost designed to limit new entrants’ (NPC 2011a: 16).

Figure 1: Ratio of minimum wage to average wage



Source: NPC (2011a: 3)

Fifth, their spatial distribution makes it very expensive for the black South African population to look for work. This applies in urban areas, where the black working class are settled in townships and informal settlements typically found at considerable distance from work opportunities. The situation is more acute in rural areas where the economic opportunities are few and far between to start with, let alone the arduous and expensive task of job seeking. Finally, the extreme shortcomings of the educational system undermine the employment readiness of many school leavers. One startling statistic underscores the profound failures of the education system: 'While there has been some improvements as measured by the pass rate of those who sat the 2010 matriculation exam which was 67.8 percent, this hides the fact that only 15 percent achieved an average mark of 40 percent or more' (NPC 2011b: 12). Guess what the class and colour composition of that 15 percent might be.... Given these factors, labour absorption will clearly remain very limited indeed.

The situation is more acute in rural areas where the economic opportunities are few and far between to start with, let alone the arduous and expensive task of job seeking.

In addition to the factors that affect labour absorption, the economy's performance is at best mediocre and vulnerable to stagnation and decline due to structural problems. Most urgent among these are: the low savings and investment rate in the economy; the poor performing and expensive logistics system in the country, which undermines competitiveness and productivity; the ageing and sometimes unreliable basic infrastructures that ensure power, water and waste treatment flows;³ the high levels of economic concentration and tendencies towards uncompetitive behaviour; and insufficient investment in research and development coupled to shallow innovation systems.

The spatial underpinnings at the structural core of the unemployment crisis in South Africa are noted in the NPC, which found a '[w]eak alignment between human settlements, economic opportunities, social services and transport, which raises stress and costs, and reduces productivity' (NCP 2011b: 12). Of course, a spatial perspective cannot address all of the structural barriers to more rapid and inclusive economic growth. However, if the national objective as articulated by the NPC is to simultaneously raise growth, while fostering greater resource efficiency and human development, understanding the importance of spatial dimensions of economic, social and environmental policy is vital.

PLACE-MAKING, WORK AND SOCIAL CONFIDENCE

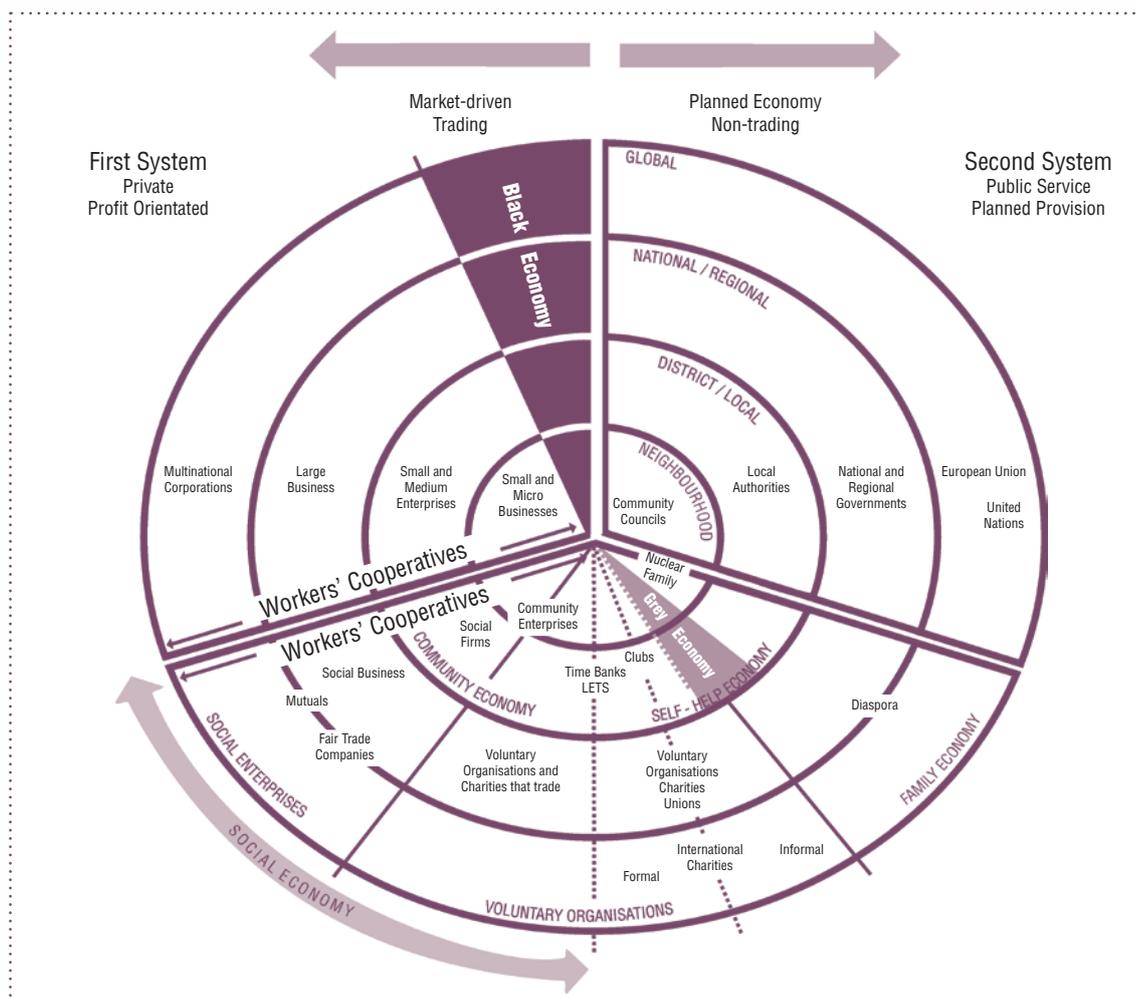
It is clear from the analysis of structural unemployment and economic exclusion that answers to the work crisis are to be found beyond the formal economy. A strange anomaly that besets the South African economy is that, despite the high rate of unemployment, the informal economy is relatively small. Examining the reasons is beyond the scope of this paper, but the informal economy is clearly not an obvious catchment for the unemployed. The emergence of literature on the social economy provides some guidance. Ash Amin builds on the work of John Pearce who regards the social economy as a fundamental element in the third sector, as opposed to the first (profit-oriented) and second (non-trading provision of public services) sectors. The third sector is 'engaged in both trading and non-trading activities, but characterized by community-based or social ownership and a clear commitment to principles of self-help, mutual obligation and social relevance' (Amin 2010: 6).

Pearce has contributed to a fine-grained understanding of the social economy in relation to market-driven and public economic activities, stressing that these three systems are distinct but also inter-

connected and hybrid at the edges. Figure 2 provides a schematic of the numerous economic moments of contemporary life, even though the nomenclature applies mainly to developed economy contexts. In contrast to the fundamental intent of the private sector (concerned with efficiency to achieve maximum profits) and the public sector (concerned with equality), '[i]n terms of intent, social economists are working towards the reinsertion of social goals, reciprocity and solidarity into economic thinking and decision making' (BALTA nd).

According to Pearce, the social economy encompasses social enterprises of various sorts in the community economy space, as well as voluntary associations in the self-help arena that deal with public interest concerns but marked by entrepreneurial energy and efficiency. A key difference in culture and practice between social enterprises and traditional community-based organisations is that the former is happy to use traditional business operating principles to ensure focus and efficiency for public purposes. This may even extend to generating a nominal profit, which is always

Figure 2: Social economy in relation to the private and public sectors



Source: Pearce J (2010: 26)

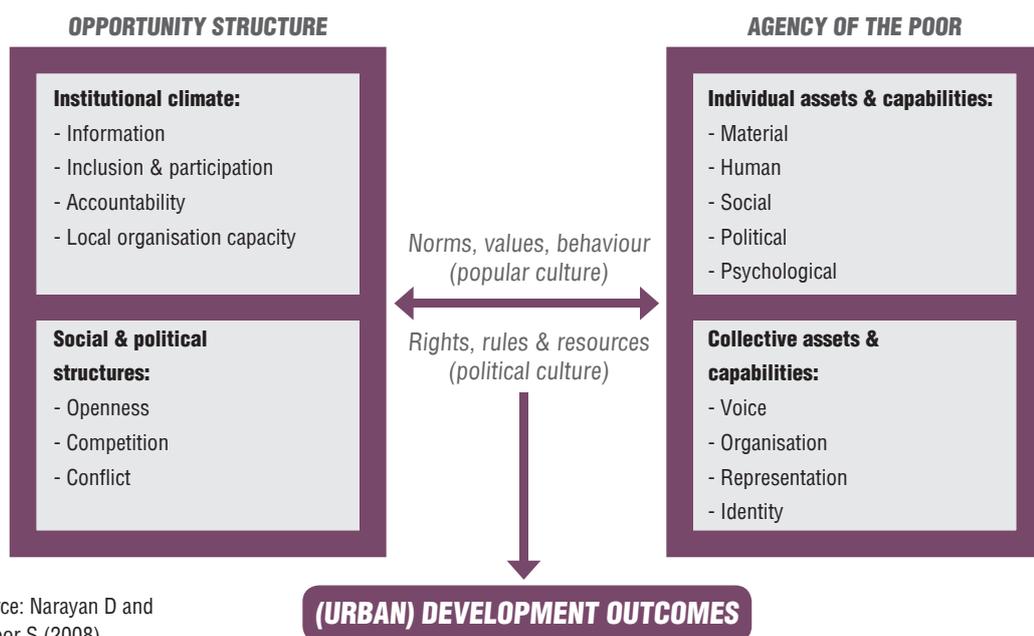
reused for the core work of the organisation. Adopting a social economy lens and understanding the role of social entrepreneurial activity can potentially break the moribund and sluggish character of social mobilisation in poor areas.

However, the idea of the social economy must be understood in relation to the broader development literature on livelihoods and social capital; a literature that emerged as a reaction to the narrow income-based definitions of poverty and deprivation. Thus, in a critique of income-based poverty measures, Carole Rakodi argued for poverty policies to be ‘informed by an understanding of the ways in which households cope, adapt and manage in deteriorating economic situations, in circumstances of personal adversity and in response to opportunities to improve their well-being so that it supports rather than damages the efforts of the poor to help themselves’ (Rakodi 2004: 100). Against this imperative for a more rounded understanding of the living conditions and coping mechanisms of the urban

poor, the “livelihoods” literature emerged, adapted from rural development contexts and reworked to better define and understand practices of the urban poor (Moser 2008).

At the core of the livelihoods and asset-based models of understanding poverty is the idea that all poor households have a portfolio of assets – physical, financial, human, social and natural capital. They continuously manage these assets to simultaneously mitigate risks (to reduce vulnerability) and improve or enlarge their assets. Furthermore, these frameworks locate the relative capacity of poor households to access and deploy their asset endowments within a larger set of structural and institutional factors, e.g. exposure to unforeseen shocks and disasters, the nature and functioning of various levels of government, the impacts of laws, policies, cultural norms and institutions. The argument thus follows that, until understood in all of these dimensions, poverty fails to engage with the structural and subjective dimensions of the problem (Beall 2004; Pieterse 2008).

Figure 3: Economic empowerment of the poor



Source: Narayan D and Kapoor S (2008)

Narayan and Kapoor (2008) argue for an integrated conceptual model that connects the assets of poor households with more collective endowments of the communities within which they live (Figure 3). They also highlight that the opportunity structure for effective participation of (poor) households and communities in various policy processes affects the viability of pro-poor interventions. In the first instance, the opportunity structure is contingent on various institutional factors such as: the availability of information, the possibility and opportunity for effective participation, effective accountability systems, and the capacity of local organisations to utilise these systems. In the second instance, they suggest that the nature and features of political and social organisations matter a great deal in shaping the opportunity structure available to the poor. Specifically, how do these structures deal with conflict, competition and the need for openness? In understanding the relative efficacy and impact of actions by the poor, it is vital to understand how both popular and political cultures shape interactions and outcomes. This rich conceptual framework is important to keep in mind when examining the elements of an integrated community development model.

HOW COULD INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK IN PRACTICE?

In poor settlements (informal settlements, townships and backyard areas), where most households do not have a sufficient and regular source of income, it is critical that government service delivery assists these communities to enhance their access to livelihood opportunities in the broader sense discussed above (see Figure 3). Counter-intuitively, municipalities (in conjunction with other spheres) could potentially make a bigger impact by focusing first on the *public realm* between households and secondarily on the household itself. Put plainly, instead of ensuring all households

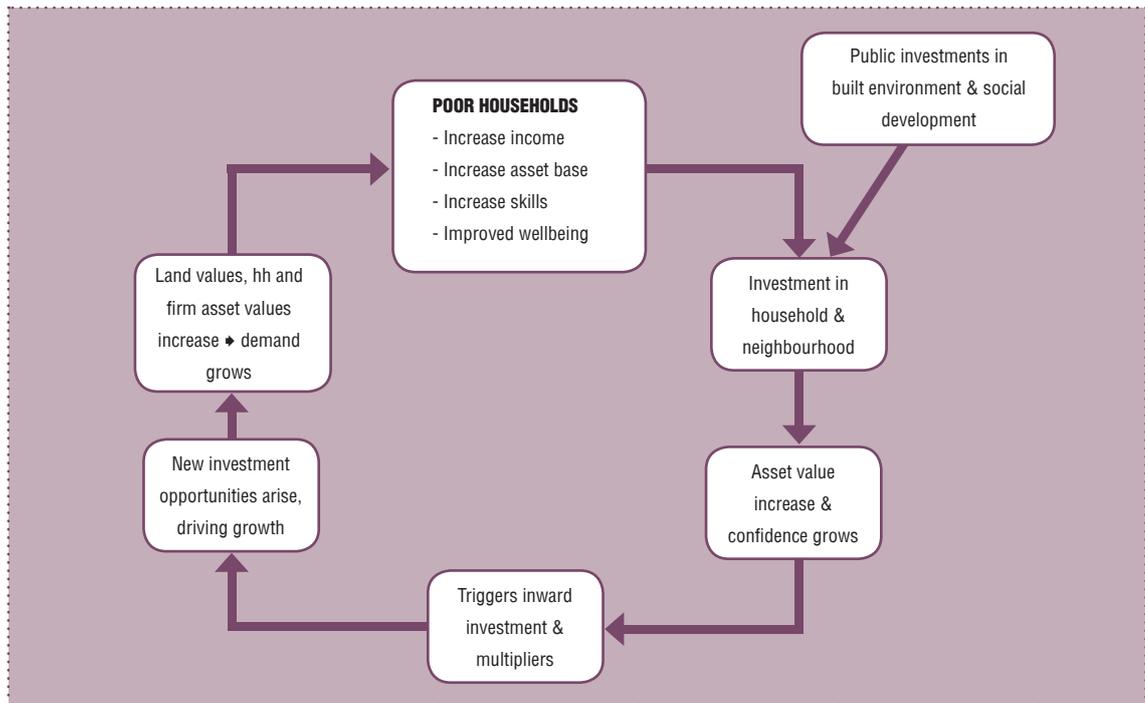
They also highlight that the opportunity structure for effective participation of (poor) households and communities in various policy processes affects the viability of pro-poor interventions.

have access to basic services, with an eye on either providing an RDP house or full-scale upgrading, it may be more important first to enhance the spaces that can make everyday life easier and cheaper, especially collective action such as trading, production and exchange.

As household incomes rise, and various forms of capital circulate more intensely at the neighbourhood level, raising household living standards becomes increasingly important. While basic services should still be provided, the overall package of investments into a neighbourhood, district or ward should also be considered, to ensure that household income and assets are raised as quickly as possible (see Figure 4). At the moment, the bulk of municipal investments go into household infrastructure; the public and economic realm is an afterthought and certainly not coherently connected to basic service investments within an overall integrated community development framework. Thus, instead of public housing representing an asset transfer, the investment could actually reduce the overall livelihoods of households by taking them away from vital social networks and imposing a higher maintenance cost than the household can afford, especially if there is no stable income.

At the moment, the bulk of municipal investments go into household infrastructure; the public and economic realm is an afterthought and certainly not coherently connected to basic service investments within an overall integrated community development framework.

Figure 4: Virtuous cycle of neighbourhood improvement



Source: Author

This argument is made more specific by focusing on the imperative of generating work opportunities in poor neighbourhoods. Building on the NPC social development thinking, community public works clearly need to be urgently upscaled. However, from a planning point of view, connections must be drawn between the provision of basic services, community development,

local economic development and environmental sustainability. Community work programmes can be categorised into four themes: care economy, green infrastructure, cultural and arts services, and the construction and maintenance of public infrastructure such as schools, clinics, roads, multi-purpose centres, libraries, etc. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Categories of community works with illustrative examples

<p>Care economy</p>	<p>Considering the disease profile in poor communities, there is a great need for sustained home-based care, which can also provide an entry point for unskilled people to get involved with health and well-being occupations. Furthermore, community-based programmes for mental ill-health and trauma requires urgent attention, given the scope and scale of social violence and related pathologies in these communities, not unrelated to the traumatic history of social relations in South Africa.</p>
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<p>Green and public infrastructures</p>	<p>One of the characteristics of most South African townships and established informal areas is the existence of significant public infrastructures such as parks, generous pavements, sport fields, community halls, libraries, and public spaces around transport nodes and inter sections, among others. However, these infrastructures are by and large in a terrible state. Much can be done with relatively little money to clean, restore and embellish these spaces through intelligently designed community works programmes. The critical issue though is productive use and <i>maintenance</i>. Municipalities can arguably achieve a rapid improvement in the liveability and well-being of poor settlements if these dormant and eroded assets are restored and appropriately maintained. Such assets could become the source of exuberant community pride and create a favourable climate for increased household, private and public investments, especially if combined with the next category of community works.</p>
<p>Cultural, arts and sport services</p>	<p>One of the reasons why public buildings and spaces are in such a neglected state is that the South African government remains trapped in a physicalist mindset. In other words, a lot of effort goes into leveraging public money to build stuff without much thought for how the stuff will be maintained and, more pressingly, used. Literacy and numeracy outcomes will dramatically improve if young children, especially in poor communities, can be exposed and equipped with opportunities to master various artistic and cultural skills, which stimulate cognitive faculties and enhance lateral thinking and imagination. In a similar vein, sporting confidence and ability can greatly enhance self-esteem and personal mastery that can spill over into other areas of well-being. Furthermore, cultural identities and democratic pluralism can be substantiated when children and youth have opportunities and skills to define themselves, their communities and concerns in the public domain. These skills and opportunities, along with sport, will most certainly serve as a counter-balance to the ubiquitous pressures to consume drugs, alcohol and other nihilistic cultural artefacts. This rich category of community works can be relatively easily sustained if every community investment is tied to a ring-fenced budget for social process facilitation and content programming to activate community facilities and spaces.</p>
<p>Public works</p>	<p>This category of community works includes constructing and maintaining public infrastructure such as schools, clinics, roads, multi-purpose centres, libraries, etc. If the need for around-the-clock security and surveillance of such infrastructures is added, many community works hours can be provided for most poor communities. Importantly, this thrust of activity can also provide an opportunity to demolish the walls and barbed wire that surround public infrastructure resources. An important indicator of community well-being is when public resources are kept safe through public usage and passive surveillance.</p>

It takes a particular skill to train and supervise gangs of community works teams, and such teams cannot get too large before they become dysfunctional, as evidenced by lessons emerging from the Community Works Programme and the long-established Extended Public Works Programme

For these programmes to work on an on-going and effective basis, an intermediary layer of community works managers is required. It takes a particular skill to train and supervise gangs of community works teams, and such teams cannot get too large before they become dysfunctional, as evidenced by lessons emerging from the Community Works Programme and the long-established Extended Public Works Programme. Therefore, a cross-cutting category of community works is *community works managers*, who should also play a vital role in connecting the specific interventions with larger community development processes.

INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The final point to make is that these discrete community works interventions need to reinforce and strengthen the panoply of community–government partnership and interface bodies, e.g. community-policing forums, health-care forums, parent-teacher associations etc. However, for these formations to function optimally, intersect and reinforce community work streams, the government needs to establish a Citizenship Academy in every municipality. Such an academy can be outsourced to coalitions of NGOs and educational institutions but

At the community level, this can be addressed by instituting community-based enumeration of local areas, driven by grassroots organisations and linked into more formal municipal data systems that may include GIS and other datasets.

needs to equip each community activist and community works manager with a range of hard skills in community organisation, management and planning.⁴

In turn, the planning skills must be used to build expertise to operationalise and sustain neighbourhood planning and management premised on a particular form of spatial literacy. *Spatial literacy* refers to the sound understanding of how a series of movement, flow and use systems optimally hang together at the local level. Specifically, understanding how public transport routes and nodes interface with the green spaces and water spaces, the pedestrian flow and accessibility pathways, networks of streets and route-ways, and come together in a pattern of land-use and density. Various simple and accessible techniques are available for use by local leaders and activists through relatively simple transmission processes. Moreover, such skills can dramatically enhance, focus and energise various community-level democratic participation processes, including ward committees.

Only if it is fed and engaged from the perspective of these neighbourhood community visions will the larger municipal planning system become sufficiently responsive to community needs and opportunities. Furthermore, having this institutional piece in place will make it easier to channel community works that achieve broader development objectives rather than simply absorbing unemployed youth. As with any type of spatial plan, if it is not underpinned by a robust knowledge management system it tends to veer off into wishful thinking. At the community level, this can be addressed by instituting community-based enumeration of local areas, driven by grassroots organisations and linked into more formal municipal data systems that may include GIS and other datasets.

In summary, this sketch of integrated community development is premised on the belief that citizen empowerment in poor neighbourhoods must prioritise

job creation, even if it is outside the formal economy and squarely embedded in the social economy. Numerous opportunities exist for community-level work opportunities that can directly contribute to the enhancement of liveability. This approach is also more likely to foster a more pragmatic and ambitious democratic vision of neighbourhood-scale incremental

improvements and medium- to long-term systemic change. Economic, social and environmental agendas can be honed in a mutually reinforcing manner. And, finally, such an approach may also provide the kind of political connectedness to everyday dynamics that can fuel a more intelligent and resonant democratic commons.

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NOTES

- ¹ This is a complicated and contentious issue because of the highly skewed salary structure in South Africa. The executive class earns substantially more than the working classes manifest in alarmingly high income inequality. In such a context, it appears patently unjust to suggest that entry-level wages are too high. However, this would be to miss an important point. Relative to competitor nations and economies, South Africa's entry-level wages are high, which is a separate issue to the fact that this also applies at the top end of the income spectrum. There is no contradiction in both suggesting entry-level wages are too high and criticising top-end wage levels. This position also does not preclude a broader critique of the structural dimensions of wage inequalities in the global economy as a whole.
- ² At this point it is relevant to also point out that 'South Africa's hourly manufacturing wage is about five times that of Sri Lanka, India, Philippines and China; about thrice that of Mexico and Malaysia; and higher than those of Russia, Brazil, Turkey and Hungary' (NPC 2011a: 9). Surprisingly, according to the NPC diagnostic, South Africa's teachers are also among the highest paid in the world.
- ³ The *Material conditions diagnostic* report of the National Planning Commission (pp. 21–22) points out that: 'Between 1976 and 2002, annual public sector infrastructure investment fell from 8.1 percent of GDP to 2.6 percent of GDP, leaving a legacy of old, outdated and unreliable infrastructure [...] The accepted norm for infrastructure investment, as a ratio of gross fixed capital formation to GDP, is 25 percent, with recent infrastructure investments shifting the South African ratio from 16 percent in 2006 to 19.3 percent in 2010' (NPC 2011c: 21-22).
- ⁴ It is beyond this chapter to explore this in detail but here I have in mind the well-established tradition of community development capability as promoted in the four volume *Transformation for Hope* series by Sally Timmel and Anne Hope. See url: <http://www.grailprogrammes.org.za/>. A more recent and equally valuable resource is: The Barefoot Collective (2009).



ESTABLISHING CITIZENSHIP ACADEMIES TO CULTIVATE ‘CUNNING INTELLIGENCE’ AND ‘PRACTICAL WISDOM’ IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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There is a fundamental problem with the quality of democracy and governance in South Africa’s system of local governance. Various government assessments detail the governance deficit in the system that gives rise to persistent community-based protests.¹

Central to the problem is the reality that, generally, the existing public participation structures and forums at local government level are not functioning well and do not achieve the expected outcomes. Substantive decision-making about ‘the nature, pace, sequencing and location of development are taken in “closed spaces” [...], which are impermeable to local citizens and communities’ (van Donk 2012: 13). Compounding this is the dissatisfaction with the pace of development since the advent of democracy.



PHOTO: HOUSINGISA/HUMANRIGHT

FURTHERMORE, the current fractured state of investments (in both physical infrastructure and social programmes) prevents the benefits of such investments being maximised. As outlined in Chapter 1, the on-going structural (and spatial) marginalisation of the majority of the urban poor from the formal economy and

substantive job opportunities make the ineffectiveness of these investments even direr. More effective planning and decision-making at a neighbourhood level is a key mechanism through which state interventions could be made in a more integrated and sustainable fashion.

As van Donk (2012) details in her description of the ‘governance deficit’ in local participatory governance in South Africa, an array of recent political and policy signals indicate that new strategies for addressing the dissatisfaction of communities are a priority. For one, the emerging discourse is that, in general, “people” have been the missing constituent in the government-driven development and the government-dominated governance processes. The *National Development Plan* (NDP) of South Africa launched in 2012 and the *Recommendations of the African National Congress’s National Policy Conference* (held in June 2012) concur with this perspective. Both documents call for a paradigm shift, one that should be centred on three things: a capable and developmental state, active citizenry and strong leadership.

Expanding the opportunities for citizens to become involved in formal participation and increasing the recognition of citizen-created spaces of mobilisation and engagement are important. However, another recognised core missing element is a mechanism through which citizens are equipped to become more meaningfully involved in their development. A huge part of this requires a simultaneous action of citizens ‘learning by doing’ and ‘learning by deliberation’ (Cornwall et al. 2008: 34). Thus the focus moves beyond initiatives that equip communities with the *hard* skills that they need to become involved in governance processes (although these are vital). What is required is to create collaborative spaces that enable both communities and officials to recognise the complexity of poor communities and develop responses that are grounded, realistic and sustainable. Citizenship is a process of becoming – the result of involvement in the give-and-take, rough and tumble of governance processes over a period of time. It is about building recognition of what your rights are, and how they can be mobilised in different ways to make concrete changes to the lives of individuals and communities.

What is required is to create collaborative spaces that enable both communities and officials to recognise the complexity of poor communities and develop responses that are grounded, realistic and sustainable.

Before outlining the essential building blocks of such an approach, this paper reviews some of the state’s current efforts to cultivate these forms of citizenship in poor communities. A core argument of this paper is that the creation of an institutional mechanism provides a successful model to promote capacitated individuals able to function as “system integrators”. This paper has adopted the terminology used in the 2011 draft of the NDP for such an institutional mechanism – ‘a citizenship academy’. These collaborative spaces also seek to enable the emergence of “communities of practice” between officials and community groups, which are able to collaborate on producing more socially relevant and sustainable solutions to jointly identified problems.

PROMINENT RESPONSES THUS FAR

Various state-created programmes and structures are intended to draw community involvement beyond the political sphere. The most prominent of these are the ward committees, the Community Development Workers (CDWs) programme and the Community Work Programme (CWP), but serious conceptual and practical barriers prevent these structures operating as intended.

✳ Often considered as the hallmark of participatory local government in the country, ward committees were established through the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (1998) and have therefore been set up in many municipalities across the country. However, these committees have been marred by many problems, as detailed in various government assessments.² Essentially, ward

committees were meant to be apolitical structures but are now 'often merely extensions of political party structures and do not encompass the full range of interests within communities' (Qwabe and Mdaka 2011: 71). The ANC, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) and the Presidency have made proposals to revamp the ward committee system. These include expanding the mandate and broadening the representation of members, changing legislation to curb politicians from being members (e.g. ward councillors will no longer be chairpersons) and providing additional financing.³ While these recommendations (notably from the ANC and the Presidency) begin to acknowledge previously identified limitations and related scale issues, less detail is provided about the institutional and programmatic implications of the suggestions. A critical and unresolved issue is whether providing defunct and highly politicised structures with more resources and planning functions will overcome the current problems besetting ward committees.

- ✧ Initiated in 2003 by former President Mbeki, the CDWs programme is estimated to have ±400 000 participants.⁴ The programme cuts across, and is coordinated by, a number of different departments from all three spheres of government. CDWs are meant to be specially trained public servants who assist citizens in accessing a number of services

such as health, welfare, housing, etc., and their duties include (CoGTA 2006: 8):

- ✧ Assisting in the removal of development deadlocks;
- ✧ Strengthening the democratic social contract;
- ✧ Advocating an organised voice for the poor; and
- ✧ Improved government community network.

The programme experienced operational problems, especially coordination within the intergovernmental system because of the "silo mentality" of government structures. Other issues included problems with recruiting and training beneficiaries who would be efficient in their jobs.⁵

- ✧ Initiated in 2009, the CWP is managed by CoGTA and is part of the Expanded Public Works Programme. The CWP is an area-based programme aimed at providing more than one million beneficiaries, spread across 228 municipalities, with a minimum of two days regular work over 100 days a year by 2014/15 (Phillip 2009). This alternative has political backing but may be bedevilled by similar problems, such as its relationship to existing government structures, the relationship between civil society organisations and the community, tensions between political and technocratic authorities, and problems with structuring capacity building and on-going learning.⁶

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of these programmes and structures. However, the critical points are that these programmes have inadequate systems of accountability, especially towards local communities, and have weak systems for encouraging on-going learning and the cultivation of a community of practice among development practitioners, local politicians and officials.

However, the critical points are that these programmes have inadequate systems of accountability, especially towards local communities, and have weak systems for encouraging on-going learning and the cultivation of a community of practice among development practitioners, local politicians and officials.

The draft NDP had recommended that ‘every municipality should promote citizenship education and training to strengthen community organisation, planning and project management skills and competencies, perhaps through some kind of “citizenship academy” run by a nongovernmental organisation or educational institution’ (The Presidency/NPC 2011: 258). Although the specific reference to a ‘citizenship academy’ was subsequently dropped in the 2012 final draft, the analysis and most of the component parts are retained. We believe that this idea is worth revisiting, especially in light of the NDP’s strong recommendation that the state should support and incentivise other forms of public participation and social mobilisation outside of state structures. Increased citizen participation in democratic decision-making (“active citizenship”) and a capable state that is able to act responsively will not occur in a vacuum. Institutional mechanisms, akin to citizenship academies, are imperative to generate and sustain such participation.

A FEW CONCEPTUAL SIGNPOSTS

As outlined systematically in Chapter 1, a key challenge in South Africa lies at the interface between the state, at local government level, and poor communities. While a range of legislation and policies require this interface, in practice appropriate and sustainable state-driven initiatives in poorer and marginal communities are highly dependent on understanding the needs, priorities and interests operating in these communities. Put simply, state officials and the policy architects are often poorly positioned to understand what is important in the lives of specific communities. Furthermore, using generic, abstract criteria to plan and make decisions is inappropriate given the divergent needs and interests within different communities and the complex dynamics within individual communities.

In his well-known account *Seeing like a State: Why Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, James C. Scott shows that these difficulties associated with applying bureaucratic rationalities to processes of development are a common (if not almost intrinsic) aspect of the functioning of the modern nation state (Scott 1995). He suggests that an explicit focus on *métis*, or local knowledge, may be a way of addressing key issues in city (and human) development. He suggests the following ‘rules of thumb’ for government officials and those involved in development (cited in Smith and Khokhong 2011: 8):

- ✦ Be aware that every intervention has the potential to be an intrusion and is likely to raise strong feelings among the experts who live where you are attempting to plan;
- ✦ Assume you start from ignorance; turn up as a curious learner;
- ✦ The next 25 years are uncertain, so work accordingly and embrace this uncertainty;
- ✦ Take small steps based on embodied knowledge (e.g. Japanese water engineers will live by a water course for a year or two before making any attempt to work on it);
- ✦ Make sure your actions are reversible without too much damage;
- ✦ The first law of tinkering is to keep all the parts!
- ✦ Expect surprises and change; and
- ✦ Make so that people can improvise on your intentions or, better still, fully engage them from the beginning, so they have the chance to reject your

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ideas and come up with something more suitable for their lives.

The underpinning logic of this approach is the need to respect the ‘wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment’ (Scott 1995: 5). That is, if the information written in books represents ‘objective’ data, then the concept of *métis* involves knowing when to ‘throw away the book and improvise’ (Scott 1995: 314). D tienne and Vernant (1991), who are largely responsible for the reintroduction of *m tis* into academic discourse, described the English translation of this concept as a form of ‘cunning intelligence’.⁷

These two sets of literature emphasise strong commonalities. The underpinning thrust is that the complexity of planning and decision-making, particularly when working with communities who have little access to the formal circuits of power in society, requires state authorities to have humility, patience and a *collaborative spirit*.

In a parallel but slightly different line of thought, a number of planners emphasise the notion of *phronesis*. Brent Flyvbjerg (2004), a proponent of applying this concept to social sciences and planning, suggests that this term is useful because it helps to differentiate between three fields of knowledge: *episteme*, scientific knowledge that is context independent (which he also characterises as ‘know why’); *techne*, the context-dependent art/craft of pursuing particular conscious goals using an instrumental rationality (‘know how’) and *phronesis*, the ability to engage in context-dependent deliberation about values with a reference to *praxis*⁸. Therefore, when embarking on a project, *episteme* would consist of the general best practice rules that you would draw upon to make sure you are taking advantage of lessons learnt around the world; the *techne* would

be the knowledge of how to apply these lessons to the specific context (recognising issues that might emerge because of the specificity of the local context) and get stuff done; and *phronesis* is the ability to understand the moral, ethical and social implications of doing things a particular way. Without this third type of knowledge projects may be well designed and managed but still fail because they are not adequately grounded in the social and moral realities on the ground. Forester (1999) suggests that the idea of *phronesis*, which he translates as ‘practical wisdom’, is useful because it incorporates the notions of political judgement, moral vision and emotional sensitivity.

These two sets of literature emphasise strong commonalities. The underpinning thrust is that the complexity of planning and decision-making, particularly when working with communities who have little access to the formal circuits of power in society, requires state authorities to have humility, patience and a *collaborative spirit*. As argued previously, this requires a shift in expectations about how knowledge is produced and used (Masiko-Kambala et al. 2012). Essentially, a shift is required: from the instrumental rationalities underpinning the ideas of the “knowledge elites” (those who are in the know) and “learning elites” (those who learn from/about), which still largely characterise state action, to fostering communities of practice that attempt to partner with communities to learn *with* them about how to tackle social problems.

On the other side of the equation, as outlined above, communities have largely become disenchanted by the existing local governance framework because of its inaccessibility, the foreign and inappropriately rigid procedures that characterise participatory spaces, and the intrusion of party politics and corrupt behaviour that perverts these spaces from their original intent to expand opportunities for democratic voice (Smith and de Visser 2009; Ramjee and van Donk 2011). In response, communities have adopted various strategies to attract

political or technocratic attention and compel action, but these remain largely reactive (insofar as they revolve around contesting or co-opting existing local power coalitions) and do not seek to transform wider patterns of investment or engagement with poor communities (von Holdt et al. 2011). This form of ‘insurgent citizenship’ is therefore limited in its ability to convert dissatisfaction and community involvement into a wider set of demands that can shape the development patterns across a particular municipality (von Holdt et al. 2011: 32). To do this, communities need the opportunity and skills to cohere their demands into a format that can be inserted meaningfully into participatory governance processes (or activism targeted at politicians and technocrats).

Writing from an anarchist’s perspective on participatory planning in the Latin American experience, De Souza (2006: 335; original emphasis) outlines the danger of co-option through contact with state structures and processes. However, he continues:

Be that as it may: there is no reasonable alternative to involvement with institutionalized participatory channels—provided they are really consistent[,] the material and politico-pedagogical gains for the population can be substantial. The classical anarchist point of view (“direct action” despite and against the state, but never any kind of “partnership” with the state) does not seem to be very realistic nowadays [...] Taking part in institutionalized, state-led participatory processes is a “risky business”, and the more the ruling party (or parties) is efficient in providing effective participatory channels and forums, the bigger is the risk for social movements. However, it can be worth-while under certain conditions to combine institutional and “direct action” practices for tactical reasons: not only because of material gains (access to public funds, for instance), but also for political–pedagogical purposes (participatory arenas as “direct democracy schools”).

For De Souza, the key is who produces knowledge and how it influences the actions of the state and the wider society (De Souza 2006: 330):

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.

This requires new and creative thinking about the kinds of capabilities needed to engage in local governance processes (by both communities and the state) and the way in which these capabilities are built.

Therefore, a cross-cutting concern for both officials and communities is the building of the *métis* and *phronesis* needed to improve local democracy. What is needed is to (re-)claim the mixture of cunning intelligence and practical wisdom, rooted in the voices of marginalised communities, that enables on-going, robust engagements between stakeholders and looks to create opportunities for increased collaboration and the co-production of solutions. It is about assembling the technical skills (*episteme* + *techne*) required to tackle the practical problems facing communities, while ensuring that they are combined with local knowledge, political judgement, moral vision and emotional sensitivity to produce more strategic, equitable and sustainable

solutions. This requires new and creative thinking about the kinds of capabilities needed to engage in local governance processes (by both communities and the state) and the way in which these capabilities are built. Therefore, the notion of citizenship academies – as structured institutional spaces tasked with fostering communities of practice able to build this form of capability – should be re-examined.

WHAT WOULD A CITIZENSHIP ACADEMY DO?

In this paper, citizenship academies are conceptualised as deliberative and learning spaces initiated by a municipality in partnership with a local civil society or learning institution. The intention is to create structured spaces where community groups, civil society organisations, state officials, politicians and progressive professionals can be equipped with the relevant skills and information and have the opportunity to debate possible solutions to social and technical problems, thereby deepening their understanding of the motivations and positions of other stakeholders. In the short-term, the primary aim of such spaces is to produce individuals, from both within the state and in communities, who are able to function as system integrators – people who understand community dynamics and the state’s systems well enough to unlock additional opportunities and knit together existing initiatives. Over time these spaces are intended to produce communities of practice that have built

sufficient trust to enable the emergence of new forms of collaboration and coproduction.⁹

As described in the 2011 draft NDP, community members and civil society groups need to be given the opportunity to participate in ‘citizenship education and training to strengthen community organisation, planning and project management skills and competencies’ (The Presidency/NPC 2011: 258). One aspect of these spaces is their ability to build the skills and capacities needed to improve planning and management processes at neighbourhood level. The key to this is capacitated and engaged communities who are able to make meaningful inputs (or advance persuasive proposals) into the systems of governance to influence patterns of development, public infrastructure investment and the creation of local economic opportunities. Pieterse (2012) suggests that the key elements of such a skill set would be the ability to (1) conduct neighbourhood-level visioning and planning processes that are able to aggregate the voices and perspectives of communities; (2) prioritise and leverage (public) investment to operationalise these plans; (3) maintain, improve and grow the assets of neighbourhoods; and (4) ensure the accountability of the state and community representatives. Neighbourhood-level planning has the potential to both invigorate and focus the activity of communities, enabling them to organise and satisfy their own needs (‘beyond the state’, to use Mitlin’s (2008) term) while simultaneously strengthening their ability to engage meaningfully with local democratic ‘invited spaces’.¹⁰

Community members can receive training in a range of practical skills – a “curriculum” of community-based planning tools, democratic accountability mechanisms and strategies (e.g. budgetary oversight), and organisational/project management skills. As previous *State of Local Government* publications show, many NGOs across South Africa have past and current experience with equipping communities with these

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skills. An aspect of this skill set that perhaps remains under-explored in South Africa is the cultivation of “spatial literacy” among community members and civil society groups. This essential element allows the integration in space of different fields of knowledge and priority-setting processes, thereby revealing any implied complementarities and trade-offs. These skills are an important part of building the legitimacy of such spaces in the eyes of community members. Participants from impoverished or marginalised communities are provided with practical and transferable skills that simultaneously strengthen their ability to play enhanced leadership roles within their community. Linking these individuals and their newly acquired skills to an expansion of the CWP (as proposed in Chapter 1) could be the backbone of a substantive shift in democratising the investment of state resources in these communities.

However, as explored in the previous section, the focus on skills is primarily concerned with increasing the *techne* of communities. The second element of these spaces is their potential to deepen the ability of citizens and officials to engage with the complexities, trade-offs and complementarities revealed by neighbourhood-level planning and management. Beyond offering communities the kind of curriculum that can strengthen their ability to self-organise and interact with the state, these spaces will offer structured learning forums in which community members can interact with state officials to identify recurring or crosscutting issues in their communities and begin to debate potential solutions. While establishing a track record of “quick wins” is an important part of strengthening the legitimacy of such learning forums, the emphasis would remain on negotiating and experimenting, to try and identify creative ways to break deadlocks, explicitly balance different priorities or sets of rights, and identify opportunities for the coproduction of individual and collective ‘goods’ (Mitlin 2008). The cultivation of cunning intelligence and practical wisdom requires

While establishing a track record of “quick wins” is an important part of strengthening the legitimacy of such learning forums, the emphasis would remain on negotiating and experimenting, to try and identify creative ways to break deadlocks, explicitly balance different priorities or sets of rights, and identify opportunities for the coproduction of individual and collective ‘goods’ (Mitlin 2008).

individuals from different stakeholder groups to work closely with one another over a period of time. Some of the features of and strategies for establishing spaces intended to foster communities of practice have been explored in the context of ‘networked spaces’ and ‘planning for informality forums’ (Görgens and van Donk 2011b; Masiko-Kambala et al. 2012; Isandla Institute 2012). Essentially, it is about citizenship as becoming – citizenship is expressed and developed in the iterative process of engagement, experimentation, reflection and learning.

THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CITIZENSHIP ACADEMIES

The size, scope and spatial scale of citizenship academies depend largely on the resources, size and existing participatory institutions within a particular municipality. Therefore, some key issues will need to be addressed in the roll-out of citizenship academies.

This paper supports the 2011 draft NDP’s suggestion that these spaces be publicly financed¹¹ but managed by NGOs or learning institutions. While these spaces should have the clear backing of the state, their independence from the state would go a long way to strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of communities and ensure that bureaucratic concerns do not overtake the curriculum and learning forums. The priorities and focus of the bureaucracy has a tendency to be deeply influenced by short-term demands (such as those created by politicians or institutionalised processes/

cycles). The bureaucracy in South Africa also suffers from a ‘compliance culture’ that favours the most narrow and least complex interpretation of a particular mandate (van Donk 2012). Both of these militate against the ability of state institutions to create spaces that will facilitate the kind of deliberation and collaboration that will produce communities of practice as outlined above. However, the on-going ambiguous attitude displayed by politicians and state officials towards civil society needs to be acknowledged, particularly where these organisations seek to play a role beyond that of augmenting of service delivery (Reitzes 2010; Görgens and van Donk 2011a). A serious threat to the successful implementation of such spaces is the explicit or implicit reservations that politicians and officials may have about the (local) state funding the strengthening of voices of/ within civil society and poor communities. Such forums may be perceived to ‘make their lives harder’ or dilute the power that is currently highly concentrated within the closed circuits of party politics and technocracy (van Donk 2012).

on ‘networked spaces’ (Masiko-Kambala et al. 2012), such processes need to be explicitly designed to identify and account for power relations/imbances within communities and between stakeholder groups. This potentially places NGOs/learning institutions in a difficult position if they are required to exert their independence (e.g. selecting a community leader other than the local, politically connected choice to be a participant) when a political authority (such as the city council or mayoral committee) is likely to hold the purse strings. Nonetheless, this reinforces the argument for such processes being held by an institution that is less susceptible to political influence and more likely to take a principled position when navigating such complex situations.

As noted above, citizenship academies are also intended to strengthen existing structures of governance (such as ward committees). The skills and knowledge base produced by these spaces should enrich and produce nuanced thought that informs planning and decision-making that informs other government planning and decision-making, such as Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Another possible threat to the successful implementation of such spaces is that they will create resourced opportunities for leaders within poor communities to cultivate new skills and build alliances with other stakeholder groups. This may result in ward councillors and communities perceiving these spaces as a second “centre of power” that either breeds political rivals or facilitates community agitation and dissatisfaction. Therefore, an integrated strategy for the roll-out of citizenship academies into a particular municipality should include awareness-raising processes about the benefits of such spaces to all stakeholder groups (particularly targeting the buy-in of councillors) and the explicit identification of opportunities for existing planning processes and governance structures to learn from the priorities, trade-offs and potential solutions being explored in these

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The danger is that such spaces become sites for elite capture because those who already hold power in communities are best able to access and dominate the spaces and/or because community leaders who benefit from these spaces cannot be held accountable to/by their communities. Yet these dangers are not unique to these spaces (Cornwall 2008) and are a further motivation for their facilitation by external entities, such as NGOs. As described in previous work

spaces. For example, affected ward committees and councillors need to review successful neighbourhood-level processes of planning, which also feed into city level planning (such as IDPs etc.).

CONCLUSION

Recent policy and political signals suggest a window of opportunity to address problems with the quality of democracy and governance in the country. The imperative to place the agency of citizens at the heart of development has now received significant political and technocratic backing. New and innovative strategies and practical wisdom are called for that can address the fault lines in the system, which will help curtail the high levels of dissatisfaction in communities.

This paper advances the notion of citizenship academies and argues for their establishment across the country. These institutions will enable communities of practice to emerge among officials, community groups and other stakeholders that are able to collaborate on producing more socially relevant and sustainable solutions to jointly identified problems. The concept of citizenship academies is markedly different from current state-created institutions because it combines an interest in the hard and soft skills required to influence change with a focus on the local knowledge and priorities of local communities in South Africa. Citizenship academies offer an opportunity to entrench the notion of “citizenship as becoming”, simultaneously enabling learning by doing and learning by deliberation.

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NOTES

- ¹ See, among others, AGSA (Auditor-General of South Africa) (2012) *Consolidated General Report on the Audit Outcomes of Local Government 2010/2011*. Pretoria: AGSA; National Treasury (2011) *2011 Local Government Budgets and Expenditure Review*. Pretoria: National Treasury; CoGTA (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) (2009) *State of Local Government in South Africa*. Pretoria: CoGTA; CoGTA (2009) *Local Government Turnaround Strategy*. Pretoria: CoGTA.
- ² See CoGTA (2009) *State of Local Government in South Africa*. Pretoria: CoGTA.
- ³ See (among others) ANC (2012) *4th National Policy Conference Recommendations* and The Presidency (2012) *Mid- Term Review of the Priorities of Government*. Pretoria: Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency.
- ⁴ The programme was initiated as a result of acute service delivery problems between 1994 and 2004 which was highlighted in a number of government reports. See also paper by Geber H and Motlale B (2008) *Community Development Workers Programme: Mentoring for Social Transformation in the Public Service in Post-apartheid South Africa*. Johannesburg: Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development, University of Johannesburg.
- ⁵ See also Evaluation of the Community Development Worker Programme (2005) conducted by the Human Science Research Council on behalf of the South African Management Development Institute. http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-19450.phtml. Retrieved 12 December 2012.
- ⁶ See International Labour Organisation. (nd) *Public Employment in South Africa: Innovation in the Community Works Programme*. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/presentation/wcms_175275.pdf. Retrieved 12 December 2012.
Also see TIPS (Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies) (2008). *Review of the Community Work Programme*. <http://www.tips.org.za/event/review-community-work-programme>. Retrieved 12 December 2012.
- ⁷ Their extended definition is 'that *metis* is a type of intelligence and of thought, a way of knowing; it implies a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behaviour which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years. It is applied to situations which are transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation or rigorous logic.' (D tienne and Vernant 1991: 3-4)
- ⁸ Praxis here refers to the cycle of applying theory or a set of ideas to practice with the intention of further refining and improving both the theory and the practice.
- ⁹ The essential ingredients of which are explored using the notion of 'networked spaces' in Masiko-Kambala et al. (2012).
- ¹⁰ A conceptual term used in previous editions of the SoLG to refer to formal state-created spaces for citizen engagement such as ward committees or IDP forums.
- ¹¹ Ideally this would occur through the creation of a specific grant administered by CoGTA that is made available to municipalities. However, the Municipal Systems Act provides a persuasive rationale that such spaces should be created irrespective of the provision of resources from national government. Flexible grants such as the Urban Settlements Development Grant provide additional opportunities to resource such spaces.



THE “UNDERBELLY” OF “ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP”: AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF A PROJECT FACILITATING PARTICIPATION IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

By Simon Sizwe Mayson, PLANACT

The concept of “active citizenship”, in particular as applied to the sphere of community development, has gained much currency in community discourse and practice ... This is perhaps not surprising. Enveloped in wholesomely positive values such as cooperation, cohesion, caring and neighbourliness, and evoking heart-warming ideals of belonging and solidarity, the idea appears all at once virtuous, worthy and highly seductive (Gaynor 2011: 28).



PHOTO: JOSEPH MAYSON

THE TERM “active citizenship” became somewhat of a buzzword in the last two decades (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). We are encouraged to be “active citizens” from all angles – the NGO sector, government and the media. Volumes have been written on the subject. Yet the term remains ambiguous at best; a wildcard drawn to suit the aims of the player at the time. Despite the lack of

clarity, the concept continues to enjoy a positive rapport in general, no matter the context in which it is used. However, what actions constitute active citizenship? Is it about community members taking initiative, raising popular support and challenging government? Does it matter how active citizenship takes place, and if so, how? Is it always helpful in addressing the needs

of the majority of residents in an area? Or can it be manipulated to further the desires of a select few? Without being clear on what “active citizenship” entails, and the roles and responsibilities involved, it can backfire both for community members at large and the organisations working with them.

Since the founding of the organisation in 1985, Planact has been promoting a form of “active citizenship” – participatory governance – and has developed innovative participatory mechanisms, from community-based planning to participatory budgeting, organisational development training and specialised support of local community-based organisations (CBOs). Planact essentially aspires to empower people to be active citizens who are able to achieve the integrated human settlements they desire, based on informed and collective decision-making for the benefit of all community members. This approach has been executed in Eryka, which is located around 30 kilometres from central Johannesburg.¹ Eryka seems to enjoy a high degree of active citizenship, where strong community leaders take initiative by campaigning for basic services, better healthcare, the upgrading of the road infrastructure and for greater participation in governance and decision-making. Active citizens utilise a variety of means of participation and are clear about their rights to real consultation, going so far as to take the City of Johannesburg to court when they felt they were not sufficiently consulted over relocation plans.

This paper takes a more sceptical look at leaders’ actions in Eryka that, at face value, could easily be confused with “active citizenship” for the public interest of “the community”. It seems self-interest motivates leaders’ actions all too often (Gaynor 2011: 28). After providing a background to the concept of active citizenship and the project site, the paper traces the saga of events linked to Planact’s work that unfolded over the course of the year. While each

event is a representation of active citizenship, an interpretative analysis reveals what could be seen as the “underbelly”. Finally, it outlines some ideas on how NGOs could deal better with the more opportunistic aspects of active citizenship, based on Planact’s work in other projects.²

THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: IS THERE A DARK SIDE?

The traditional understanding of citizenship is that of the official ‘citizenship-as-legal-status’ – full membership in a particular political community (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). However, particularly in the last two decades, writers began emphasising ‘*citizenship-as-desirable-activity*’, where the extent and quality of one’s citizenship is a function of participation in that community’ (Kymlicka and Norman 1994: 335). When people are active citizens, they ‘participate in the governance of their countries in a direct manner’ (Murray et al. 2010: 45). Contemporary discourse regards active citizenship as encompassing social, economic and cultural rights, as well as responsibilities, and incorporates the idea that, from the level of an individual to the level of a community, citizens will play an active role in shaping their own rights and responsibilities (Murray et al. 2010; Cornwall and Gaventa 2001).

The South African government has attempted, through for example the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000), to legislate opportunities for active citizenship to play a role in defining development at a local level. On a broader scale, community-driven development has become the World Bank’s

On a broader scale, community-driven development has become the World Bank’s fastest growing strategy for delivering development assistance (Dasgupta and Beard 2007).

fastest growing strategy for delivering development assistance (Dasgupta and Beard 2007). Thus, there seems to be greater potential for local residents to have control over development processes that affect them. However, while many authors advocate the concept (Hordijk 2005; Koonings 2004; Murray et al. 2010), only a select few examine the more sinister motives that can underpin the actions of active citizenship. Baiocchi (2003: 52) notes that ‘the idea of participation of this sort often evokes romantic images of virtuous citizens engaged in selfless discussions that may not reflect the conflict inherent in such exchanges’.

Competition among community based organizations and other popular movements for access to scarce development resources and power is a major constraint preventing proper participation. Most civic and political movements are well aware that development, for which they can claim responsibility, will boost their support base; therefore, they have an incentive to discourage processes for which they cannot claim sole credit (Botes and van Rensburg 2000: 48).

Stage by stage (as discussed below), Planact became aware that it was this competition for power – organisation and individual – that formed the backdrop to many endeavours that the organisation had supported as examples of “active citizenship”. It is the opportunistic and opposing nature of these deeds that frustrated any real progress in its project work, requiring Planact to rethink its involvement in the area.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT LOCATION

Eryka, as a broader area, is characterised by a long history of contestation over land and housing. The area was originally occupied by around 160 families, who were then removed to other areas under the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950). Their brick houses remained, and dispossessed African families were then accommodated in these houses. From the mid-1980s, homeless people began making their homes in the open spaces and between the brick buildings. The number of people increased over the years, and Eryka is currently home to around 6 200 households (Maluleke 2006).³

The informal settlement was earmarked for major upgrading in the early 2000s, and plans to build 1 600 homes were advertised to the community. However, in 2006 the release of geotechnical reports, which detailed the extent of the underlying dolomite, put a halt to development of low-income housing. Government switched instead to a policy of relocation – a controversial move, as many residents claimed the City was simply trying to shift poorer residents off the land in order to sell it to developers. Furthermore, the area of relocation was felt to be more poorly located with regard to work, shops and public facilities (Landless People’s Movement 2009).

Johannesburg’s outward sprawl has meant that Eryka has become relatively well located in terms of income-generating opportunities. It borders a light industrial and consolidated retail hub, is near to public amenities including schools, has well-maintained parks and a clinic, and lies directly along a Rea Vaya bus rapid transport as well as bus and taxi routes. For several years, certain residents, particularly from the informal settlement, have been demanding a detailed investigation into the dolomite issue and the feasibility of in-situ upgrading, and it is these residents that Planact has been assisting, along with a legal firm.

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In the interim period, the residents are advocating for emergency services to be rolled out and, although the area enjoys the facilities mentioned above, the informal settlement has been neglected. As many as 85% of shack-dwellers do not have electricity. The roads running through these areas are in a terrible condition and, except for those lying along the bonded houses, are of gravel or sand and are subject to seasonal flooding. Only chemical toilets are provided, and even these are far too few for the number of residents. There is limited provision of potable water. Planact has been involved in Eryka as part of our programme of strengthening community participation in informal settlement upgrading.

There is representation from a wide variety of political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA) and National Freedom Party, as well as social movements such as the Informal Settlements Network (ISN) and Landless People's Movement (LPM). These organisations share almost identical aims, which are focused mostly on informal settlement upgrading, including electricity and water supply, roads, toilets, lighting, healthcare and houses. However, development in Eryka has virtually stalled. The lack of progress is often blamed on government not listening to "the community" or responding to their demands. This may be true to some extent, but Planact's on-going work within the area has revealed additional dynamics at play. What can seem like positive active citizenship can in fact be the outward appearance of a complex melee, drawing in competing political parties and "non-political" social movements, city departments and NGOs.

PLANACT'S INVOLVEMENT IN ERYKA

Generally Planact's entry point into communities is via existing structures that approach it with a certain request. In the case of Eryka, the local branch of the

It is the competition between these organisations that forms the backdrop to the acts of active citizenship explored in this paper. Conflict arose between the new LPM and DA structures and, at the beginning of 2012, Doreen called in Planact to act as mediator.

LPM initiated Planact's involvement. Headed at the time by Doreen Magadla, one of Eryka's most active citizens, the LPM took the City of Johannesburg to court in 2008. Supported by a top legal firm, Magadla and others argued against the evictions and relocations that the City of Johannesburg was attempting, and instead pushed for in-situ upgrading in the area. The LPM claimed that there had been insufficient consultation, and demanded that the City release its development plans for the area. The court found in favour of the Eryka residents and, while not able to secure rights to permanent upgrading for residents due to the presence of dolomite, ordered the rollout of emergency services in the area. Furthermore, the City was required to engage in meaningful consultation with residents. Although Planact had been generally involved in the area for years, in 2008, Doreen made a specific request to facilitate more effective public participation as part of these processes.

Doreen, who could be considered as the main organiser within Eryka as a whole, had her first real engagement with community mobilisation when she founded the Eryka ANC branch in 1995 (Sinwell 2011). In 2002 she left the ANC and founded the LPM branch, becoming provincial coordinator. Then in May 2011 Doreen ran for the local elections as ward councillor, under the banner of the DA. She did not win the position but was made PR councillor (Sinwell 2011). Throughout this progression, from political party to social movement in opposition, to another political party in opposition, Doreen has been supported by largely the same core group of people who have

moved with her between organisations. In the switch from LPM to DA, many of her supporters joined ranks with the DA, leaving an interim committee elected to run the LPM. It is the competition between these organisations that forms the backdrop to the acts of active citizenship explored in this paper. Conflict arose between the new LPM and DA structures and, at the beginning of 2012, Doreen called in Planact to act as mediator.

THE SAGA AND AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS

This section traces the saga that evolved from Planact's involvement in Eryka over the course of 2012, demonstrating some of the issues NGOs can face when supporting active citizenship. Planact's own interpretation of events, explored within each stage, is captured below.



Figure 1: The four stages of the saga

STAGE 1: PLANACT REQUESTED TO ASSIST IN CONFLICT MEDIATION

LPM had released a press statement about Doreen in November 2011, accusing her of corruption, mismanagement and authoritarianism, while members of the DA responded with counter-allegations. Doreen notified Planact of the conflict at the start of 2012 and

requested its assistance as an independent mediator. It was thought that the main issue here was that Doreen had absconded to a non-ANC-aligned movement. Planact held a conflict resolution workshop in the neutral venue of its offices, and the day ended with both groups singing struggle songs and agreeing wholeheartedly to work together again. Various participants emphasised that being a member of a political party did not mean that you could not also be a member of a social movement, and vice versa.

Interpretative analysis: Doreen's original followers were placed in an interesting position when Doreen formed the local branch of the DA. LPM members officially remained LPM members, as it is a social movement, but were simultaneously DA members, i.e. members of a political party. Doreen had a reputation as an active citizen, i.e. someone that was able to successfully represent residents' rights and utilise various means of participation, even securing a lawyer to take the City to court. Without Doreen's reputation to lend legitimacy to the LPM's name, the interim leadership structure that replaced her struggled to retain active members or gain sufficient audiences at mass meetings. Previously, Eryka residents had come because Doreen called, not when the LPM called. The LPM therefore resorted to trying to discredit Doreen as an active citizen. This, and other actions, placed some threat, however small, to Doreen's reputation as an active citizen fighting for the interests of the community, and she called in Planact with the intention of quelling the dissenting voices.

STAGE 2: PLANACT REQUESTED TO FACILITATE AN IDP PROPOSAL PROCESS

Soon after, Doreen made another request. She claimed that Eryka had been bypassed in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) consultation process and requested that Planact assist the community in drawing up an IDP proposal, so that their needs would feature

in the 2012/13 IDP. Planact felt that this was without question a clear example of active citizenship and, furthermore, fitted within its mandate of advancing participation within informal settlement upgrading.

Consulting with residents, and drawing on preliminary findings from its broader fieldwork in the area, Planact drew up a draft IDP proposal highlighting the desperate need for emergency services in the area. Volunteers then took this proposal door-to-door around Eryka for comment, and Planact convened a mass meeting in Eryka where the proposal was widely disseminated. Community feedback generated three main priorities: 1) electricity provision for all residents, 2) better sanitation facilities, and 3) road stabilisation of all mobility roads.⁴ After consulting about the best means to submit a proposal of this nature, a Planact representative and four Eryka residents submitted the document to the City, backed by over 400 signatures in the form of a petition.

Interpretative analysis: This undertaking seemed a straightforward demonstration of active citizenship, in the interest of all residents of Eryka informal settlement. However, Planact soon learnt that this was in many ways an illusion. In fact it formed part of a complex pattern of using active citizenship in state-organised participation forums and independent initiatives to gain support and power for certain factions within the political melee of Eryka.

The ward councillor had invited the deputy chair of the new LPM structure to official IDP consultations for the first time in the history of the branch. Although the LPM was somewhat ANC-aligned, in Eryka, Doreen represented the ANC ward councillor's only real threat. After all, if Doreen was more effective than the ward councillor in securing development, then what would be the councillor's role? The ward councillor wished to exclude Doreen from avenues of participation that could further build her reputation.

With Doreen stepping down as leader of the LPM to start a branch of the DA and the new LPM beginning to come into conflict with her, the ward councillor saw an ally in the LPM. She therefore invited the LPM deputy chair into the official sphere of active citizenship – government's legitimated participatory processes. LPM members, in turn, saw the potential of using this opportunity to validate their presence within Eryka with the insider information and promise of development that active citizenship in government processes brings. Excluded from this opportunity, Doreen countered by drawing Planact in (unbeknown to it), to set up a competing, parallel process in the form of an "independent" IDP proposal. By structuring the proposal as a petition, we made use of a separate government participation process that is equally as legitimate within government structures and is, in fact, possibly more effective when dealing with the local scale.

STAGE 3: LPM ACCUSES PLANACT OF BEING AGAINST "THE COMMUNITY"

Immediately after this process, the new leadership began accusing Planact in various forums of being politically biased, supporting a political party rather than a non-political social movement and in so doing working against the community's desires for development.⁵ As the weeks progressed, the LPM began claiming that Planact was supporting Doreen in petitioning for the development of bonded houses (for sale on the open market). Up until this point, no objections had been raised, despite public announcements about the different meetings and consultations. Furthermore, Doreen and all others at the workshop explicitly told Planact that there had been no official IDP consultation process from the City's side. However, from an outsider's perspective, LPM's accusations could easily be seen as legitimate attempts to protect the Eryka community's rights from political corruption.

Interpretative analysis: Following Planact’s mediation intervention (Stage 1), the active citizens from both DA and LPM had declared themselves to be re-united, working toward identical development goals. Planact had assisted Doreen’s initiative, which unbeknown to us had been set up in competition with the ward councillor’s/LPM’s process. With the backing of an external power in the form of Planact, this came across as a stronger, more tangible and thus more powerful promise of development, usurping LPM’s attempt. Our process resulted in the same development priorities being highlighted. However, as raised by Botes and van Rensburg (2000: 48), in spaces of competition such as this, the incentive for active citizens is to discourage initiatives that they ‘cannot claim sole credit for’. Members of LPM started playing on people’s fears and lack of real knowledge of government processes by spreading rumours that Doreen was actually planning development that went completely against the majority’s desires for development in the area.

STAGE 4: PLANACT REQUESTED TO FACILITATE A REPORT-BACK ON THE RELOCATIONS CASE

During this period, Planact met with the LPM leadership on multiple occasions, with the purpose of mediating the conflict. One of the resolutions of the final meeting was that Planact would organise for the lawyer to report back on the current status of the case regarding relocations in Eryka.⁶ As per Planact’s policy, because LPM had put forward this request, LPM members announced the meeting to residents. Before Planact

could relate the details of the case, Doreen’s close supporters asked to be heard by the crowd and, seemingly unrelated to the agenda, raised the point that Doreen had been the one to start the LPM in Eryka, to arrange for the services of the lawyer, and to call Planact in. After over an hour, we managed to get the meeting back on track but midway into the lawyer’s report, another supporter raised a point of concern. Apparently the deputy chair of the LPM had attended an IDP consultation at the City, and Doreen claimed to have official minutes to prove he had spoken in favour of the relocations. This again caused strong discord, which was resolved only by a call to hold another meeting to deal with the concern.

Interpretative analysis: Accusing the LPM deputy chair of misrepresenting Eryka’s real development needs was a tactic almost identical to the accusations of bonded houses (Stage 3). At face value, it could be seen as a legitimate concern for the well-being of Eryka’s informal settlement residents. However, as usual, the underbelly of active citizenship was lurking.

The court case had been capitalised upon by Doreen as a “land victory”, which, although won by Eryka residents, was not in any way an outright victory over the land, but rather the requirement for greater “participation” in the decision-making process regarding the land. The lawyer’s report could make it evident to residents that they had not actually “won” the land. This meant that the stature Doreen had gained as a successful active citizen because of the “victory” could be thrown into disrepute. The “hijacking” of the meeting by Doreen’s close allies could therefore be seen as an attempt if not to completely derail the meeting but to distract people from this conclusion. As Baiocchi (2003) describes in his study of budgeting assemblies in Porto Alegre, Brazil, public meetings like these can serve as a staging ground for some participants to manage their reputations.

Before Planact could relate the details of the case, Doreen’s close supporters asked to be heard by the crowd and, seemingly unrelated to the agenda, raised the point that Doreen had been the one to start the LPM in Eryka, to arrange for the services of the lawyer, and to call Planact in.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENT GAINS AFFIRMING YOUR STATUS AS AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

During Planact's fieldwork, it became clear that Doreen and the ward councillor were seen as the two main active citizens in the area. When people were questioned as to why they supported the ward councillor, the answer was inevitably, 'because she gives us houses'. With regard to Doreen, it was usually, 'because she fought for our land and development in Eryka'. Doreen also put a violent stop to the stabilisation of roads in the area when the ward councillor took the credit for it, claiming lack of participation and consultation of the community. This is similar to the action described by Baiocchi (2003: 53) of one community member accusing another of having a politician build it 'as a favour' and disrespecting the 'will of the community' at large. However, other individuals within Eryka are also recognised as active citizens.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE ACTIVE CITIZEN?

Being recognised as an active citizen, particularly in areas where there is a dire need of development, brings power, which has the potential to bring wealth. You are guaranteed the status of an active citizen if you demonstrate that you have access to government-condoned participation processes that promise development, or to external authorities that lend legitimacy to your efforts; and, even more so, if you are able to demonstrate the fruits of this by visibly attaching your name to any development that occurs. This status draws popular support and, in South African contemporary democracy, has the potential to attract votes. Attracting votes means you are able to gain a government-secured position of participation. In Eryka, the ward councillor presides as the chair and gatekeeper of government-initiated participation processes and, as

This status draws popular support and, in South African contemporary democracy, has the potential to attract votes. Attracting votes means you are able to gain a government-secured position of participation.

the area's "first citizen", can play a much larger role in defining development according to how they may want it to happen (Botes and van Rensburg 2000).

In the capitalist democracy of South Africa, holding political title also brings financial gain. For instance, full-time ward councillors earn an annual package of between R280,000 and R542,000, depending on the type of municipality they serve (Masondo 2011). It also has the potential to bring financial gain in other ways. Using your influence as a favour to someone can easily mean the favour is returned in a form of "clientelism" (Bénil-Gbaffou and Piper 2012).

But what if a citizen or group is not officially politically aligned, as in the case of a social movement such as LPM? In an informal settlement context, where there is intensive competition for scarce resources, active citizens can 'monopolise the information channels between the slum residents and the agencies' (Botes and van Rensburg 2000: 49), even with organisations such as Planact. Popularly recognised active citizens can enjoy the privileges of a local elite and are able to maintain this by effectively thwarting attempts to deal directly with beneficiaries (Botes and van Rensburg 2000). This again has the possibility of development decisions that favour themselves or their patrons. After all, 'the centre is where the honey is – the further away you are, the less you're going to have' (Mike Makwela 2012, pers. comm.). Claiming non-political alignment, such as in the case of LPM, allows social movements to use "non-aligned" NGOs to support their cause – something that political parties are not able to enjoy.

Here it can easily translate once more into financial advantages. LPM's major drive in 2012 has been to gain membership (which holds financial incentives), but they have been really struggling. With established active citizen Doreen stepping down from her role as chair and shifting the primary allegiance of her supporters to another group, the new LPM leadership had to establish *themselves* as active citizens. Riding on the success of the court case and general achievements of the LPM of the past did not work. People seemed to associate those achievements not with the organisation, but with the active citizen who so visibly headed it. Seemingly lacking the strategy to create new initiatives, most of their interventions seemed to be about trying to gain credit by *discrediting* Doreen's initiatives. This can then result in development stalling in the community.

However, in Eryka the ANC and its aligned groupings at the time refused to attend CDC preparatory meetings, which they possibly saw as an opportunity to undermine their dominance in the area.

Another option is to call for independent proposals for assistance, recognising that these come from individuals, rather than structures, and are judged on merit, based on the NGO's understanding of the public interest in the area as well as its own mandate and capabilities. However, not working with existing structures can seriously endanger the sustainability of a project after the NGO leaves.

Developing participatory governance capacity in terms of participation and how development operates ensures that the knowledge does not sit only with the active citizens. The power granted to active citizens is linked a lot to the ability to be "in the know", as a result of participation and linkages to government.

One of the key aspects that need to be strengthened before and during any intervention by an NGO, so as to avoid unintentionally supporting the underbelly of active citizenship, is comprehensive research, particularly regarding power relations within the community. The understanding gained needs to inform any decision-making, particularly who to work with and how. NGOs need to demonstrate to those they work with that they are aware of their status as outsiders and the potential impact of their involvement on communities (Botes and van Rensburg 2000).

CONCLUSION

This paper looked at the not so "virtuous" or "worthy" aspects (Gaynor 2011: 28) that can be entangled in the intentions behind active citizenship. It showed how these aspects are often linked to the reputation gained from the promise of development and knowledge of government and other participatory mechanisms. In turn, the competing claims on development among active citizens can result in working *against* the

Another option is to call for independent proposals for assistance, recognising that these come from individuals, rather than structures, and are judged on merit, based on the NGO's understanding of the public interest in the area as well as its own mandate and capabilities.

HOW DOES AN NGO RESPOND TO THE UNDERBELLY OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?

What should the role of the NGO be in such a situation? How do NGOs deal with the power inherent in these structures and, more importantly, in the individual active citizens who head up the structures? In addition, how does one deal with situations where statements from two competing sides are impossible to match? One model Planact uses to encourage active citizenship is the Community Development Committee (CDC). Representatives are elected from each representative group in equal proportion, under the common goal of securing development in the public interest in the area.

development goals the active citizen claims to be promoting.

Politicians and community leaders follow both personal and community agendas – always (Matlala and Bénit-Gbaffou 2012). However, problems arise when they sacrifice community or developmental agendas for their personal battles. In all initiatives, NGO actors need to be deeply cognisant, even sceptical, of the undercurrents below the visible lines of power and conflict. A reflective and on-going type of monitoring and evaluation needs to underpin action, however small; often this is more effectively achieved through informal means. Furthermore, capacity

building should take place to empower all residents of the project area to become active citizens, therefore delinking in some way the power associated with the leader of the local partner CBO. One does not have to be a public figure to be an active citizen. Finally, much of this paper was based on an interpretative analysis, derived from discussions with various Eryka leaders and residents, and debated between colleagues. However, it may easily be off the mark. If we are able to promote a critical consciousness for all residents, people will be more able to decide for *themselves* what the true intentions are behind an action of active citizenship.

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NOTES

- ¹ All names, including place names, have been changed in order to protect the identity of the community and individual residents from the potentially inflammatory material explored in this paper, in terms of taking the court case further, relationships to other organisations and reputations within the community
- ² This paper stems primarily from my observations and discussions with community members from March to September 2012, when I co-ordinated Planact's Eryka project. I was also guided by reflections from people who assisted me during the different stages of the project and brainstorming/advisory sessions with Planact's project team and external advisors.
- ³ In order to retain anonymity of settlement, full details of the reference are not provided for in this paper. Please contact author at ssmayson@gmail.com for further details, if required.
- ⁴ Although recognised as being the first priority, for the moment land rights and the construction of adequate housing were not an option, due to the on-going discussions regarding dolomite.
- ⁵ The concepts of "the community" and "non-political" are heavily contested. Although beyond the scope of this paper, the use of inverted commas for these terms indicates Planact's awareness of the usage by groups to lend legitimacy to their cause.
- ⁶ We had previously organised for dolomite information sessions with different leaders from Eryka, which had altered their perspective on development likely in the immediate term.



RECLAIMING POWER: A CASE STUDY OF THE THEMBELIHLE CRISIS COMMITTEE

By: Thapelo Tselapedi and Jackie Dugard, Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)

In 1992, the apartheid government conducted a geo-technical study, which found that the Thembelihle informal settlement to the south-west of the City of Johannesburg was built on dolomitic rock. The study recommended that all residents be located to a nearby area. However, the community resisted relocation and rejected the recommendations of both the 1992 report (for not being participatory) and a 1998 study that largely confirmed the 1992 report. Ten years later, worn down by the years of resistance, many of the residents finally agreed to be relocated to nearby Vlakfontein and Lehae. Their place was taken by backyard dwellers from the surrounding townships who occupied the vacant land made available by the relocations.



PHOTO: CENTRE FOR APPLIED LEGAL STUDIES (CALS)

NOTWITHSTANDING THE capitulation of some residents, the Thembelihle story provides valuable insight into the dynamics of community struggles in post-apartheid South Africa. Led by the Thembelihle Crisis Committee (TCC), the struggle to compel the city to consult with the community over its development plans in the area, to re-consider the recommendations of multiple geo-technical reports to relocate the

community, and to conduct a full and comprehensive report of the area, offers an illuminating case of active citizenship in contemporary South Africa.

This paper highlights the strategies and tactics pursued by the TCC in its attempts to upgrade Thembelihle informal settlement and more generally uplift the community. It looks at the organisation's long-standing struggle for the in-situ upgrading of

The TCC has always viewed itself as playing a broad local development role, beyond the issues of relocation and electrification. Resistance to the relocation was always tied to attempts to get the city to electrify the settlement.

the settlement and the impact of informal and formal engagements with the city on Thembelihle's local development. It also examines some of the tensions and difficulties encountered by the TCC in representing the interests of the community. The paper thus sheds light on the realities and complexities of attempts by poor communities – particularly those living in informal settlements – to actively engage an increasingly remote and fractured state. To a large extent, the TCC experience exemplifies the growing disconnect between the country's constitutional demands and the dominant political culture.

AN OVERVIEW OF THEMBELIHLE INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

Located in the south of Johannesburg, in region G, ward 8, Thembelihle informal settlement is one of the City of Johannesburg's 22 protest hotspots.¹ The settlement, which was known in the 1980s as Esigangeni ("in the bush" in IsiZulu), is situated in Lenasia, a formerly Indian community. It was formed in the mid-1980s 'by (mainly Sotho-speaking) people working in a brick making company where SA Block is today' (Bovu interview 2012).² Although Thembelihle is located far from the economic opportunities of the City of Johannesburg, residents are able to leverage some of the economic benefits offered by the suburban area of Lenasia.

The settlement is 'partially regularised and serviced' (Wilson 2005) and is congested, with households said to number 7000 (Bayzer interview 2012)³ or 8000, according to Webber Wentzel, the law firm that has most often worked with Thembelihle residents (Hathorn 2007). As the land has not been proclaimed a settlement,

the city's electricity distributor, City Power, has not installed electricity in the area, and unlawful electricity connections abound (Ndarala interview 2012).⁴ Moreover, the settlement is located on dolomitic land, 'which is prone to ground movement and can form sinkholes'.⁵ Since 1992 the city has wanted to relocate Thembelihle's residents and, in 2002, declared the area unsuitable for human settlement. The issue of dolomite and the attempt to relocate the Thembelihle community form the backdrop to the formation of the TCC and its active engagement with the state.

THE FORMATION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TCC

The TCC is a membership-based organisation that claims to represent the collective interests of Thembelihle residents. The leadership, comprising ten members, is elected by the residents of Thembelihle at annual general meetings. The organisation was formed in 2001, a year prior to the City of Johannesburg's formal decision to relocate all Thembelihle residents because the settlement was located on dolomitic rock. According to Siphwe Segodi, a leader in the TCC, the organisation leads 'the struggle in resisting the forced removal of the entire informal settlement'.⁶

The TCC has always viewed itself as playing a broad local development role, beyond the issues of relocation and electrification. Resistance to the relocation was always tied to attempts to get the city to electrify the settlement. Indeed, the TCC became aware of the dolomite issue and the plans to relocate residents through initial engagements with City Power over electrification of the settlement. In addition, the TCC mobilises for improved access to water and sanitation, and assists local children to access schools in Lenasia, which are considered better than those in Thembelihle. The perception among Thembelihle residents is that the largely Indian community in Lenasia tries to control access to Lenasia's schools and resists registering black

children (Dugard et al. 2006). The TCC also recently started a funeral scheme in response to the high number of deaths in the community but has not yet rolled out this scheme. Moreover, the TCC is concerned with the high level of crime in the area and, to this end, participates in the ward committee and the Community Policing Forum.

Notwithstanding these increasing roles and objectives over the years, at the core of the organisation's purpose has always been the city's plans to relocate the community. The section below examines the TCC's strategies and tactics to resist relocation, promote in-situ upgrading and more broadly achieve local development in Thembelihle.

EXAMINING THE TCC'S ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

From the outset, the TCC leadership has actively worked to re-negotiate the city's decision in 2002 to relocate the entire settlement, using a mixture of formal and informal tactics. In terms of formal channels, the TCC held discussions with City Power for the electrification of Thembelihle. This issue became particularly pressing after a shack fire killed an entire family a few years after the TCC was formed.⁷ However, the TCC was not successful in its attempts, as City Power did not want to connect an informal settlement to the electricity grid. In response, some community members resorted to unlawful electrical connections. The engagement also had far-reaching consequences, opening the community's eyes to a range of other problems such as a lack of adequate basic sanitation, water and housing. At the same time, some residents volunteered to relocate, tired of the city's decade-long intransigence over proclamation and attracted by the lure of better services in the relocated settlements. Nevertheless the TCC remained determined to resist the relocations.

In June 2002, the TCC held a meeting with the municipality to discuss relocations and evictions

in Thembelihle. At this meeting, 'the municipality undertook not to send in the Red Ants to remove people from Thembelihle' (Wilson 2005). However, later that year, in a display of arrogance and aloofness, 'the City sent in the Red Ants to try and forcibly evict the entire community and the community fought back, successfully resisting their removal. After this, they were promised that thousands of houses would be built and that basic services would be delivered'.⁸ However, the apparent concession won by the community was short-lived. The following year, in 2003, the city 'brought an urgent application to evict the entire community of Thembelihle and relocate them to Vlakfontein and Lehae' (CALs 2006). Then, after many months of not responding to enquiries, the city dropped the case, which can be viewed as a victory for the TCC (Wilson 2005). With the formal evictions route foreclosed, the only remaining option for the City was to try to convince the whole of Thembelihle to "voluntarily" relocate. But this proved difficult, as the community was resolutely against the relocations.

In the meantime, the TCC continued to address basic issues of access to schooling. Between 2004 and 2006, the TCC worked with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs) to help learners to gain entrance to some of the Lenasia schools, which Thembelihle residents considered better than many of the other schools in the area. Allegations of racism were levelled against the schools' administration.⁹ For the TCC, while the political settlement of 1994 had ended, it seemed that racial manifestations persisted.

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During this period, other developments occurred. In 2005, in a surprise about-turn, the municipality had finally undertaken (allegedly on the sole basis of the 1992 and 1998 geotechnical reports) to investigate the feasibility of in-situ upgrading, although official pronouncements still were that the entire Thembelihle community will relocate to houses in Lehae.¹⁰ The city was clearly caught between the policy implications of the 1998 report recommendations to upgrade where feasible, which is in line with Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code, and the political imperative to adequately house people. Part of this logjam was because the 1992 report was not complete and the TCC wanted another, comprehensive report. The city tasked the TCC to pay for the costs of another study. The TCC rightly questioned the mandate of the city in shifting the costs to the community, wondering who the city is serving if poor communities are expected to pay for costs related to their development. The organisation has been seeking ways to get the City to pay for the costs. Clearly unresolved underlying systemic features would need to be confronted head on and would require a different level of organisation and mobilisation.

By 2006, the TCC had shifted gear and became part of founding Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM), to contest the local government elections that year.¹¹ OKM is a socialist organisation that contests local government elections in parts of Johannesburg including Thembelihle and Soweto. The TCC's decision to become involved in formal politics, through its affiliation to OKM – considered by the leadership to be a new tactical frontier for the struggle – was taken in order to get

closer to the levers of power and decision-makers within the city and to better understand the city's processes and systems, particularly its plans for relocation and/or upgrading of Thembelihle. The TCC's leader, Bhayi Miya, stood as the OKM ward 8 candidate but was unsuccessful, losing to Dan Bovu of the African National Congress (ANC). However, defeat in the arena of formal politics did not deter the TCC's broader campaign, which had in any event never relied on one tactic.

Resorting to more informal tactics, in 'July 2007, the community held a mass meeting which demanded a report about the provision of housing and electricity in the area'. With no response from the city, the community resolved to march peacefully to the local municipal offices. When the City Manager failed to meet with the marchers, they decided to 'stage a blockade so that the Mayor of Johannesburg would come to address their grievances in light of the council's lack of accountability to the community'. The demonstration continued into early hours of the morning, until 'the crowd dispersed under heavy fire from the police'.¹² The TCC was not going to bow down to the city's pressure to relocate Thembelihle residents, and in 2008 much of the same mass action continued. The TCC marched alongside other community-based organisations under the banner of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) demanding a moratorium to all evictions.¹³ Although this demand did not succeed, the TCC had consolidated its leadership and established lasting networks with like-minded organisations.

In 2009, with the emergence of xenophobic attacks across the country, the TCC responded quickly. 'After a local trader was attacked and robbed and rumours circulated of an impending attack on immigrants, the TCC leadership swung into action using its organisational machinery, its authority and experience and provided leadership' (Ngwane and Vilakazi 2011). The organisation held a community meeting at which it was agreed that no such attacks would be tolerated in

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Thembelihle. To instil goodwill in the community, the TCC organised a soccer game between immigrants and locals in a gesture of solidarity (Ngwane and Vilakazi 2011). The TCC also undertook street patrols to protect immigrants. The TCC's anti-xenophobia campaign continued throughout the 2010 FIFA World Cup, amid on-going fears of more flare-ups of violence against foreigners.

During 2011, in what became a year of protests and negotiations with the city, the OKM fielded Miya as its preferred candidate in the local government elections. Miya again lost, coming in third with 450 votes¹⁴ while Janice Ndarala won 3 657 out of a registered total 6 968 votes, or 52% of the electorate (IEC 2011).¹⁵

In June 2011, accompanied by 50 protesters, the TCC held a meeting with the city's water utility (Johannesburg Water), Councillor Janice Ndarala, a contractor from Limpopo Province and the police to discuss the installation of toilets, which did not materialise (Ranchod 2011). Dissatisfied with delays in installing toilets, in August residents marched to the municipal offices 'to hand over a memorandum to the local Councillor' (Naick 2011). According to Miya, the aim of the march was to present the councillor with a list of issues from the community of Thembelihle. The TCC saw the memorandum as establishing a mandate for the councillor's tenure.¹⁶ It is unclear how the councillor viewed this "mandate" and in particular the extent to which it clashed with the mandate of her party, the ANC. The march was jointly led by OKM's Simphiwe Zwane, who was and is a proportional representation councillor in the Johannesburg city council. The TCC's memorandum gave the councillor a few days to respond to the issues.

When councillor Ndarala allegedly did not respond to memorandum, a backlash followed, as the TCC returned to street politics. In a violent and protracted demonstration, residents blockaded 'the K43 and surrounding roads with boulders and burning

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tyres [...] stones and rocks rained down on the K43 road as residents from the informal settlement' protested. The police presence failed to 'curb the waves of stone throwing attacks by residents as the running battles continued throughout the morning'¹⁷, while the presence of the Public Order Policing (POP) unit exacerbated the already tense situation, according to one participant.¹⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Levy Mere, the Operational Commander of the POP unit in Johannesburg, reported that he had seen 1 500 protestors taking part.¹⁹ Violence also appears to have been used to mobilise protestors, with many witnesses stating that people were heckled outside their homes to join the protest. In one statement, a witness talks of protestors moving through Section F of Thembelihle, mobilising people in the early hours of the morning of 5 September. She says that when the protestors passed her house singing, they threw stones on her roof presumably because the day before, at a meeting of OKM, her name was listed as part of a group of mpimpis (sellouts) who regularly give information to Councillor Ndarala.²⁰ The protests resulted in arrests of community members. However, although the police brought a case against the protest leaders, the leadership of Thembelihle, through the litigation efforts of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI), were able to get the case struck off the roll.²¹

Later in September 2011, concerned by a spate of sustained protests over two weeks in August and September that involved a range of community groupings, Member of the Executive Council Humphrey

Mmemezi met with the TCC leadership over the issues raised in the memorandum. The ‘uprising to demand electricity and housing focused country-wide attention on the Thembelihle community even more than it did in February 2011 when a similar protest produced no response from the government’.²² The protests caught the attention of Gauteng ANC politicians and forced the city to respond favourably to the community’s demands.

Continuing to mobilise across its networks and affiliate organisations, in September 2012 the TTC and the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) organised a protest to deliver a memorandum to Nomvula Paula Mokonyane, Premier of Gauteng Province. This clearly shows that the TCC is successfully collaborating with other community-based organisations and social movements. As a result of these protests, in

By the end of 2012, the TCC has become adept at operating in both formal and informal political arenas in order to push its demands and objectives. Electoral and street politics will be needed for the TCC to ensure the city constitutes the task team and commissions another study. The TCC’s longstanding struggle for in-situ informal settlement upgrading in Thembelihle can also be seen as a struggle to be considered as equal citizens who are consulted about development in their area.

CONCLUSION

Formed in 2001 when the city announced its plans to relocate the Thembelihle community, the TCC initially focused on having electricity installed in the settlement. The knowledge gained in subsequent engagements with the city and its various agencies empowered the movement to take up more and more local development issues on behalf of Thembelihle residents. From attempts to electrify Thembelihle, fight evictions, assist local learners to access schools in Lenasia and contest local government elections, to grappling with the burning issue of dolomite and relocation, the TCC has constantly shifted and mixed tactics and strategies according to perceived political realities. While the combination and relentlessness of the various actions may be seen as responsible for any gains made by the organisation, informal protests or “politics of the street” appear, at least for the moment, to be the most effective strategy in the context of enduring unresponsiveness by the state. Certainly, the city’s latest promise to renegotiate any further relocation came out of the sustained protests at the end of 2012.

Although the TCC did not achieve electoral victory in the 2011 local government elections, the organisation enjoys popular support, as shown by the city’s recent concession to pay for a comprehensive geo-technical study and the results of the 2012 ward committee elections. It has consolidated networks

The TCC’s longstanding struggle for in-situ informal settlement upgrading in Thembelihle can also be seen as a struggle to be considered as equal citizens who are consulted about development in their area.

October 2012 the city agreed to conduct a new and comprehensive geo-technical study and to establish a multi-party technical team of geologists and lawyers to monitor the study. It also finally agreed to pay the costs of a more comprehensive geo-technical study of Thembelihle. However, despite a promising start, like previously, the city appears to be dragging its feet over the implementation of this process.

In the meantime, continuing its formal engagement, the TCC participated in the November 2012 ward committee elections and won most seats. This success was a clear sign of the exposure received by the organisation during the protests earlier in the year. It also demonstrated the ward’s growing confidence in the organisation, signalling that reputations and credentials are won on the ground and with people.

with other communities and their organisations. In this way, by bridging the divide between the City's aloofness and grassroots needs, the TCC assists in reconnecting the dominant political culture with the country's constitutional demands.

This paper has demonstrated that even when citizens are able to organise themselves, achieving their stated objectives at once is not always possible. Active citizenship, such as constituted by the TCC, occurs in a dynamic, flux environment where the struggle

to upgrade and improve informal settlements is longstanding and complex, involving multiple strategies and tactics. Navigating this terrain and representing the interests of the community is difficult and requires extraordinary energy, resilience and courage in the face of considerable intransigence and opposition from the state. However, cases such as Thembelihle offer the hope that with sustained active citizenship, the state can be made to respond to collective demands, and democracy can be consolidated.

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NOTES

- ¹ In a meeting of the Gauteng Land and Housing Social Network in Johannesburg, Mike Makwela, Programme coordinator at Planact, spoke about how in a conversation with a Johannesburg City official he was informed that the City had identified 22 protest hotspots in its jurisdiction.
- ² Interview with Daniel Bovu, the first ward 8 councillor after the historic 1994 elections and currently Mayoral Municipal Committee (MMC) member for housing, 18 October 2012.
- ³ Telephonic interview with Miya Bhayzer, 23 August 2012.
- ⁴ Interview with Janice Ndarala, ward councillor for ward 8 which includes Thembelihle, 15 August 2012.
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FORGING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FURNACES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

By Walter Fieuw, Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC)

Within a context of deep urban poverty, landlessness and homelessness, building collaborative partnerships between organised informal settlement communities and local governments is one of the most important – and perhaps most neglected – aspects of participatory, inclusive, pro-poor and sustainable development. It is also one of the most salient challenges, especially when upscaling to the city-wide level.



PHOTO: CORC

BALANCING MICRO-LEVEL interventions and practices with the macro-level structures of governance and body of rules requires the skilful building of institutions that can navigate the complexities of informal settlement upgrading. In this sense, forging partnerships requires the ability to negotiate and transact around a common set of problems and agendas guided by social and political change. According to section 16 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000), government should create a ‘culture of community participation’ where civil society has a direct interest and influence on the design of governance arrangements. The creation of new institutional alignments, through the practice of

upgrading informal settlements, is one of the unfolding “cultures” in the partnership between communities aligned to the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and local governments.

During the first post-apartheid decade, “first generation” urban and housing policies, such as the White Paper on Housing (DoH 1994) and the National Housing Act (RSA 1997), underscored the importance of creating viable, integrated, sustainable settlements with convenient access to opportunities. Despite significant achievements, the roll-out of housing delivery has produced unintended consequences¹ of socio-economic, spatial and racial fragmentation,

urban sprawl, and has failed to create low-income housing markets, thereby undermining the ideal of houses contributing to asset-driven poverty alleviation (e.g. Charlton and Kihato 2006; Cross 2010; Khan 2010; Pithouse 2009). The “second generation” (from the second decade) of potentially more progressive, transformative and responsive policies has had little impact in changing the paradigm of an unsustainable housing subsidy system (Misselhorn 2008). Breaking New Ground (BNG), the ‘comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements’, which aimed to inform the new generation of human settlement legislative frameworks, advocated that ‘informal settlements must urgently be integrated into the broader urban fabric to overcome spatial, social and economic exclusion’ (DoH 2004: 12). Moreover, BNG introduced the notion of ‘locally constructed social compacts’² and called for capacity building and organisation building to be supported in the roll-out of the new human settlements paradigm (DoH 2004: 18).

Local governments have struggled to come to grips with the extensive community engagement and difficult engineering and geotechnical interventions implicit in the upgrading of informal settlements. A lack of community participation, political will and technical expertise has resulted in “knowledge gaps” that obstruct effective planning. Government-appointed contractors at the coalface of project implementation are often confronted by communities that refuse to collaborate on plans drafted without their participation. Communities are often still regarded as passive recipients, unable to contribute significantly to the design, management and implementation of settlement upgrading plans.

Institutional and political, legal and financial, and technical constraints (such as lack of departmental alignment, supply-chain management procedures and contractors with adequate socio-technical skill-sets) obstruct collaboration between organised communities

and “developmental local government” in upgrading informal settlements. However, new approaches are emerging, where communities have greater influence on how public resources are allocated for development. By “co-producing” development plans and outcomes, democracy is deepened and citizenship is actively exercised. Communities are presenting responsive, intelligible, affordable, and inclusive in-situ solutions to urban poverty compared to conventional contractor and state-driven delivery mechanisms. The Informal Settlement Network (ISN) experience shows how horizontal networks of the urban poor mobilised around issue-based agendas and solutions can have significant impacts on the way development is conceptualised and operationalised.

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However, reaching this level of active citizenry and collaborative partnerships requires extensive engagement, which starts with recognising informality.

ACTIVE CITIZENRY IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING: THE ISN

Informal settlements are often perceived as obscure places; as political time bombs waiting to explode. Political relations are framed as oppositional, violent, and rights-demanding. To a certain extent, shack dwellers are seen as surviving by illegal means. They are seen as land invaders, a perceived security threat and the cause of depreciating land market values to neighbouring land owners, and are therefore not considered to be rights-bearing citizens (Chatterjee 2004). Yet, if the very nature of their citizenship is

contested, how can shack dwellers be required to be “active citizens”?

Patrick Magebhula, chair of the ISN and special advisor to Mr. Tokyo Sexwale, the Minister of Human Settlements, wrote³:

The press has a fascination with what are often referred to as ‘service delivery protests’. The fires and looting make good copy for editors desperate for any kind of violence or scandal. But there is a much bigger story developing across our cities. The poor are organising, informal settlement by informal settlement, to work with all levels of government and other stakeholders to address their most pressing needs. We can recall the street and issue-based people’s development committees so effectively in the civics movement that organised communities to improve their own lives and bring down apartheid. The Informal Settlement Network (ISN) is the first major attempt in the post-apartheid era to bring South Africa’s settlement-level organisations of the urban poor under one umbrella, this time to work with government in finding solutions to slum poverty.

The impact of social movements on policy deliberations has been recognised internationally, and in many cases has had transformative significance in building more just and inclusive cities. Organised and capacitated networks of the poor and marginalised – the underclasses – are mobilising around the chronic and acute conditions associated with the “urbanisation of poverty”. When modernist planning ideas – those imagined sanitised spaces of the competitive city – meet urbanisation trends, existing anti-poor systems of exclusion and exploitation are often entrenched. Policy makers fail to address core urban problems. Coalitions

and networks are formed at the intersections of a failing state, the planning of competitive urban spaces (such as the “World Class City”⁴), the commodification of public spaces and resources, and existing systems of exclusion (Mayer 2009). These very same forces and dynamics make complex social systems, such as cities, either work or crumble. The “right to the city” discourse is often framed along these lines, albeit open to various interpretations, arguing that the remaking of the city in the fashion of a more egalitarian and sustainable city depends on a politics of contestation and resistance (Harvey 2008, 2012; Marcuse 2009; see Purcell 2003, 2006 for a different interpretation).

The ISN has emerged as an alternative social movement, arguing that communities are best placed to contribute meaningfully to the design, management and implementation of upgrading projects that affect their immediate living conditions. Communities are networking in the metropolitan municipalities of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, eThekweni and Cape Town, and smaller municipalities such as Stellenbosch. The origins of the network can be traced to the momentum built up by the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP), a national network of more than 400 woman-led saving schemes that mobilised around an asset-based approach⁵ to development. The Coalition of Urban Poor (CUP) was inaugurated in 2006, when the then-minister of housing, Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu, pledged⁶ up-front subsidies to the FEDUP. The CUP, consisting of a wider representation of community-based organisations, centred its focus on the Learning and Advocacy Programme. This included the upgrading of Kwa-Themba (Johannesburg); Inanda and Eshowe HIV/AIDS grassroots care initiative (Durban); dialogues with state institutions around sanitation, emergency housing, and relocations; community-based solid waste management and recycling (Cape Town); and many more. The Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) – an NGO based in Cape

Town – supported CUP in creating platforms for learning exchanges, providing technical support, and documentation. Following after CUP, the ISN was launched in 2008/09 and by that time constituted a network of more than 400 affiliated settlements in the major metropolitan areas of South Africa.

The rally call in ISN is: *Nothing for us without us. Vukuzenzele! Wake up and do it for yourself!* The kind of upgrading that the ISN espouses is not about land and services alone, but about realising citizenship and equality in our cities. ISN is re-interpreting the “rights-based” discourse by opting for renewed state-citizen relations via the political strategy of “co-production”: extending citizen action to secure political influence, build community capacity and skills, and access central decision-making processes that determine resource allocation (Mitlin 2008). Shifting the energy from opposition to collaboration, the ISN strives to influence resource allocations in remaking the city.

AMANDLA! IMALI NO LWAZI. EISH, AYILUMI MA IHLAFUNA

In partnership with local government, or as autonomous change agents, the ISN is implementing projects capable of demonstrating the value of “co-producing” development solutions. Local capacities come to the fore as communities illustrate their ability to plan, budget, procure and implement their own projects, drawing government into new democratic spaces. By leading the way with draft development plans produced by communities, effective negotiation with government authorities occurs. Autonomous initiatives of the urban poor are funded through the Community Upgrading Finance Facility (CUFF). The CUFF board – consisting 60% of shack dwellers and 40% of CORC technical staff – makes the final decision on the allocation of funds, which might include small-scale drainage, water and sanitation reticulation, public amenities (crèches, community centres, etc.) and re-blocking

(shack improvement in a new layout plan). The CUFF aims to provide seed funding for precedent-setting projects able to catalyse partnership formation. Plans for new upgrading projects should be well motivated by communities and are usually based on enumeration results.

The process of self-enumeration entails a detailed socio-economic and demographic profiling of the settlement by the residents, which becomes the key building blocks for a comprehensive development plan. This development plan is also spatially referenced on (often hand-drawn) maps indicating the levels of services, densities, footpaths, and other socio-spatial readings. These maps are codified in Geographical Informal System (GIS) databases, with support from CORC. In this sense, service delivery goes beyond consultation and participation because power is shared. The goal of ISN capacity building, networking and partnership formation is to activate new kinds of citizenship forms, where poor communities have direct access to government decision-making processes. This requires a balancing of community agencies at the micro level, and government’s institutional parameters at the macro scale.

The electric chants of the collective speak volumes – *Amandla! imali no lwazi. Eish, ayilumi ma ihlafuna* [Power is money and knowledge. You cannot bite while you are chewing], referring to the inability of councillors, officials and politicians to facilitate participation, which is a central principle of the Constitution and major policy frameworks. For ISN communities, empowerment means on the one hand access to knowledge and decision making, and on the other influence on resource flows.

The following section, albeit limited in scope and depth, discusses partnerships with two local governments where the ISN has made considerable inroads in realising the kind of institutional alignments

necessary to place people at the centre, and take upgrading strategies to the city-wide scale.

STELLENBOSCH MUNICIPALITY

Stellenbosch is home to an internationally acclaimed university, has a booming FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) industry and is generally configured to cater for the knowledge economy. Surrounding the town are wine farms and other agri-businesses that provide seasonal jobs. Land is a valuable commodity and is subject to fierce competition. But hidden in the folds and crevices of a seemingly unspoilt landscape, resides some of the poorest communities in the country. Two large informal settlements of more than 1 500 households – Enkanini (Khayamandi, Stellenbosch) and Langrug (Franschhoek) – and many smaller settlements and backyarder communities make up a housing backlog that will take the municipality more than 130 years to eradicate, based on the 300 housing subsidies the municipality receives per annum (Carolissen 2011).

The gripping reality of the urban crises, among others, led to the restructuring of core municipal functions and the newly created Integrated Human Settlements Department under the Planning and Economic Development Department. A subdivision in the Integrated Human Settlements Department, the Informal Settlements Management Department is dedicated to improving the conditions of people living in informal settlements and backyards.

IN-SITU UPGRADING OF LANGRUG: FROM PERCEIVED PROBLEMATIC TO CHANGE AGENT

Langrug is an informal settlement established in the early 1990s by migrant labourers seeking jobs on nearby farms, the forestry plantations, and the construction of Wemmershoek dam. Langrug has a population of 4 088 people, or 1 858 households, of which 41% are led by woman (CORC 2011c). The settlement is located on the

slopes of Mont Rochelle Nature Reserve, three kilometres outside the town of Franschhoek. On average, about 45 people share a toilet, and 72 people share a water tap. However, these services only reach two-thirds of the community: higher up on the mountain slope is Zwelitsha, an area that was occupied in the past five years, has no services, where people use the bucket system and carry water up the steep slope.

For more than three years the municipality tried to engage with the community to find solutions to these challenges. Years of neglect and mismanagement of the settlement's services had led to the greywater runoff polluting the neighbouring farmer's irrigation dam, and in 2008, the farmer obtained a court interdict against the municipality. Under the interdict, the municipality was forced to construct a road hierarchy with proper storm water channelling. The construction of the road required 16 families to be moved to another section in the settlement. However, planning processes were delayed because of the fractured relationship between the community and the municipality.

Officials from the Informal Settlement Management Department approached the ISN in the hope of cementing a partnership that would initially focus on the in-situ upgrading of Langrug. Notwithstanding the claims from the municipality of being an "honest broker", the ISN leadership had suspicions about the municipality's intentions for entering into a partnership and whether any serious long-term developmental prospects were on the cards. Over two years (2009–2010), a sustained engagement between ISN/CORC and Stellenbosch Municipality took place, with parties outlining the conditions under which the partnership would crystallise. The central topic of discussion was the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and, more specifically, the core areas of intervention and action (contained in the appendices to the MoU). Between 11 and 16 October 2010, senior officials from the Stellenbosch Municipality and community members

from ISN Stellenbosch (mostly leaders of Langrug settlement) travelled to Uganda to see people-centred planning in action (see CORC 2011b). This international exchange was facilitated by Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI).

Once a draft agreement was in place, the ISN launched a settlement-wide mobilisation in Langrug with the aim of building local capacity in municipal engagements. This entailed a number of general meetings and learning exchanges from and to ISN Cape Town communities. In February 2011, Langrug community volunteers took on the job of enumerating their settlement through house-to-house visits, socio-economic and demographic surveys, and measuring shack sizes. Alfred Ratana, a Langrug community leader, said ‘we took ... about two to three weeks to talk with them [the broader community] about the enumeration. And then afterwards they came in big numbers’. The community presented their enumeration results to the Mayoral Committee and the Executive Mayor, who were impressed by the community’s articulation of their needs and aspirations. One of the immediate needs identified was better engineering services to Zwelitsha, which required the construction of a pump station to improve the pressure in the water supply. Meanwhile, a committee was formed to drive the project to relocate the 16 households that had to be moved because of the new road development. Trevor Masiy, another community leader, remarked that ‘our will is to see the improvement of the whole of Langrug, because the municipality has been trying to come up with a solution since 2008’. In October 2011⁷, the relocation of 16 families was successfully completed, paving the way for the in-situ upgrading of Langrug. As Johru Robyn, senior project manager of the municipality, commented, ‘the role of the municipality has intensified in this partnership compared to an agreement with a contractor. In this case, we were quite hands-on in everything’.

By November 2011, the community’s enumeration data had evolved into a detailed spatial development plan, which informed the extension of the electricity grid, more toilets and standing pipes, and the installation of a play park. The MoU was signed between the Stellenbosch Municipality and ISN and CORC, and at the spirited event, the Executive Mayor Mr Conrad Sidego remarked,

The benefits of this partnership are far-reaching and *should be viewed as a paradigm shift in municipal governance*. Today is about changing mindsets in providing housing ... Just days ago we contemplated that we now have seven billion people on the planet and the challenges going with that ... For us as the local government, we also need to understand and face the reality of what we need to do. If we continue with our old thinking, there is no way that we are going to change this [emphasis added].

The in-situ upgrading of Langrug also drew the attention of Western Cape Premier Helen Zille, who visited the settlement with a number of officials from other municipalities across the Western Cape in May 2012. In an interview with *Eyewitness News Online* (2012), Premier Zille stated,

The important point about this informal settlement is that it is one of the first where we have a viable partnership with the community. And now, working with the community, we are installing stormwater, greywater systems, toilets, washing facilities, roads and upgrading the place generally ... But the exciting thing about this project is that we are upgrading shacks where they are instead of moving people out and starting from the beginning.

In 2012 a design studio was launched in partnership with the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Department of Engineering and Built Environment. The studio's aim was to produce a number of potential spatial frameworks in a collaborative planning exercise between community members and urban planning students. The spatial frameworks made recommendations on precinct developments, environmental health, mobility and transport nodes, and more generally on how Langrug could be integrated into the broader urban fabric. In June 2012, eight Langrug community leaders were awarded Continued Professional Development (CPD) certificates from UCT, recognising their contribution in the design studio. At the time of writing, the upgrading project is in phase three of the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP)⁸ application, and the Municipality has committed to the full upgrading of the settlement, which includes land rehabilitation, relocation assistance, the instalment of permanent municipal engineering infrastructure, and the provision of social amenities and community facilities.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIOS

While waiting for full service delivery in Langrug, the community is taking proactive steps to produce more detailed information that can inform future development. In collaboration with the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, USA, locally based "community researchers" have initiated more pointed research into key areas of concern as identified at general meetings. Portfolios in Health, Security, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Greywater, and Education have been established. With funding from WPI, the community has built more than 500 meters of greywater channels, beautified sanitation and wash-up facilities, planned a health conference, and established working relationships with local schools to reach out to non-attending youth. Plans are being devised for a multi-purpose centre, and a team is engaging stakeholders such as youth and

culture groups, churches, and arts and crafts collectives on maximising the use of the centre. The settlement has been divided into clusters, where households within these clusters are saving towards livelihoods development and shelter improvements (CORC 2012).

NETWORKING COMMUNITIES FOR MUNICIPAL-WIDE INFLUENCE

In the first financial year (2011–2012) of the partnership between the CORC and ISN alliance and Stellenbosch Municipality, in addition to the capital and operational expenditure of community-initiated projects, the MoU makes provisions for 'building an urban poor platform through a network of informal settlements and informal backyarders'. This is done by surveying, mapping and profiling settlements across the municipality with the aim to upgrade them (Stellenbosch Municipality and CORC/ISN 2011). Provisions are also made to invest in the social institutions of the poor in order to manage the partnership projects; for example, setting up mini offices in five strategic zones within the municipality. Various spheres of government and other interested parties will also be invited to participate in researching and designing a 'financial facility that incentivises community participation in informal settlement upgrading' (Stellenbosch Municipality and CORC/ISN 2011).

CITY OF CAPE TOWN

Cape Town is often referred to as the city with two faces: an inner city hub with European characteristics, which is geared towards creating a viable business centre (via the Central City Improvement District), and sprawling middle-class suburbs; and the massive expanses of pockets of poverty spread across the Cape Flats, where more than a quarter of the City's residents reside. Cape Town's Gini coefficient⁹ ranks it as one of the most unequal cities in the world, and the city has a housing backlog of more than 400 000 units.

2009/10: CATALYST FOR CHANGE

More than three years of successes and failures in informal settlement upgrading inform the partnership-in-the-making between ISN/CORC and the City of Cape Town. After a seemingly stalled period, in 2006 the partnership was launched onto a troubled stage when a run-away shack fire in the Joe Slovo settlement razed 500 shacks to the ground (CORC and iKhayalami 2009). ISN mobilised the community, and FEDUP set up effective savings schemes. With support from CORC and iKhayalami¹⁰, the community “re-blocked” (shack improvement in a new layout plan) the settlement, which became a precedent for in-situ upgrading in the contested N2 Gateway project. Based on the Joe Slovo experience, the City showed interest in partnering at a city-wide scale, and 12 pilot projects were agreed to. These projects included the resettlement of a section of Barcelona settlement (Gugulethu) to nearby Lwazi Park (see CORC 2010) and the in-situ “re-blocking” of Sheffield Road in Philippi (CORC 2011a).

2010/11: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS TAKE SHAPE

The successes of these earlier pilot projects spurred on frequent dialogues between communities and the City. Linking community-based organisations across the regions of Cape Town, ISN introduced monthly forums around needs identification, project progress, and planning for upgrading. The regular attendance of various line departments (such as Informal Settlements Management, Water and Sanitation, Roads and Stormwater, and Electricity) implicit in upgrading and the City’s four Principal Field Officers guaranteed real-time feedback and action planning.

This departure – from service delivery consultations on a project-by-project basis to engaging in collaborative, responsive and cost-effective partnerships focused on improving living conditions and “materialising citizenship” – was

a momentous moment. Understandably, this new partnership was wrought with complexity and uncertainty, especially when aligning other line departments to the community development plans, which threatened to derail the process.

The geographical spread of these projects were true to the needs of the City, with eleven projects in the South/Central area, six in the Khayelitsha/Strand area, and the rest spread across other parts of the city. Some of the projects (20%) included consolidation and relocation of settlements that consisted of less than 15 households and where development was not feasible.

2012: PARTNERSHIP REKINDLED

In the embers of a seemingly stalemate, a renewed interest in building partnerships ignited new negotiations and possibilities. In February 2012, the ISN and the municipality agreed to 22 pilot partnership projects. The geographical spread of these projects were true to the needs of the City, with eleven projects in the South/Central area, six in the Khayelitsha/Strand area, and the rest spread across other parts of the city. Some of the projects (20%) included consolidation and relocation of settlements that consisted of less than 15 households and where development was not feasible. The majority included formalisation and subdivision (40%), and re-blocking (40%). Settlements ranged from very small (seven households) to considerably large (1 284 households). The partnership would lead to better-serviced and more tenure-secure settlements. Projects prioritised basic service delivery in the short term, and formalisation and infrastructure development in the long term. In February 2012, the deputy-minister of the National Department of Human Settlements, Ms Zoe Kota-Fredericks visited Mshini Wam and Siyahlala informal settlements and formed part of the activities and celebrations of these pilot projects. She witnessed

the in-situ process of re-blocking, heard about the layout plans, and handed over ID cards with household enumeration data. 'It's an honour to again have you here amongst the shacks, Minister,' said Patrick Magebhula. 'This is where it really matters.' Turning to the buzzing crowd he said, 'You need to be a leader with a purpose. And you will only know your people and your settlement if you have enumerated and discussed the data'.

On Thursday 19 April 2012, the celebrations came closer to home when Mayor De Lille signed the partnership accord with ISN and CORC (City of Cape Town and CORC/ISN 2012). At a mass gathering held in Vygieskraal – a settlement of 300 households located behind the formal housing development with the same name in Athlone – the Mayor was introduced to the programmes of the ISN. She saw the community's demonstration model of the new cluster layout, the enumeration results, and listened to community leaders and the local councillor speak about their experiences.

1. Create a shared community vision of the future, especially with regard to informal settlements upgrading and backyard rehabilitation;
2. Identify and prioritise key issues, thereby facilitating immediate measures to alleviate urgent problems;
3. Support community-based analysis of local issues, including the comprehensive review of long-term, systemic problems that confront particular service systems and the need to integrate different service strategies so that they are mutually supportive;
4. Develop action plans for addressing key issues, drawing from the experiences and innovations of diverse local groups;
5. Mobilise community-wide resources to meet service needs, including the joint implementation of sustainable development projects; and
6. Increase public support for municipal activities and local understanding of municipal development needs and constraints.

CONCLUSION: NOTHING FOR US WITHOUT US.

As government struggles to adjust to the changing dynamics in delivery and infrastructure development, organised poor communities are offering responsive, innovative and cost-effective solutions to settlement upgrading. They are preparing their own development plans based on community-led enumerations, collective saving schemes, spatial mapping and implementing projects. Communities are advancing the idea that the only socially sustainable solution to upgrading – and for that matter enhanced People's Housing Processes (ePHP)¹¹ – is for organised poor communities and local governments to form partnerships, or "social compacts". Partnerships are emerging where communities have direct influence and access to central decision-making powers that determine resource allocations.

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De Lille reiterated her vision of an 'inclusive and caring City' that included forming new partnerships with civic organisations. The partnership between ISN/CORC and the City will share the following guiding principles, set forth in to the MoU (City of Cape Town and CORC/ISN 2012), which was presented by Mayco Member for Human Settlements Councillor Sonnenberg:

On-going negotiations and transactions are necessary in order to balance micro agencies with macro institutional prerogatives. On the one hand, communities need to articulate their development plans in ways that fit into government's bureaucracies, while on the other hand, local governments need to move beyond the iron towers and red tape that hinders service delivery. Collaborative partnerships are being forged in the furnaces of the practices of upgrading informal settlements. As organised community networks such as the ISN emerge at the city-wide scale, local governments cannot afford to view the delivery of basic services and informal settlement upgrades as purely mechanical supply-side interventions. Not recognising the agencies and micro-practices of the urban poor has led to numerous unintended, anti-developmental consequences in the roll-out of housing delivery.

This paper has attempted to unpack some of the emerging dynamics in the partnerships between organised networks of the urban poor aligned to ISN (and supported by CORC) and local governments of

These platforms should start tilting the balance in favour of the urban poor and carve out a space in the numerous and overlapping government participatory processes that influence decision-making.

Stellenbosch and Cape Town. The challenge going forward will be to build platforms where engagement is centred on the lived experience of communities themselves, and not the perceived experience in the imaginations of city planners and builders. These platforms should start tilting the balance in favour of the urban poor and carve out a space in the numerous and overlapping government participatory processes that influence decision-making. In doing so, new cultures of community participation are realised, and democratic engagement is deepened. Communities are leading the way in demonstrating alternative paradigms in the governance of service delivery and building an active citizenry. For, as the rally cry goes, 'Nothing for us without us'.

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NOTES

- ¹ South Africa's ambitious housing delivery regime is said to have delivered more than 2.3 million houses since 1994, but today the demand for housing still outstrips the supply. Many developments have not had a significant impact on reconstructing apartheid spatial forms because they are located on the peripheries of cities. The National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) estimates that meeting the 1.2 million housing backlog with the standard RDP housing package (40m² top structure on 250m² serviced site plus 30% for roads and amenities) would require 40 000 hectares (plus 30%) and a budget of R92.4 billion, which is equivalent to 70% of the total budget 2009–2015 (NUSP 2010).
- ² In the Breaking New Ground policy, 'social compacts' make direct mention of 'new funding mechanisms for PHP' developments. Earlier versions of the National Housing Code's Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (under Chapter 13 and after 2009 under Part 3) included the notion of 'social compacts' between local government and communities, but this term was removed in the 2009 Housing Code amendments. Three per cent of the UISP subsidy is allocated for social facilitation grants (DoHS 2009).
- ³ 'Eradicating the slums', *The Sowetan*, 11 May 2010.
- ⁴ Urban theorists and critical geographers such as John Friedman, Saskia Sassen, David Harvey and Manuel Castells have developed new "geographic vocabulary" to point to the 'spatial outcomes of economic and social transformations' of globalisation and the new roles of cities (Harrison 2003: 14). The "world city" hypothesis focuses on the transnational economic flows and their subsequent impacts of urban populations and spatial formations. The ambitious capitalist urban development trajectory of "African World Class City" has become popular in emerging cities looking to attract international capital, such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos, and so forth.
- ⁵ An "asset based" approach departs from the belief that the inherent qualities, competencies and experience of communities should be revealed and supported in order to build sustainable communities capable of forming collectives to achieve common goals.
- ⁶ The relationship between government and FEDUP have been described as follows: 'communities take the lead, government adopts a policy based on community actions, and then government implements that policy through legislation, which effectively removes it from the genuine process of the urban poor' (FEDUP 2008: 9). In 2006, in an effort to restore the relationship, then-minister Sisulu entered into a formal agreement pledging to release 1 000 subsidies through each province.
- ⁷ The Municipality initially suggested providing pre-fabricated Wendy houses (wooden "cottages") for the relocated families. For each family, R8,000 was made available. The community rather took it on themselves to use the allocated funds to construct better quality structures, complete with concrete foundation, zinc walls and finishing. This was in accordance with a self-produced layout plan, which incorporates stormwater channels, walkways and open spaces.
- ⁸ Part 3 of the National Housing Code, also called the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), makes available allocations for a phased approach to upgrading informal settlements. There are four development phases: application (Phase 1), project initiation (Phase 2), project implementation (Phase 3) and housing consolidation (Phase 4). In Phase 2, as seen in the upgrading of Langrug, an agreement between the municipality and the community should be reached, and preparation measures such as land acquisition, socio-economic and demographic profiling, provision of interim services, and conducting

pre-planning studies should have been conducted. In Langrug, this was completed. Going forward into Phase 3, full services will be provided for based on township planning and associated social and technical intervention (DoHS 2009). Stellenbosch Municipality has made allocations to construct an access road in the 2012/13 financial year.

- ⁹ UN-Habitat (2010) reports that spatial, economic and social polarisation have increased in the post-apartheid era in South Africa's major cities. Cape Town has a Gini coefficient of 0.67 (1 meaning absolute inequality; 0 meaning perfect equality).
- ¹⁰ iKhayalami works closely with CORC in finding alternative and cost-effective solutions to shack upgrading in a new community-based layout plan, which has been dubbed "re-blocking".
- ¹¹ The enhanced People's Housing Process (ePHP) is a housing subsidy where beneficiaries are actively involved in decision-making processes in the design and implementation of houses.



FROM SUBJECT TO CITIZEN: BUILDING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUES AND RADIO STATIONS

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The conventional definition of citizenship focuses on the act of voting and taking a vow to uphold the Constitution and laws of the country. This concept of citizenship is limited, as it reduces the power of citizens to mere “voters”. Elected officials and leaders consider citizens as nothing more than consumers, which manifests often at election times when citizens become targets of campaigns and are promised a better future that someone else will create for them (Block 2008: 63). Indeed, citizens in this context have little control and influence over the decisions and policies that shape their lives and the life of their community.



PHOTO: DDP

THIS PAPER examines a pilot project implemented by the Democracy Development Programme (DDP), which has immense potential to build and enable active citizenship in local democratic processes and governance. The project is entitled ‘deepening democracy through increased community participation in democratic processes: a multi-media approach’. It is aimed, firstly, at enhancing the capacities of civil society organisations (CSOs) as process facilitators

and, secondly, at using community radio stations (CRS) as mechanisms for deepening civic education in democracy and active citizenship on the local scale. This paper conveys the practical contributions of the project towards building active citizenship and democracy. It discusses the impact of the project through selected case studies and outlines the emerging challenges and lessons for improving active citizenship and participatory local governance.

CONTEXT OF PROJECT

The rationale for active citizenship in South Africa is founded on the understanding that the country's developmental challenges cannot be addressed by the government alone but through the collective responsibilities of government and citizens (van Donk 2012). While active citizenship may be acknowledged as an essential component of good governance, views diverge over the challenges of active citizenship. Some maintain that the majority of citizens have not been successfully integrated into the liberal notions of citizenship that embody current manifestations of democracy in South Africa (Thompson and Nleya 2010). Similarly, Thompson and Matheza (2005), cited by Thompson and Nleya (2010), have previously argued that the marginalised poor, in particular, are perceived as apathetic and reluctant to take advantage of the fresh opportunities available to them in present-day South Africa. As a result, many citizens are unable to exercise their voice in local governance amid the institutional spaces created for such purpose.

Others shift the blame from citizen apathy to the government's failure to translate political rights into social and economic empowerment, which is equally essential for citizens to have a voice in decisions that affect their well-being.

Others shift the blame from citizen apathy to the government's failure to translate political rights into social and economic empowerment, which is equally essential for citizens to have a voice in decisions that affect their well-being (Chagunda 2007; Esau 2007; Moodley 2006; Tapscott 2010). Municipalities are expected to comply with public participation guidelines and principles that ensure communities are not relegated to the background by elite officials. However, public participation is 'reduced

to spectator politics, where ordinary people have [...] mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes' (Williams 2006). Moreover, substantial evidence shows that many of the existing mechanisms for public participation, such as ward committees, do not function properly or are (party-) politicised. This often discourages individuals and CSOs from engaging through ward committee structures (Naidu 2011; Smith and De Visser 2009).

Promoting active citizenship can be a daunting task, particularly among people who were previously politically disengaged. Hence, citizenship should transcend voting or fulfilling public obligations and focus on shaping the system's structures through deliberative participation by the state, civil society and community, as partners in local governance and development (Honohan 2005). This suggests mainstreaming democratic participation by re-engaging with citizens in local decision-making processes and governance. The current focus on active citizenship emphasises political relationship between citizens and the state (Jochum et al. 2005).

The literature on citizenship links three distinct theoretical approaches: liberal, communitarian, and civic republican (Gaventa and Jones 2002, as cited in Jochum et al. 2005). The liberal perspective emphasises equal rights, rule of law, and independent and self-interested citizens. Citizenship is constructed as a status entitling citizens to formal rights enshrined in the Constitution, while the function of government is to protect and maximise individual rights. The communitarian approach concerns a social notion of citizenship, where the concept relates to a sense of belonging, group identity and rights, and the common good rather than the pursuit of individual interests. The civic republican perspective emphasises the participation of citizens in public life, with citizens taking responsibility to exert their rights and enforce the accountability of elected representatives. In this realm, citizenship is

characterised by rights and obligations and is shaped by a common public culture (stronger than separate group identities), which is produced by a sense of belonging to a particular nation state (Jochum et al. 2005).

The above theoretical approaches have influenced diverging debates about citizenship. Active citizenship can therefore be defined as both a status and an active practice. It fundamentally re-examines the relationship between citizens and the state, how citizens can relate to each other and how civic participation rather than civil participation¹ can be encouraged in local governance (Chanan 2003, as cited in Jochum et al. 2005).

While the DDP project recognises the libertarian construct of citizenship, the approach and ideas are located within the communitarian and civic republican perspectives. The idea of citizenship advanced in this paper is that citizenship must concern individual willingness to build community rather than isolationism. Citizens must exercise their rights and obligations, and have a collective interest in policies over and above their self-interests as users of services. The community is the starting point of citizenship, as community building enables citizens to truly feel and exercise their power and voices in a way that is respected and heard by their fellow citizens. Government's role in promoting community building and active citizenship should be to facilitate processes and support citizens in communities – not to do things for citizens but to work in tandem, empowering them to participate in their own development.

Citizenship does not happen naturally in response to increased spaces or political opportunity. It is fostered through learning/education, socialisation and citizen participation in public and community life on a daily basis (Veneklasen and Miller 2007). What may be plausible is to deepen civic education, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities. Local CSOs need to be mobilised to complement the efforts of local government and to deepen civic education in democracy and active

citizenship. In principle, CSOs, including community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community radio stations, are best situated to be conduits for implementing civic education programmes in marginalised rural communities.

However, one major challenge is that these organisations and groups frequently do not have sufficient resources and capacity to administer civic education and actively engage with existing local participatory structures. As a consequence, the civic education activities that do take place are often unsystematic, incidental and limited in reach. The DDP project addresses this problem by building the capacity of CSOs to engage with existing participatory structures (so as to increase levels of cooperation and citizen participation) and involving community radio stations in civic education focused on democracy and citizenship.

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DEEPENING DEMOCRACY: A MULTI-MEDIA APPROACH

The long-term aim of the project² is to strengthen accountability and good governance in South Africa by enabling and motivating active citizens to participate in local democratic processes. This was achieved through enhancing the capacity of CSOs and using community radio stations as a medium in three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. The target group of the project comprised 45 facilitators from participating CSOs from the three provinces

and nine community radio stations (three from each province). The final beneficiaries of the project are citizens of South Africa.

A two-dimensional approach relating to *reach* and *depth* was employed in order to attain the project's goal and objectives. Reach was achieved through mass media, in the form of easily distributable material like pamphlets³ and the broadcasting of mini drama series through community radio stations.⁴ Depth was ensured by equipping CSOs with training and resources (a manual and a facilitator's guide) and supporting them in conducting intense and challenging workshops on community building and civic educational activities.

Development practitioners widely accept that to build community and social fabric requires an approach that shifts communities into having transformational conversations about a future that they intend to co-create (Block 2008). In view of this, over the years DDP has applied (and adapted) the Peter Block approach⁵ of hosting dialogue to its various programme activities. The approach emphasises the importance of ownership, commitment, accountability, possibility and dissent in a series of conversations that moves community members from being subjects and consumers to becoming active citizens (Block 2008).

This method of hosting dialogue has been adapted to take into account South Africa's wounded past and, while acknowledging this past, also implies the need for a fundamental shift – from seeing communities as victims to seeing them as citizens. A fundamental shift is also needed in how community leaders and government (as convenors of gatherings) conduct meetings in which they have conversations about the future of their communities. Citizens also need to fully comprehend the cost of the stalemate and recognise their personal contributions to perpetuating the community-as-victim story. The organisations participating in the project were trained in this tool

for convening meaningful dialogues and workshops with communities and within their own organisations. The impact of the project in activating citizenship is discussed through selected case studies involving CSOs and a CRS.

INSPIRING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CSOs AS COMMUNITY BUILDERS

A series of capacity-building workshops and community-building conversations were held with facilitators from 45 CSOs in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. The facilitators included elected councillors, ward committee members and other government officials. Participants were expected to learn and internalise the Peter Block method of hosting dialogue. It was envisioned that, with this knowledge and skills, participating organisations would be able to conduct intense and challenging transformational conversations and workshops with communities and, in so doing, contribute towards community building, active citizenship and improved democratic local governance.

Active citizenship concerns the idea of citizens participating actively in public and community life. The two case studies, considered below, show how organisations can contribute towards active citizenship through mobilising and building the capacities of local communities. In the first case study, citizens got involved in school governing bodies in order to improve the quality of education and governance. The second case study shows how local women used the Peter Block method of hosting dialogue to find solutions and possibilities to overcome their challenges. The participating organisations in the project have assisted local communities to initiate transformational dialogues and to take ownership and responsibility for their actions and problems.

CASE STUDY 1 - MARIANNRIDGE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mariannridge Coordinating Committee (MCC) is a CBO that facilitates processes aimed at empowering the community through organising spaces for learning and healing, initiating food security and income-generating projects, and creating opportunities for citizens to participate in partnerships that advocate for change. The organisation strives to create an active community in which all people feel socially connected and part of a healthy society. The aim of the capacity-building workshops was to:

- ✳ Increase the participation of members including school governing body members, teachers, learners, parents and other community members interested in improving the quality of education and school management in Mariannridge.
- ✳ Motivate and inculcate a notion of active citizenship and participation in local democratic processes by training stakeholders to use the hosting dialogue methodology.

The intention was to rebuild broken relationships and trust in order to begin a process of creating a different future for a secondary school, based on the possibilities and capacities of the Mariannridge community. The method involved reflecting on questions of ownership, dissent, accountability and commitment, and having conversations about how to be an active citizen. In the first DDP-hosted community builders' dialogue, members of the Mariannridge community had an opportunity to be seen as citizens who have the right to be heard and to voice their opinions of what they would like their community to be, and how they see their roles in achieving that.

The hosting dialogue methodology had an influence on MCC's work, which shifted from *leading* the community to *following* the community, and from focusing on *needs* to focusing on *capacities* of citizens. Jenny Boyce, the director of MCC, now uses the hosting dialogue principles in her daily work. She explains how the methodology has affected the work of the organisation:

We used the conversations to uncover real issues first. Afterwards, being aware where the challenges are, we used the conversations again to go deeper with those who were part of the issue and looked at the possibilities of working together. We used the concept of the small group to see what passions and skills are among people rather than faults and deficits. It is about building broken relationships and reviving the passions and motivation. The small group also showed how many people were listened to for the first time ever. As an organisation we learnt that we need to step back and look whether we are damaging by helping or if we are really listening to those who we see as trouble makers. We also used the methodology as a healing process with young women who are stuck in their relationships and the outcome of this conversation was remarkable for its members. They see this safe space of conversation as a beginning of their healing, personal growth and contribution to changing lives of others who will be also welcomed in the future conversations.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

'This was the first time I really spoke to our youth like this and I must say that after having an opportunity to talk to these two young people, I am certain that the future is in safe hands.'

'I felt heard for once; I am actually sharing lots of thoughts and opinions about life with people who have the same interest as me.'

'For me it was really excellent to see how people are contributing into a change process.'

CASE STUDY 2 - KWAZULU-NATAL REGIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

Based in Eshowe, Zululand, the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Christian Council⁶ (KRCC) is a church organisation that promotes ecumenism⁷, development and unity among churches in the struggle against poverty, injustice, diseases and ignorance. Its mission is to enable churches to take action against social ills by helping them to develop skills needed to monitor service delivery within the KRCC region. Their core work revolves around the issues of gender-based violence, crime, drugs and HIV/AIDS.

KRCC applied the hosting dialogue methodology to engage with the rural communities of Nknanini and Masangweni, where for more than a decade farmers have been fighting over land, which has led to killings and resultant arrests. The aim of the workshops was to encourage local women to construct conversations in a different way, in order to find solutions and possibilities to overcome some of their challenges such as gender-based violence, crime, HIV/AIDS and drugs. The methodology focused on their personal contributions, either negative or positive, to the current situation, and allowed them to reflect deeply and to come up with their own solutions to the aforementioned challenges. KRCC was thus able to ensure that the voices of these women were visible.

Below are some of the responses to the question 'why are we here?' that was asked at the start of the conversation. However, as the conversations progressed, participants started to move from focusing on the problems they face (such as the absence of a community hall) to the possibilities they have among themselves (for instance, building their own community hall).

WHY ARE WE HERE?

'To listen to what visitors will do to help solve our problems.'

'We are troubled by the issue of having no school for our children in this area. Therefore KRCC and the visitors must tell us what solutions they have.'

'I thought by coming here I will be able to get feedback as to what land affairs can do to enable the government to build me a low cost housing for my family on this farm.'

KRCC now uses the methodology not only in community conversations, but also when discussing various topics at staff meetings and when reviewing their programme structures. These are some of the reflections by facilitators from KRCC on how the hosting dialogue methodology influenced their work:

What these communities normally see in meetings, are people telling them the solutions to the problems they face. But this time everything was centred on people themselves. This time we asked them to work in groups

where they worked closely with the people who were listening to their successful stories, looking at 'how we can do things in a better way?' There has been a shift from pointing fingers, blaming somebody else without seeing their own contribution to listening to people's contributions. We ended the conversation with a plan with people saying: 'this is what we want to do and this is how we want to do it and these are the resources that we need to get in order to get things done'. To see people changing their attitudes about the problems they have, for me it is a success and I am thrilled.

We used to use our organisational power to uplift people out of poverty and other problems they were facing but after attending the workshop we applied the methodology and found out so much that the communities can do better for themselves. After many years of working with one particular community, for the first time they let go of the talking about the same problem that has been affecting every project we engaged them with and they started looking at

possibilities of what else is out there that they can do for themselves. We forget that people are human beings, they have their own thinking and they know what it is that they want.

BUILDING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

Community radio stations are central to reaching the masses, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities where civic education in democracy issues and processes is almost non-existent. The rationale underlying the use of community radio stations is that radio is more accessible to the broader community and hence better placed to motivate active citizenship in local democratic processes. Community radio stations are used as mechanisms (or ambassadors) to raise awareness or provide civic education through the broad-casting of *mini drama series*.⁸ These series act as conversation starters on issues of democracy, active citizenship and service delivery, and on how citizens can take ownership in solving their problems and holding their local representatives accountable.

CASE STUDY: RADIO KHWEZI IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Located in the Kranskop area of KwaZulu-Natal, Radio Khwezi (90.5 & 107.7 FM) has a huge footprint covering a population of about 2.7 million people, making it a suitable station to pilot the mini drama series. Episodes of the series were developed to be broadcast in English, isiZulu and Afrikaans – languages used by Radio Khwezi. The initiative has been successful, with results thus far, demonstrating that the mini drama series has a huge potential for deepening active citizenship and local governance.

The broadcast of the first drama series in August 2012, received a warm reception from listeners who called into the radio station and voiced their concerns and anger, made submissions and called for regular engagements between citizens and municipal authorities. Citizens were inspired to take ownership and to contest municipal (political) officials and leadership in their constituencies on decisions that affect their wellbeing. Their submissions simply show the extent to which mini dramas incite active citizenship among listeners.

After listening to the mini drama series, citizens raised issues that included poverty and inequality, democratic principles and procedures in solving problems, conflicts, service delivery protests, public participation and the duties of local government representatives such as ward councillors. Citizens specifically raised concerns about: the roles of ward committees and councillors; community development workers; proportional representative councillors; how municipal managers and councillors are appointed, and whether citizens can remove from office those councillors and ward committee members who are not performing their duties as per their mandate; trust between communities and officials; and how to report cases of maladministration. The citizens demanded that municipal officials and their representatives be more accountable, accessible and responsive to their needs and priorities.

More importantly, the mini dramas revealed the level of citizens' understanding and knowledge of municipal processes, with a focus on active citizenship and exercising rights and principles of democracy. Most citizens conceived active citizenship as the right to vote (confirming the conventional view of citizenship). It was also observed that citizens lacked knowledge and information about how to hold their elected representatives accountable and how to participate in local government processes such as integrated development planning, municipal budgeting and performance monitoring systems.

In addition, citizens lacked the knowledge and understanding of the role of elected representatives, which makes monitoring their performance difficult. Citizens' perspectives of ward councillors seem to indicate a lack of trust between councillors and community members because councillors have not been able to fulfil on the promises that were made during election campaigns. The experiences from Radio Khwezi point to the possibility of increasing the scope of this initiative to other areas where civic education in democracy, rights and active citizenship is in peril.

EMERGING IMPLICATIONS FOR ENABLING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The DDP project and its associated hosting dialogue methodology are not distinct from the rationale underpinning the people-centred development paradigm. Developmental elements and principles are central to the DDP's strategies to consolidate democracy and development, with the emphasis on collectivism, agency, empowerment, social justice and participation of civil society and citizens in local democratic processes. Having applied the hosting dialogue methodology for more than a decade, and considering the current lessons emanating from this pilot project, the following implications for improving

active citizenship and democratic local governance are discernible.

The approach has proven useful for engaging with partners, strengthening partnerships and coordinating efforts between different stakeholders in the communities where capacity-building workshops were held. The majority of these stakeholders are now able to convene their own transformational dialogues and assign roles and responsibilities to different role players in their communities. For example, at KRCC the hosting dialogue methodology has been applied to staff meetings, performance appraisals, as well as when engaging with other stakeholders. DDP is learning more about activating citizenship in various contexts and

deepening understanding of how the methodology can calm angry voices and make quiet voices louder and more visible. The model emphasises ownership, accountability, dissent, commitment and possibility as a series of conversations that move community members from being subjects to becoming active citizens. As a result, citizens who have gained knowledge of the model become active citizens in local decision-making processes.

Moreover, through community radio stations, mini drama series have assisted in deepening civic education in democracy and active citizenship. Citizens have become keener to contest their leadership, participate in municipal processes and to use radio stations as platforms to raise critical issues that face their constituencies. This results in a process where municipal officials or representatives are invited to challenge issues raised by citizens within a space that allows peaceful face-to-face interactions. The shift of government's role – from leading to following citizens – implies the devolution of power to ordinary citizens in communities. In practice, this implies giving powers to citizens to make decisions relating to budgets, resource allocation, selection of service providers, identification of projects, and also encouraging participation in municipal performance monitoring processes. This may improve accountability, transparency, openness and restore the legitimacy of government at the local level.

Above all, the model has the potential to mend fragmented communities by instilling trust between communities and municipal government through regular dialogue between elected representatives and citizens. In addition, the shift from subject to citizen changes the relationship between citizens and the state. Eventually, citizens who become leaders may hold themselves accountable for the wellbeing of the larger collective of which they are part. This invariably deepens the trust that citizens have bestowed upon their leaders as colleague citizens.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS, LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

This DDP project raised a number of issues relating to the hosting dialogue methodology:

- ✳ Dependency is deeply embedded within the South African society, and several iterations of the hosting dialogue methodology may be required before citizens can find and successfully use their voice to assert their citizenship;
- ✳ The right to say 'no' is perhaps one of the most important conversations that communities need to make space for. It is here that citizens learn that dissent does not mean betrayal but just another point of view;
- ✳ Commitment happens one person at a time and not by a show of hands;
- ✳ NGOs, CBOs and others need to be supported along the way so that the methodology is embedded in the culture of the organisation. This requires commitment from the NGO or CBO itself and the facilitating organisation to continually practise the methodology;
- ✳ Creating ownership of their own future involves acknowledging that individuals contributed to the present state communities find themselves in; and
- ✳ Community radio is a powerful medium to ignite active citizenship but is being under-utilised and under-resourced in South Africa.

The significance of the conversations is not necessarily what the communities talk about, but how they talk to each other. This is where transformational dialogues, and in particular the Peter Block approach to hosting dialogue becomes an invaluable tool. It breaks through the surface and reaches a space where the difficult questions are answered with authenticity that leads to liberation.

CONCLUSION

The DDP project and its methods and approaches covered in this paper should not be regarded as ends in themselves but rather as a way of improving structures and processes that promote local governance and development. After almost two decades of development work, the DDP has come to the conclusion that, compared to project-based work, addressing political processes that shape and constrain local level development has a huge potential for transformation. DDP strives to consolidate democracy and good governance through strategies that include dialogue, capacity building, advocacy and research.

The case studies examined in this paper provide practical lessons and experiences for improving active citizenship and local governance that can be applied to broader local government processes and institutions. Based on these experiences, this paper is of the view that conversations that build social fabric and relatedness result from community building and collectivism – where unpaid citizens avail themselves by choice rather than through programme interventions where experts show up because they are tied to contractual agreements. When citizens and leaders begin to take personal responsibility for their own decisions

and actions and hold transformational dialogues, it may lead to transformation that is consistent with citizen's needs and priorities in all spheres of life.

A key lesson learnt is that those in power are most likely to dismiss the process of empowerment, which they perceive as a threat to current structures. For communities, it is difficult to break through these structures that are designed to shut down the voices of citizens. However, councillors and leaders, who participated in the DDP's project and have applied the hosting dialogue methodology to their work, have indicated that it was facilitative.

Disconnection seems to be one of the biggest challenges within community development work. Through our engagements with communities, we have observed that the segregation that took place during apartheid is still strongly present. Trust is broken, making it difficult to mobilise citizens. Building relationships among community members is the biggest asset of development. This action on its own is often effective enough to begin the transformation process. The use of the Peter Block hosting dialogue method builds connections and relationships, which have the power to contribute to the healing of wounds from the past and move community members towards action.

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NOTES

- ¹ Gabriel Chanan (2003) has often distinguished between vertical (civic) and horizontal (civil) participation: the former relates to governance, such as participation in a Local Strategic Partnership or in a council committee, and the latter relates to community participation in a sports club or faith group.
- ² The project began in July 2011 and is due to end December 2012. It will be seeking funding to extend the work to other areas.
- ³ DDP has developed a more innovative approach; 'Democracy and You', which seeks not only to inform but to open up spaces for citizens to engage with the democratic process. The materials which have been designed and applied on numerous occasions over the years are structured in a way to stimulate interaction and encourage participants to connect their own views into the learning process.
- ⁴ Information on pamphlets and mini drama series can be obtained at www.ddpdurban.org.za.
- ⁵ The Peter Block methodology has been widely used in the North American context and has great possibilities for rebuilding fragmented communities in South Africa. Background information on the Peter Block methodology can be accessed at <http://www.peterblock.com/>
- ⁶ For more information about the work of KRCC visit www.krcc.org.za.
- ⁷ Ecumenism may refer to the promotion of cooperation and understanding among different religious groupings or denominations.
- ⁸ Mini dramas focus on civic or democracy education at the local level designed to provoke dialogue between communities and their representatives and municipal government. They are broadcast by community radio stations and the emanating experiences or lessons are documented and used as feedback into the learning process.



BARRIERS TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

By Nontando Ngamlana and Sibulele Poswayo, Afesis-corplan

Many conflicts in development can be understood as struggles by the poor to hold the powerful to account. Contests over the rights and responsibilities of actors in development are increasing in intensity amid clashes between the promotion of a rights-based developmental approach and market-based notions of access and entitlement to resources. How these conflicts are played out has enormous implications for efforts to tackle poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals¹.



PHOTO: NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

THE ACTIVE exercise of citizenship has been conceived in both very broad terms, as any form of voluntary public activity, and in far narrower terms, as political participation in electoral-partisan activity. Coehlo (2007) argues that, in many democracies, citizens enjoy relatively free and equal exercise of their political rights, including that of the vote, but they experience gross inequalities in access to public goods that are necessary to the enjoyment of many other (non-political) rights and entitlements that constitute contemporary citizenship.

Therefore, in its most general sense, citizenship is concerned with the rights and obligations of members

of society. While this paper does not deal in detail with the definitions and discussions on the most appropriate definition of citizenship, much of this debate has been influenced by the work of scholars such as Marshall (1950) and Turner (1992). Marshall argued that citizen rights have been extended from civil rights (i.e. right to free speech), to political rights (i.e. right to vote), to social rights (i.e. rights to welfare), while Turner points out two forms of citizenship: citizenship developed from above and citizenship developed from below. The discussion in this paper is located within the democratic theory that individual citizens, who actively exercise

their rights and entitlements by voting, making demands on public officials or engaging in the public life of the community, help to transform political institutions into democratic ones.

This paper looks at barriers to active citizenship and more especially barriers to the emergence, upkeep, recognition and institutionalisation of community-based monitoring and planning, drawing on the work done by various partners within the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN) and lessons shared from implementing different models of alternative participation spaces. In presenting the arguments, the paper will have a bias towards citizen participation in local governance. However, this does not in any way imply that citizens can only be deemed active if they are engaging in local governance processes; it is simply the angle that the authors have chosen to locate and anchor the discussion.

Governments and social organisations find it increasingly difficult to sustain the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes. Therefore, along with regular elections, free political parties and freedom of speech and association, the implementation of mechanisms capable of promoting greater citizen involvement in public decisions, greater transparency and/or more horizontal flow of information need to be encouraged (Kimemia 2009).

In summarising the findings of comparative research on decentralisation and participation in South Africa, Robins et al. (2008) point to five major limitations to citizen participation in local governance:

- a) Lack of political commitment or leadership on the part of local elites with regard to the new participatory spaces;
- b) Lack of political mobilisation of the poor;
- c) Inadequate financial resources to guarantee the sustainability of participatory experiences;
- d) Lack of institutionalisation of participatory spaces and mechanisms; and

- e) Lack of technical and managerial capacity, as well as inequalities of information among participants.

Authors such as Coehlo and Nobre (2004) and Abers (2001) show that deliberative processes contribute towards changing participants' positions and opinions, narrowing the gap between people's opinions and contentious issues, while for Cornwall and Coehlo (2007) important questions remain concerning the democratic potential of participatory processes. Given the informality that is a feature of participation in deliberative processes, questions that still need to be addressed are around the quality of processes (inclusion, involvement and transparency) or of the outcomes that are attributed to participation (innovation and distribution).

Two recommendations are generally suggested: the first is to redesign participatory bodies (Fung 2004) and the second is to mobilise social actors (Gaventa 2006; Cornwall 2007). Over the past few years, various organisations within the GGLN have explored different mechanisms of redesigning participatory structures, while focusing on mobilising social actors. This paper will draw on the work of these organisations² to support its main arguments.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

A look at the history of South Africa, and its impact on active citizenship, may be useful before attempting to explore possible limitations and current barriers to active citizenship. Since 1994, the post-apartheid leadership has made significant strides in uniting the country. The end of apartheid and the introduction of a legal framework that ensured everyone's right to free and fair democratic elections and access to justice meant that all races can live as rightful citizens in the land. However, South Africa still faces enormous developmental and structural challenges. The inequality gap continues to

widen, while opportunities continue to be defined by race, gender, geographic location, class and, at times, even linguistic background (ILO 2007: 148).

As has been well documented, of the three spheres of government (national, provincial and local), local government appears to be the most dysfunctional (as noted also in the Local Government Turnaround Strategy report 2009). Party political fights have had the most (and worst) effects at local level. Although South Africa's Constitution makes citizen participation central to local governance, various government reports have raised concerns that citizens are not living up to their constitutional obligations, giving a particular interpretation to the relationship between the state and the people (SAHRC 2008).

Although South Africa's Constitution makes citizen participation central to local governance, various government reports have raised concerns that citizens are not living up to their constitutional obligations, giving a particular interpretation to the relationship between the state and the people (SAHRC 2008).

In looking at the structural and developmental challenges facing South Africa, the core of the problem is the lack of civic education to prepare post-apartheid South Africans for, on the one hand, what government is expected and can do and, on the other hand, the roles and responsibilities of citizens (Gregory 2005; Finkel and Howard 2005; Galston 2001). It is widely agreed that effective citizenship, whether in well-established democracies or in those in transition, requires some educational preparation. For example, ward committees were established without being properly prepared for participation in local governance. In no time these structures were hijacked by local politics and failed to effectively fulfil the purpose for which they were intended (CoGTA 2009). It did not help that by the

second local government elections, candidates who stood for election as ward councillors had largely been participating in ward committees (Helliker 2010), thereby creating the impression that ward committees were the first point of entry towards a successful local political career.

As local politics continue to hijack the developmental space at local government level, the demand is increasing for alternative spaces for citizen engagement in local governance (Poswayo 2012). Various civil society organisations have begun piloting alternative mechanisms to the ward committee that citizens could use to engage with local government. They include Planact, the Built Environment Support Group (BESG) and the Black Sash. The pilot projects explored different spaces and led to the emergence of terms such as 'invented spaces', 'closed spaces', 'networked spaces', etc., which aim to push the boundary beyond the legislated 'invited' spaces (Masiko-Kambala et al 2012). The organisations have shared experiences and lessons learnt through different platforms in an effort to inform government policy.

FACTORS THAT HAMPER ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The involvement of citizens and communities in local government is a statutory requirement of the legislative framework in South Africa. However, even with such an accommodating legal framework, a number of challenges continue to hamper active citizen participation in local governance. While by no means exhaustive, below are some of the factors that obstruct active citizenship.

POLITICAL WILL

Despite the legislative framework that places citizen participation at the centre of local governance processes, the question of political will to facilitate this participation remains. The continued efforts to establish

ward committees, as the only legitimate structures through which citizens should engage with the state, are limiting the emergence of alternative, citizen-initiated forms of organisation. On numerous occasions (and in most parts of South Africa) local government has sidelined citizen-initiated participatory structures, hailing 'dysfunctional' ward committees as legitimate citizen representative structures. This was the experience of both Afesis-corplan, in its support of Civil Society Action Groups (CSAG) in the Eastern Cape, and the Black Sash, in facilitating the Community Monitoring and Advice Programme in South Africa's nine provinces. This attitude and prescriptive stance from the state has been seen as a key contributing factor to the growing phenomenon of service delivery protests.

In their study into the causes of service delivery protests in urban informal settlements, Heese and Allan (2009) noted that poor communication between citizens and the state was the biggest catalyst of service delivery protests. They found that even a well-functioning ward committee system could not reach the entire community and all interests groups within the ward. Local government would still need to create room for other organised structures through which citizens could participate in local governance, such as ratepayers' associations, social movements, networked structures, etc. Clearly, political will would be required to push the boundaries of participation beyond those legislated by the state.

STATE CAPACITY TO ENGAGE

The African National Congress (ANC)'s cadre deployment policy (ANC 2007), with all its good intentions, robbed the country of capable and highly skilled people in various positions of influence and had the greatest effect on the local government sphere (Kanyane 2009). Yet local government is the most heavily legislated sphere and demands that highly complicated compliance measures are in place (Steytler

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and De Visser 2007). The legislation requires citizens to be involved in local government, with ward committees as the primary vehicle through which citizens should participate. However, the ward committee system has failed to deliver on its intentions, and so alternative vehicles for citizen participation in matters of local governance are being piloted.

These alternatives call for an innovative state that is ready to engage in these creative spaces. However, in many instances, the efforts of citizens to engage creatively with the state are met with a lack of capacity from the state. Examples include the experiences of Planact in its implementation of participatory budgeting (Makwela 2012), Afesis-corplan's support of CSAGs (Poswayo 2012), and BESG's support for people-driven housing development (Bailey 2011). Poorly informed officials, poorly written plans, or highly complicated technical plans developed by consultants, which even officials cannot interpret or implement confidently, are just some of the obstacles faced.

In some cases, municipal officials are not willing to think (or capable of thinking) outside the box in order to meet the unique demands of the municipality, while meeting their compliance obligations. For example, in one municipality the community (supported by the PCRD) undertook a comprehensive community-based planning process, which included developing a long-term vision for their ward. They then engaged with municipal officials in an attempt to get the broader municipal vision reviewed, so that it could incorporate or reflect their ward vision. The officials could not understand the possibility of reviewing a municipal vision. Only after years of countless engagements and submissions

to council (and finally a protest) did the municipality review its vision statement and incorporate the broader aspirations and visions of the ward communities.

Any increased support of citizens' efforts to organise outside the state's legislated structures must be accompanied by capacitating the state's ability to engage effectively in these alternative spaces. In this regard, efforts to professionalise local government and to ensure that qualified and skilled officials are placed in relevant positions will assist.

While they play a highly commendable role in bridging the gap between the state and citizens, intermediary organisations should preferably empower communities to engage directly with the state. One typical example is South African NGOs (and consultants to a large degree) who assisted communities to develop community-based plans when these were first introduced.

DIEMPOWERING ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATIONS

At times the development of an active citizenry is limited by the presence and role played by intermediary organisations. In communities where literacy levels are low, unemployment is high and classism may even exist, local officials tend to prefer to engage with intermediary organisations rather than with local citizens. Officials generally find it easier and less time-consuming to explain the technicalities of their processes, technical plans and budget issues to the intermediary organisations than to deal with citizens directly (Helliker 2010). As a result, citizens have to get information from a "middle-man" as opposed to engaging with the state directly. This robs citizens of an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues on the spot, and to hold their elected representatives to account (Vellem 2012).

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intermediary organisations should preferably empower communities to engage directly with the state. One typical example is South African NGOs (and consultants to a large degree) who assisted communities to develop community-based plans when these were first introduced. Community-based plans provide communities and local authorities with a common ground for discussing development priorities. The tools and methodology are, in essence, aimed at empowering communities to plan for themselves with assistance from local authorities and other structures where possible (SASDIA 2004). However, at the insistence of certain municipalities, a number of NGOs fell into the trap of facilitating the development of community-based plans without capacitating local communities with the necessary skills and tools, and then engaged with these municipalities on behalf of the communities for the implementation of the plans (Labuscagne 2007). Community-based planning, as a concept, promised great success, but has been severely compromised by these NGOs who disempowered communities and paraded themselves as the 'be all and end all' for communities (Labuscagne 2007). The key role of intermediary organisations in any development process should be to support and empower communities and to act as catalysts to unlock their potential, including their ability to engage with the state (Helliker 2010).

NARROW ECONOMIC BASE (LACK OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCES)

According to the Auditor-General's report, most local municipalities in South Africa have a very limited revenue base. They struggle to run their operations effectively, do not have the proper accounting systems in place and/or lack the ability to attract requisite skills (AGSA 2012). In general, public participation tends to command the least budget in municipal budgets, while the institutionalisation of public participants in all municipalities, as called for in the Framework for

Public Participation, is yet to be fully achieved. Citizens often struggle to attend meetings organised by the municipality, especially council meetings where the most crucial decisions are generally made.

A recent study, conducted by Afesis-corplan in seven municipalities in the Eastern Cape, revealed that poorer municipalities considered the cost of facilitating effective citizen participation to be extremely high. They have to support citizens travelling to central venues for meetings in areas where wards are vast and straddle a number of rural villages (Afesis-corplan 2012). In these municipalities, officials confessed that emphasis was on compliance rather than facilitating effective citizen participation. In such meetings, municipalities only shared pre-drafted plans as opposed to getting input on the citizens' developmental needs and priorities, which can then inform planning. In essence, the communication approach used was top-down, prescriptive, and only aimed at compliance with the law (Poswayo 2012).

PARTICIPATION FOR PERSONAL GAIN

In most rural municipalities the biggest employer is often the municipality (or other government departments), and standing for election as ward councillors is the best available paid job opportunity for low-skilled individuals. Currently the criteria for electing ward councillors do not include any academic requirements, making it relatively easy to achieve. Individuals up for election as ward councillors are elected based on their standing in the communities where they live, their level of activism and involvement in local politics and, in many instances, their position in the ranks of the political party that endorses their candidacy.

Individuals seeking election as councillors often actively mobilise citizens to participate in local government matters in order to profile themselves as possible candidates for ward councillor. Then, when

A growing notion within South African communities is that local governance is a complicated affair that can only be understood by those with a certain degree of literacy (Project Literacy 2004).

these individuals join municipal councils, citizen mobilisation movements at grassroots level are robbed of capable and seasoned leaders. Yet a pool of leaders to sustain grassroots movements could be provided by deliberately grooming leaders at different levels of the civic mobilisation process. Therefore, it is crucial that organised community groups develop various levels of leaders to ensure that they place their own in municipal councils.

With regards to the leadership issue, the experience of CSAGs³ found that groups are stronger and more active in the year preceding local government elections. However, once elected as ward councillors, the lead individuals (or some members) were the first to discourage the group's participation in local governance and to even sow dissension among the group. Further investigation points to a belief and an understanding that, once the individuals are elected as councillors, their thinking shifts, from 'participating to governing' to wanting limited interference with their 'governing' (Gregory 2005).

CLASSISM

A growing notion within South African communities is that local governance is a complicated affair that can only be understood by those with a certain degree of literacy (Project Literacy 2004). Coupled with this view is very little effort on the part of the state to make information accessible to all citizens irrespective of literacy levels. A certain section of society – the less educated – is in turn locked out of the participation space. This behaviour allows for the rise of local elites – those who can understand and engage with the state

In the Eastern Cape, where a number of communities continue to fall under the jurisdiction and authority of traditional leaders, classism had been cited as the key issue that limits citizen participation in the formally legislated spaces for participation (Triangle Project 2012).

on behalf of the rest of the illiterate community – who most of the time represent the community without a clear mandate. Better education would enable certain organised citizen groups to shape public opinion through effective use of the media, economic pressure (i.e. withholding rates, strategic boycotts, etc.) and establishing a range of local networks to help their cause. With support, an enabling prescriptive legislative framework and political will, government could reach illiterate and poorer citizens as well as engage with literate citizens.

In the Eastern Cape, where a number of communities continue to fall under the jurisdiction and authority of traditional leaders, classism had been cited as the key issue that limits citizen participation in the formally legislated spaces for participation (Triangle Project 2012). In these communities, where the ward committee system and the traditional system co-exist, citizens tend to participate more in the traditional system that they know and are familiar with, rather than try to grapple with the local governance system that is relatively new to them. In numerous cases, the ward councillors and the traditional leaders have brought their constituents together to deliberate on development priorities, but this is only possible when harmonious relationships exist between the two (for example the Planact's participatory budgeting pilot). However, when the relationship is not good, each leader hosts their own meetings, locking their constituents out of the benefits of both systems, as was reflected by the work of BESG in social housing delivery (Bailey 2010) and

Afesis-corporation's CSAGs and Good Governance Surveys (Ngamlana and Mathoho 2012).

Currently no legislative framework effectively brings these two systems together in a true manner (allowing for transfer and balance of powers within council). To this day, sections of society actively participate in local governance (through the traditional system) but do not have the tools or power to hold municipal leaders to account. While the roots of this issue are complex and cannot be attributed to classism alone, the Afesis-corporation's Good Governance Surveys reveal that classism is one of the major contributing reasons for municipal officials preferring to engage with the ward committee system as opposed to the traditional system.

CIVIC EDUCATION

As noted above, during the "transition" period, no efforts were made to prepare South Africans for their role and responsibilities in a democracy. At the time, efforts focused on ensuring that previously disenfranchised groups were ready to cast their vote in the first national election. Voter education efforts were intense but did not extend to preparing for democracy (if such a thing exists). A number of years later, researchers are realising this was a step missed in the country's foundation phase (Galston 2001; Finkel and Howard 2005; Ramphela 2012).

Over the years, poorly resourced, NGO-led civic education programmes have also not yielded the results to scale, as required in South Africa's development process (Triangle Project 2012). Much more institutionalised, state-supported civic education programmes (drawing from international experiences) are needed to prepare the next generation of active citizens. Calls are being made by various activist and advocacy groups that such civic education should be incorporated in the main educational curriculum, from the lowest education levels (Ramphela 2012, Triangle Project 2012). While different times may call for a

different kind of activism, steps still need to be taken to prepare the next generation to engage with the struggles of their time much more actively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section draws on the barriers to active citizenship, as summarised above, in order to extract some recommendations to inform policy and practice. The recommendations are summarised (in no particular order) as follows.

EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL CHAMPIONS

Political champions need to emerge who can promote alternative spaces and true citizen participation in matters of local governance. These champions will have to be individuals of strong character, who will not back down under political pressure and would have to be willing to be unpopular. Furthermore, these champions would have to be accountable to the community or the citizens who voted them into power. While the failure of the ward committee system has been noted, what is not clear is how political parties will be monitored and curbed from manipulating and using these structures for their purpose.

CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education is a necessity and should be linked to the school curriculum, so as to ensure that the key tenets and principles of a democracy and the role of a citizen in a democracy are entrenched at a young age. Currently, civic education efforts, by the state, are largely aimed at voter education and, by NGOs, are limited and fail to reach the quantities of scale necessary.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Various levels of leadership must be developed at community level to drive citizen-based efforts to engage with and to hold the state accountable. Citizens should

Furthermore, these champions would have to be accountable to the community or the citizens who voted them into power. While the failure of the ward committee system has been noted, what is not clear is how political parties will be monitored and curbed from manipulating and using these structures for their purpose.

be encouraged to contest local government elections, as these elections are strictly about local issues. Communities also need to actively mobilise to put the right people in their local municipal councils.

DEVELOPMENTAL ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATIONS

The role of intermediary organisations remains that of empowering and supporting citizens in their cause, whatever that may be. Whenever they enter a community or a space, intermediary organisations should at all times aim to work themselves out of a job quickly. However, this may not always be easy, as the developmental process can take a long time.

NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS AND SUPPORT

Participation outside of legislated spaces can sometimes be resource-intensive, which would in turn discourage community members. Therefore, such organised groups should seek support from partners (e.g. NGOs, an institution of higher learning, a corporate entity, etc.) who will share and understand their cause. The struggle for change and good governance is no doubt an intense one and networks and partnership support is critical.

CONCLUSION

Numerous elements limit active citizenship in local governance. This paper has not exhausted all the facets of the challenges but has brought a few to the fore in an attempt to help stimulate debate, and inform policy and

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practice. The prescriptive stance that the country has taken towards citizen participation in matters of local governance has not worked as well as envisaged, and the legislated spaces have failed to bear the expected fruits. Therefore, alternative citizen-led organised structures need to be accommodated creatively in matters of local governance.

A paradigm shift is needed for engaging with citizens. Both government officials and NGOs should consider and treat citizens as custodians of information

with regards to their own development. The call is for a proactive approach where citizens can groom their own leaders within local government to ensure that they place the right people in the right jobs. Finally, targeted and strategic civic education programmes are required with the aim of preparing the next generation of active citizens. For this to be possible, political champions need to emerge, together with a mobilised, energised and willing citizenry able to organise itself and push the boundaries of participation in local governance.

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NOTES

- ¹ The Millennium Development Goals are eight critical economic and social development priorities, which the international community reached consensus on achieving by 2015.
- ² Over and above reference to the work done by Afesis-corporation, this paper will also draw specifically on the work of Planact based in Gauteng, Built Environment Support Group (BESG) based in KwaZulu-Natal, Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD) based in the Eastern Cape and the Black Sash which is based in various provinces in South Africa.
- ³ Civil Society Action Groups are civil society-led structures that are set-up within a municipal area to represent civil society interests in local government processes. The groups are made up of organised civil society structures, faith-based organisations, activists, ratepayers groups, and some elements of business. Afesis-corporation has been supporting the CSAGs for the past four years in various municipalities in the Eastern Cape.



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AS A FORM OF ACTIVE CITIZENRY: INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMME (CMAP)

By: Elroy Paulus, Monique Warden and Louise Carmody, The Black Sash

The National Development Plan – Vision 2030 (NDP¹), which was launched in late 2012, places active citizenry – along with strong leadership and effective government – at the centre of the ‘cycle of development’ model proposed (see Figure 1). It sets out six interlinked priorities for development, including ‘promoting active citizenry to strengthen development, democracy and accountability’ (NPC 2012: 26).



PHOTO: BLACK SASH

THE BLACK SASH'S Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) offers a model for motivating active citizenship and government accountability. Conceptualised by the Black Sash in 2008, the CMAP² was piloted in 2009 and implemented in all nine provinces of South Africa in 2010. The CMAP demonstrates how accountability, monitoring and advocacy can inform and add stakeholder legitimacy to the South African State's framework of active citizenship. The CMAP experience provides a useful guide for future community-led monitoring and advocacy initiatives,

of what needs to be done, what principles need to be upheld, and what power shifts need to occur to ensure that such initiatives are recognised and appreciated significantly and in a sustained manner by all levels of government and state institutions. This paper argues that CMAP has the potential to transform from a project to a wider, multi-contextual, broadly owned practice, supporting nuanced implementation strategies.

After examining the different views of the concept “active citizenry”, the paper looks at the role that CMAP has played in mobilising active community engagement,

examines the objectives of the project and considers some of the underlying assumptions and challenges that were identified. Valuable insights are provided from the CMAP monitors, the Black Sash (in its engagements with provincial and national government officials) and from an independent evaluation report on CMAP, by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). Finally, the use of the CMAP as a tool to motivate active citizenship in the South African context is discussed, and a way forward proposed.

The pendulum of active citizenry has arguably swung back to a liberal interpretation, as the current UK Conservative–Liberal coalition government is again promoting individual responsibility, pursuing cuts to public funding and calling for public volunteering under the banner of “Big Society” (United Kingdom Parliament 2011).

THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVE CITIZENRY

Traditional definitions of active citizenry, mostly imported from Western experience, distinguish between liberal, communitarian and civic republican interpretations. The liberal construct focuses on the citizen as an individual with legal rights, such as the right to equality, and within a nation state respecting the rule of law. In contrast, the communitarian theory focuses on group identity and pursuing the common good, while according to civic republican theories, the citizen has an overarching responsibility of civic morality and participation (Jochum et al. 2005).

Western experience suggests that active citizenry will have a broader scope in practice than any one definition and moreover is often a combination of aspects of these theories. Much depends on whom – and for what purpose – the concept is defined or promoted. When governments use active citizenship,

their motive is political – to rally the public into social responsibility or action, or to encourage greater awareness and interest in the political landscape (Jochum et al. 2005). The UK experience shows how governments of different political persuasions interpret active citizenship differently.

The Conservative government (1979–1997) employed the liberal interpretation of active citizenship, where the political policy emphasised was private freedoms and individual interests. The intention in invoking the term was not to foster political participation but, rather, to promote active citizenship as a way of discouraging reliance on the welfare state (Jochum et al. 2005: 8). However, under the subsequent Labour government (1997–2010), the interpretation of active citizenship followed both the civic-republican and communitarian model: civic-republican, as ‘[c]itizens are defined by duty: rights of citizens are dependent on the fulfilment of their responsibilities. The emphasis is equally based on active participation’ (Jochum et al. 2005: 8); and communitarian because the government sought to promote ‘reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens’ with ‘citizen participation in governance... essentially promoted at the community level’ (Jochum et al. 2005: 9). The pendulum of active citizenry has arguably swung back to a liberal interpretation, as the current UK Conservative–Liberal coalition government is again promoting individual responsibility, pursuing cuts to public funding and calling for public volunteering under the banner of “Big Society” (United Kingdom Parliament 2011).³

In contrast, active citizenry in the South⁴ emphasises citizen leadership as a key element required for deepening democratic accountability: citizen leadership is promoted and consolidated through using and reclaiming participatory spaces and using the right to information (Jha et al. 2011). Thus, active citizenry in the South most closely resembles a

communitarian approach. For Oxfam, active citizenship is practiced at both the individual and collective level, where rights and responsibilities are claimed and fulfilled in a balanced way (Clarke and Missingham 2009):

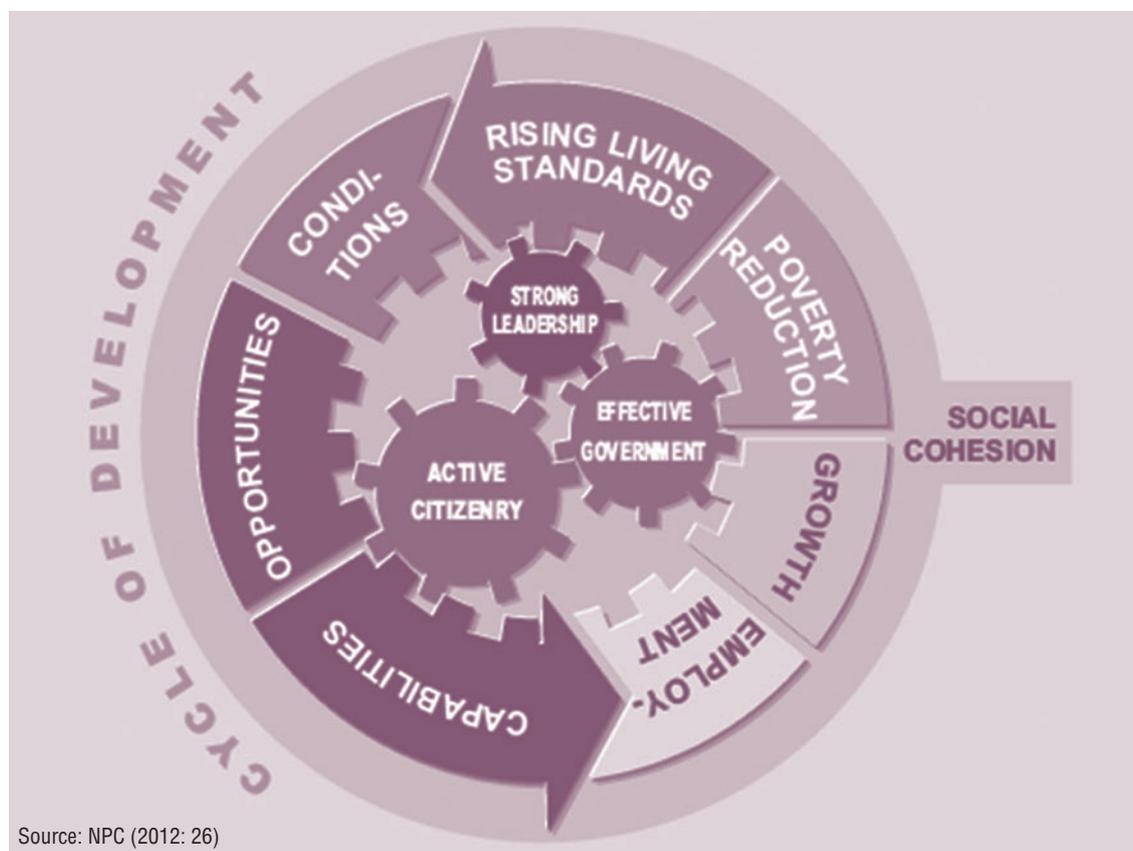
By active citizenship, we [Oxfam] mean a combination of rights and obligations that link individuals to the state, including paying taxes, obeying laws, and exercising the full range of political, civil, and social rights. Active citizens use those rights to improve the quality of political or civic life, through involvement in the formal economy or formal politics, or through the sort of collective action that historically has allowed poor and excluded groups to make their voices heard.

ACTIVE CITIZENRY AND THE NDP

The recently launched NDP is an ambitious forecast that sets out key goals for the coming decades.

The NDP shares the responsibility for delivering its objectives with the population, stating: 'It is up to all South Africans to fix the future, starting today' (NPC 2012: 24) and uses the term active citizenship in this context of responsibility. The 'cycle of development' illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates the close link between capabilities, opportunities and employment on social and living conditions. It shows how 'leadership, active citizenry and effective government can help drive development in a socially cohesive environment' (NPC 2012: 26).

Figure 1: NDP cycle of development model



Source: NPC (2012: 26)

This State-defined construct of active citizenry in the NDP, although arguably rooted in both the communitarian and the civic republican theories, greatly expands on these traditional theoretical moulds. In contrast to governmental manipulations of active citizenry, which ‘aims to further Government’s own agendas’ (Jochum et al. 2005: 24) such as policy implementation, when interpreting the concept from the alternative perspective of civil society, the emerging South African version of active citizenry has the potential to become broader, more inclusive and participatory. This version or interpretation may also result in criticism of government and/or seeks to hold government to account to its obligations of service delivery and anti-corruption on a different basis to that intended under the government’s own models. There is inevitably a tension between these competing models, and this can be seen at the fundamental level of the ability of the citizen to participate in government.

The interpretation of active citizenry proposed in the NDP relies on government allowing citizens to participate in government processes. Indeed the government is under a legal duty to do so. Yet, despite the constitutional obligation on local government to establish participatory democratic processes, under Section 152 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (which requires the establishment of ward committees), and the potential for involvement in forums such as school governing committees and community policing, such invented and State-sanctioned spaces for participation are often ineffective (Ramjee and van Donk 2011).

Instead of facilitating inclusion, these formal structures become sites of fierce contests and politicisation, often in order to pander to sectoral interests (Cornwall 2002 quoted in Ramjee and van Donk 2011). Intended to secure community participation through consultation and dialogue – as stated in the many government reports and public engagements and in a plethora of indabas, izimbizos, lekgotlas, and public events arranged by public entities – these forums

have arguably achieved the opposite result. Sadly, in South Africa’s post-democratic experience, these structures serve as platforms for monologues and speeches by elected leaders and officials, rather than a genuine attempt to listen attentively to (and address in a sustained and transparent manner) the concerns raised by local communities.

Broad sections of society are excluded from the invited spaces because of the barriers to participation at local government and ward level. These include (Skenjana and Kimemia 2011; Nyalunga 2006):

- ✧ Local government spaces for participation are vulnerable to political interference;
- ✧ National, provincial and municipal guidelines fail to recognise marginalised members of communities in the formation of ward committees;
- ✧ Ward councillors do not possess the necessary skills or motivation to whole-heartedly fulfil their roles; and
- ✧ Ward councillors lack clear guidelines as to what their roles do and should entail.

In response, civil society advocates of active citizenry have called for more channels of participation to open up at all levels of government (Qwabe and Mdaka 2011: 64). Consequently, the definitions of active citizenry proposed by civil society generally have a more inclusive and active focus, aimed at finding ways to make the voice of the citizen heard by the relevant state institution or department.

ACTIVE CITIZENRY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Aspects of citizenry in the South African context must also take into account our often violent history associated with past struggles to identify the concept of citizenship. Von Holdt et al. (2011) describe a rebellious ‘civil society of the struggle against apartheid during the 1980s’ that was often associated with, and considered to have, ‘established violent practices as

an integral element of civil society mobilisation and of struggles for citizenship' (Von Holdt et al. 2011: 12). The post-apartheid rapid social change has led to the emergence of a new elite amid continuing unemployment and precarious employment opportunities, leading to 'fierce struggles over inclusion and exclusion both within the elite, between elites and subalterns, and within the subaltern classes themselves. These struggles are in part marked by contestation over the meaning and content of citizenship' (Von Holdt et al. 2011: 11).

These struggles over 'the meaning of citizenship is, at the same time, struggles over rank, status and power' (Von Holdt et al. 2011: 12). "Differentiated citizenship" is a term coined by Von Holdt et al. that describes the consequence of these developments, where the distribution of 'treatment, rights and privileges differentially among formally equal citizens according to differences of education, property, race, gender and occupation' resulted in these subaltern groups responding by mobilising what they term as an 'insurgent citizenship', with its own set of negative consequences, such as 'reproducing patriarchal prejudices, xenophobic exclusion, and the use of violence in political and social disputes and to buttress local power—practices which corrode, undermine and restrict the basis of citizenship' (Von Holdt et al. 2011: 12).

THE CMAP AND ACTIVE CITIZENRY

The Black Sash, a human rights organisation active for the past 55 years in South Africa, originally conceptualised the CMAP as a social accountability mechanism. The Black Sash works to alleviate poverty and inequality and is committed to building a culture of rights-with-responsibilities in South Africa. It specifically focuses on the socio-economic rights guaranteed by the Constitution to all living in South Africa. The Black Sash is deeply conscious that unaccountable, corrupt and inefficient service delivery ranks high among the many

factors that prevent the full realisation of these rights. Poor service delivery denies millions of people a dignified life, undermines the impact of government spending on other social protection programmes, as well as any advances that have been made to create employment. Therefore, a high standard of service delivery is a fundamental part of the social compact between the government and the population.

The CMAP view is that active citizenry is built on the tenet that citizens are not passive users of public services but active holders of fundamental rights. Therefore, integral to CMAP is the monitoring of service delivery by active, community-based civil society. Only aware, informed and active communities are able to insist that government deliver on the promises made in national, provincial and local elections and account to their constituencies for policies and practices that affect their quality of life.

In 2010, the Black Sash, in partnership with the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), launched CMAP, in a bid to help improve government service delivery, with a particular focus on poor and vulnerable communities in South Africa. CMAP used community monitors, nominated by local organisations, to maintain a regular and disciplined presence at service delivery points, such as pension pay points and health facilities.⁵ Monitors recorded their observations against standardised monitoring questionnaires (drafted specifically for the purpose) and were encouraged, along with their local organisations and with the support of Black Sash and SCAT, to take up the identified local delivery issues. In turn, the Black Sash analysed the data from the questionnaires in order to advocate for improvements in service delivery at local, provincial and national levels.

The CMAP objectives are to:

- ✳ Assess and report on the quality of service delivery in specified government departments and municipalities across South Africa as experienced by beneficiaries;

- ✧ Develop a system for civil society organisations and community members to hold government accountable for the principles of Batho Pele (People First) as well as specific norms and standards that govern service delivery and promise excellence;
- ✧ Work closely with partners and ensure widespread, visible, standardised and regular monitoring of service delivery points by Community Monitors that are selected by CSO networks;
- ✧ Coordinate the development of the monitoring instruments and databases, collating and analysing the monitoring information, and producing and distributing regular reports to its partners and the public; and
- ✧ Present reports to the appropriate government officials in order to affirm good practice and to work together to make improvements where required.

The project uniquely combined frontline service delivery monitoring and advocacy, involving the services of 499 individual monitors from 375 different local organisations, drawn from all nine of South Africa's provinces. CMAP ran for two years.⁶ CMAP monitors who signed a code of conduct with the organisation they represent were each issued with a brightly coloured bib, orientation pack, pamphlets about CMAP, training materials and questionnaires for them to complete and return via a self-addressed envelope. Over the two-year period, the monitors were trained in provincial workshops to use a set of standardised monitoring tools and instruments specifically developed for CMAP.⁷ A third of the participating organisations received further mentoring and support from provincially-based CMAP fieldworkers. CMAP monitors participated in a total of 36 workshops, carried out 477 field visits and submitted more than 8 900 questionnaires that were developed into 44 reports.⁸

The service delivery points that were monitored included: SASSA pay points and service points,

Department of Home Affairs, primary healthcare providers (clinics) and basic services. At the beginning of the monitoring process, the Black Sash sought permission from the relevant government department, but the level of engagement and feedback was disappointing, especially from the Department of Home Affairs and the district departments of health. The lack of response from more than 280 municipalities in South Africa was even worse. However, a significant breakthrough came when the CEO of the Social Security Agency (SASSA) gave permission for monitoring at all SASSA pay points and service points. A constructive process ensued, whereby CMAP reported their findings to SASSA, and SASSA provincial offices produced written responses and actions.⁹ In all spheres of government, when permission to monitor was refused, the responsible official often made little or no attempt to provide a policy-based rationale for the decision.

The reports, drawn from analysis of the questionnaires, were sent to the relevant government department for response.¹⁰ Each report followed a general format, setting out acknowledgements, background and introduction, project rationale and methodology. The data analysis was limited to scope, limits and assumptions, and key findings (such as measurements that included time, venue, security, personnel, language and communication). Observations and recommendations from monitors were included in a specific section, and where needed, recommendations were made by the Black Sash itself.

Using these evidence-based reports, local, provincial and national advocacy activities were conducted in various forums and public meetings, including Parliament, government departments, submissions to the South Africa Human Rights Commission, The Presidency, an International National Health Insurance conference hosted by the South African national Department of Health, and a civil society-led conference People's Power, People's Parliament, held

in June 2012.¹¹ A positive development emerging from this conference was that the Office of the Presidency (present at the conference), through the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation committed to engage with CMAP partners on their potential to make a significant contribution to independent, community-driven frontline service delivery monitoring in South Africa, and requested representation on national government structures that will take this forward.

LESSONS AND INSIGHTS ON ACTIVE CITIZENRY

The Black Sash asked the monitors to give suggestions on how to make the CMAP more effective. A total of 246 completed evaluation forms were received from six out of nine provinces, representing the views of 67% of the CMAP monitors (mainly from the North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo) from organisations working in community development, human rights and health.

CMAP monitors made the following suggestions to the Black Sash and its implementing partner, SCAT:

- ✦ Provide letters of authority to the relevant government departments, explaining CMAP;
- ✦ Develop a CMAP training manual containing monitoring toolkits for use in group activities;
- ✦ Provide CMAP staff and monitors with T-shirts, in addition to visible bibs provided; and
- ✦ Increase travel stipends, or introduce stipends, to cover out-of-pocket expenses and to extend their reach to monitor.

In order of importance and per category, the training needs requested were: capacity building, advocacy, fundraising (organisational), CMAP and direct community participation, project management, case management (i.e. paralegal work), how to make a business plan and a funding proposal, facilitation skills, personal development, project management, youth leadership, life skills and financial management.

Monitors felt that the project was also a unique opportunity for organisations to meet and discuss this and related work, something that is often denied to cash-strapped and struggling, rural based CBOs and NGOs.

They found the provincial networking opportunities very useful, and in particular those who attended the culminating national conference found it to be even more so. Concerns were expressed about the need to sustain funding for future CMAP activities, while at the same time wanting to invite many other organisations to the project.

CMAP monitors made suggestions for further education, training or information (and possibly local monitoring and advocacy) about:

- ✦ How the family courts work (maintenance and estate);
- ✦ Monitoring the departments of Education, Home Affairs and Justice, especially related to disabled people;
- ✦ How the Grant-in-Aid works;
- ✦ Child abuse and women, maintenance and abuse (men and women), the rights of foster parents, prospective foster parent guides, the Child Act, foster care and disability;
- ✦ The importance of information and good service delivery;
- ✦ Compliance and access to the child maintenance system and the magistrate courts;
- ✦ Laws about drugs and liquor being sold to young children;
- ✦ Local government and how to foster better relations between local government and NGOs;
- ✦ The roles of local municipal councillors and officials in relation to community participation, the departments of Justice, Transport and Police, child maintenance and family support systems, refugee rights, and Home Affairs;
- ✦ How to help people with no income get ID documents so they can access social grants, the Department of Justice and others; and
- ✦ How to monitor the supply chain within government.

At an individual level, some monitors suggested that the experience had ‘revived [their] research and advocacy skills’ and helped them to help ‘community to practise and understand their rights, make work in the field very easy’.¹²

These requests reflect a level of ownership and a degree of support and affirmation of CMAP. This is a project that monitors wish to be associated with in the future, with some internal administrative arrangements to improve on attaining the objectives they were collectively striving to make a reality in their local community.

Suggestions made were very cogent and constructive. All except one of the completed forms indicated that such a project would continue. The exception was from an NGO who chose not to continue due to the lack of access to a stipend.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the concept of “active citizenry” contrasting the perspective (and experience) of Western countries and the South with that of South Africa. In the government’s ambitious plan for developing South Africa, the NDP uses the term active citizenship in the context of shared responsibility for achieving the plan’s objectives. The interpretation of active citizenry proposed in the NDP relies on government allowing citizens to participate in government processes. However, despite the legal obligation that government must consult with the people through various forums, barriers are preventing effective public participation.

The concept active citizenry needs to be broader, more inclusive and participatory. The CMAP views active citizenry as built on the tenet that citizens are not passive users of public services but active holders of fundamental rights. The CMAP experience provides the basis of a framework for active citizenry that works, supported by evidence-based feedback and valuable insights from those who were involved in the project.

The project is able, albeit in a small and tenuous way, to transform the quality of service delivery at a local level, using many examples steeped in very different contexts and each with unique challenges. The project and form of active citizenry espoused appears to have broad support.

The CMAP has the potential to make a significant contribution to independent, community-driven frontline service delivery monitoring in South Africa. To this end, it will continue to engage with government and follow up with the commitment received from the Office of the Presidency (through the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation) at the People’s Power, People’s Parliament conference.

There is a saying in Venda that ‘one cannot remove fluff with one finger’. The CMAP has been a collective effort of many role players, at a local, provincial and national level, using the expertise, knowledge and respect commanded by community-based leaders. No single person or organisation could have produced the results of this project. It is fitting to end with the statement issued by the participants of the CMAP September 2012 National Conference¹³, aptly entitled *Moving from CMAP as a project to a practice: insights, lessons and future plans for active citizenry*, (Black Sash 2012¹⁴):

We, the participants of this CMAP National Conference [...] recognise that accessible and quality public services are essential if we are to ensure a dignified life for all living in South Africa, and particularly for those in poor and marginalised communities, celebrate the work done by [approx] 480 volunteer monitors from over 300 community based organisations across all nine provinces. [...] We are committed to bring the valuable experience, skills, materials, networks and practices that have been developed by and between CMAP partners over the past two years into the process [...] remain committed and inspired to build a culture of active citizenry in South Africa.

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NOTES

- ¹ The NDP was presented to Parliament on the 15th of August 2012.
- ² See <http://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/sash-in-action/community-monitoring-and-advocacy-programme> for more information on CMAP.
- ³ The UK organisation called 'Active Citizen' is an interesting example. Its website states its focus as the interest of the consumer, holding 'major firms, brands, banks' to account, rather than government institutions. Available at <http://www.active-citizen.org.uk>.
- ⁴ A term commonly used to refer to countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but also including India, South Africa, Brazil and other mid-income and developing countries.
- ⁵ Most of the organisations that nominated CMAP monitors were from advice offices, paralegal resource centres, health affiliated CBOs and NGOs, Home-based Care centres and Drop-in Centres, faith-based organisations and larger regional NGOs. Each of the provinces had different combinations of these organisations.
- ⁶ CMAP was funded by the European Union and the Open Society Foundation of South Africa between 2010 and 2012.
- ⁷ www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/cmap-monitoring-tools

- ⁸ Fifty two per cent of all questionnaires were received from SASSA pay and service points, 22% from basic services and 17% primary health. The majority of questionnaires were received from Limpopo, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape respectively. A complex range of factors affected the number of questionnaires completed in each province, including: access to travel to service points, the composition of monitoring teams and the sectors, responding to the interests of their nominating organisation, the lack of resources and internal dynamics of their organisations.
- ⁹ See the Black Sash website at www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/cmap-reports
- ¹⁰ To date, 44 reports have been or are in the process of being sent to government for a formal response. These can be found on the Black Sash website. The intention is to produce a report for each province or department monitored on a six-monthly basis.
- ¹¹ See www.peopletoparliament.org.za/a-conference-on-people2019s-power-people2019s-parliament-will-be-held-in-june.
- ¹² Authors' analysis of feedback of CMAP evaluation forms (2012).
- ¹³ Conference held at Birchwood Conference Centre, Johannesburg. In attendance were a representative sample of approximately 45 CMAP monitors selected by fellow monitors in each province, Black Sash and SCAT fieldworkers and project staff, researchers, donors, and other civil society partners.
- ¹⁴ http://www.blacksash.org.za/images/cmap_final_statement_sept12_conf.pdf



ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND RURAL WOMEN: A CITIZENS' VOICE MODEL FOR EMERGENT PRODUCTIVE WATER USERS

By Lesego Loate, The Mvula Trust

The environment in which local government operates has become increasingly difficult. Limited resources, capacity constraints, complex socio-economic challenges and citizens' unmet expectations have led to changes in how people relate to the state. These changes have, in part, been reinforced by shifts in the way citizens understand and exercise citizenship, a concept that has many interpretations. This paper examines a project implemented by The Mvula Trust in Strydkraal and Apel, two rural villages located in the province of Limpopo. Its main focus is to assess the practical implications of active citizenship by looking at how rural women, as emergent productive water users, exercise active citizenship to engage with government in order to effect changes in their socio-economic conditions.



PHOTO: STRING

THE CITIZENS' voice model, which forms the crux of the project, is proposed as a participatory model that can be used to foster active citizenship by facilitating engagement between citizens and government (particularly local government) – citizens and government meet regularly to discuss service delivery issues and agree on solutions to any challenges. Moreover, the model includes civic education of

citizens so that they can understand their rights and the government service delivery systems and processes. As localised development agents, community-based organisations (CBOs) are best placed to assist in reaching local women engaged in the productive use of water. The paper aims to show that the citizens' voice model, when revised for rural environments like Strydkraal and Apel, has the potential to build

agency and active citizenship among women in these communities, to improve their access and rights to water and their livelihoods.

CONCEPTUALISING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Active citizenship is a contested concept, which is interpreted differently by the state, communities and civil society, involving the relationship and interaction between the state and citizens. At the core of active citizenship is the change in the way citizens approach citizenship, which in turn alters their relationship with the state (Nelson and Kerr 2006). The impetus for these changes are varied but can be classified into two arguments: first, globalisation has inspired structural limitations on the state's capabilities and, second, the state's post-1994 socio-economic transformation agenda for citizens has been implemented on a rights basis. With regards to the former, Sengupta (2001: 3137) indicates that many of the key challenges facing states are not limited to a state's territory. Technological advancements have led to increased capital flows that negatively affect a state's ability to raise resources through taxes, which has implications for its service delivery mandate (Schmitt et al. 2004: 133). In post-1994 South Africa, citizens have started actively fighting for public goods and services, to which they have rights that are recognised by the state (Miraftab and Wills 2005: 201). These drivers of the changing understanding of citizenship – increased limitations on the ability of the state to deliver on its responsibilities and citizens' rights-driven demands on the state – means that citizenship is seen not only as a status but also as a practice that emphasises governance instead of government in public affairs. The shift from government to governance concerns the sharing of responsibilities between the state and citizens (Jochum et al. 2005). The diverse understandings of what this means in practice has resulted in different approaches to implementing active citizenship.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

One approach is where the state supports active citizenship among its citizens (Nelson and Kerr 2006). In democratic states, active citizenship consolidates democracy by giving citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions as users of public goods and services (Jochum et al. 2005). This is done by encouraging citizens to take part in decision-making participatory processes and structures. In the case of South Africa, public participation structures may include parliamentary public hearings, izimbizo, integrated development planning (IDP) forums, ward committees, catchment management forums (CMF) and water users' associations (WUAs). These mechanisms emphasise active citizenship as a way of deepening participatory democracy.

However, some consider government-led participatory structures to be 'invited' spaces that are controlled by government (Skenjana and Kimemia 2011). Miraftab and Wills (2005: 202) criticise 'invited' spaces as a statist attempt to define active citizenship instead of citizens exercising their citizenship as they deem necessary to better their lives. This construct of citizenship holds that citizens should determine what is important to them and how they want to engage the state on their priorities, rather than legitimising – through their participation – a narrow and state-driven participatory democracy. Such a perspective emphasises the need for citizens to interact with each other not only on public issues but also to promote their collective interests through active citizenship (Jochum et al. 2005). The desire to mobilise outside the consultative structures of local government is viewed by some as a vote of no confidence in these structures by citizens (Fakir and Moloi 2011: 112).

An alternative approach to citizenship views citizen participation as not being limited to consultative government structures, which are aimed at ensuring

participatory democracy. Rather, citizens take part both in participatory structures and in implementing service delivery, as partners of government. They are therefore not passive receivers of public goods and services (Jochum et al. 2005). It is important to note that, in practice, different aspects of these diverse perspectives of active citizenship can manifest.

RESEARCH ON WATER AND RURAL WOMEN IN STRYDKRAAL AND APEL

The Mvula Trust¹ implemented a Water Research Commission (WRC) study² in Strydkraal and Apel in the Fetakgomo Local Municipality of Sekhukhune District Municipality. The study's focus was to determine whether rural women are supported in policy and practice to play the role of strategic users and managers of water, as envisaged in the *Water for Growth and Development Framework* (DWAF 2009):

Women should be thought of as strategic users of water. They manage the use of water for preparing food, for drinking, bathing and washing, for irrigating home gardens and watering livestock. Women know the location, reliability and quality of local water resources. They collect water, store it and control its use and sanitation. They recycle water, using grey water for washing and irrigation. Their participation in all development programmes should be given priority. Policies and programmatic interventions such as Water Allocation Reform need to factor this in to achieve the desired end results.

The WRC study reflects on the ability of women living in the two villages to improve their socio-economic conditions. In the context of this research, the significance of active citizenship relates to women's efforts as citizens to engage among themselves

and with the state regarding their right to water and sustainable livelihoods. The women in Strydkraal and Apel exercise their active citizenship by cooperating among themselves, supporting women's organisations, engaging in local socio-political structures and with local officials in decision-making processes pertaining to water supply and use, and empowering themselves in order to enhance their participation. Thus, the women are active citizens from both a household and a collective cooperation perspective.

STRYDKRAAL AND APEL

The village of Strydkraal is located within the Fetakgomo Local Municipality, which is part of the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality. It is made up of Strydkraal A and Strydkraal B – Strydkraal B is adjacent to Apel (Greater Sekhukhune District 2010). Within Strydkraal, the Department of Agriculture (DoA) developed an irrigation canal system that dates from before 1994 and supplies 18 DoA farming projects. The water is untreated, as it is meant for productive use, but community members also collect water from the canal to use for domestic (including drinking) uses.

Compared to Strydkraal, Apel is more developed, with resources that include a shopping centre and the Fetakgomo Local Municipal offices, which enhances the village's citizens' access to local government. Water meters have been installed in Apel households but not in Strydkraal, although their installation is planned in the near future. Strydkraal and Apel both struggle with water cut-offs, with up to 43% of households not able to access water at the basic level (Fetakgomo Local Municipality 2010).

A number of community-based women's organisations, including the Rural Women's Association, Mante Vegetable Project, and Ngwanamante, operate in Strydkraal and Apel (Fetakgomo Local Municipality 2010). Women in these villages mobilise themselves through organisations to facilitate cooperation in their

predominantly agricultural livelihood activities (Greater Sekhukhune District 2010). The community agricultural activity is lower in Apel than in Strydkraal because Apel does not have a water canal.

The women's activities benefit the two villages through building food security, providing livelihoods opportunities for community members, reducing poverty and generating income. Women have been empowered and have, for instance, been able to make decisions about how household resources should be invested to boost livelihood activities (Molose et al. 2011b).

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AMONG THE WOMEN OF STRYDKRAAL AND APEL

The two main drivers behind active citizenship among women in Strydkraal and Apel are: the absence of men as primary income-generators, and limited or interrupted access to water. The unemployment rate in the Fetakgomo Local Municipality is 61% and, as a result, economically active men leave the villages to become migrant labourers (Loate et al. 2012). Women who participated in the study indicated that the remittances received from their husbands are often insufficient to sustain their household needs. Therefore, they are compelled to be active in creating sustainable livelihoods to supplement the remittances and meet their household needs (Molose et al. 2011b).

The women's activities benefit the two villages through building food security, providing livelihoods opportunities for community members, reducing poverty and generating income. Women have been empowered and have, for instance, been able to make decisions about how household resources should be invested to boost livelihood activities (Molose et al. 2011b). By engaging in such activities, women are elevated from playing a household role to being contributors of local production.

The second driver is access to water for domestic (drinking, bathing, cooking) and productive use, especially for agriculture – food gardening, small-scale crop farming and livestock watering (Molose et al. 2011b). The women of Strydkraal and Apel also report using water for non-agricultural, social entrepreneurial and income-generating ventures, such as home-based care and within childcare centres. However, Strydkraal and Apel experience water cut-offs due to operations and maintenance (O&M) and water-sharing, as a result of water supply shortages.

FINDINGS ON ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN STRYDKRAAL AND APEL

The shortcomings of active citizenship practice in the village need first to be understood in order to establish whether the citizens' voice model can be used in these contexts. Active citizenship depends partly on women's ability to work together. Yet, although the women in the study worked together (having formed women's organisations), they have not been able to coordinate and engage effectively at organisational level (Loate et al. 2012). As the women's organisations do not meet regularly, there is no collective agreement about how to tackle water challenges/needs and possible solutions (Loate et al. 2012). This lack of agreement has weakened their capacity to engage with local officials, institutions and in local socio-political structures (such as ward committees, WUAs and CMFs) in a united manner that could place greater pressure for responsiveness on local officials (Molose et al. 2011b). The fractured approach to active citizenship is demonstrated by women raising their access-to-water needs individually (through their organisations) with local institutions and officials rather than collectively (Loate et al. 2012).

Instances where women in the villages assist each other's organisations are limited, and such support tends to focus on the more immediate, livelihood-related

challenges of their organisations (Loate et al. 2012). Thus, women provide advice, labour, seeds, etc. to other organisations but do not come together to identify common challenges or to develop strategies on how to engage local socio-political structures, institutions and officials. Their inability to cooperate on water service delivery and water for emerging productive use issues (such as livestock watering and small-scale irrigation) can be seen as a result of the tendency to view their organisations competitively (Loate et al. 2012). This competitive outlook is likely driven by scarce water resources in Strydkraal and Apel, limited financial support from local government and other institutions, partial access to markets and a lack of training. However, on an individual organisational level, the women recognise the importance of engaging with local structures over their water availability challenges.

The women do not appear to understand the government structures for engagement or that organisational collaboration would give them strength in numbers when raising their voice in local structures (Molose et al. 2011b). Therefore, capacity-building is crucial so that the women of Strydkraal and Apel can understand the workings of government, as well as their role within participatory structures. Equally important is to build capacity among local officials on how to foster effective engagement with local stakeholders such as women. As stated earlier, the women of the two villages do engage with local participatory structures and leaders over their water availability challenges, in particular with local councillors, Fetakgomo Local Municipality officials and ward committees. However, this practical exercise of active citizenship is hampered by a number of factors.

Firstly, the Fetakgomo Local Municipality has no legal water function, as it is neither a Water Services Authority (WSA) nor a Water Service Provider (WSP) (Loate et al. 2012). Despite this, many women bring water issues to the local municipality, as the closest government institution, even though the municipality

can do little but pass on these complaints and concerns to the WSA (Loate et al. 2012). This frustrates both the local municipality and the rural women who raise these issues. Moreover, even when women approach the WSA (the district municipality), they are often left frustrated because the WSA's satellite office lacks capacity, authority and information (which resides with its main office in Groblersdal), and adequate institutional communication (Loate et al. 2012).

As stated earlier, the women of the two villages do engage with local participatory structures and leaders over their water availability challenges, in particular with local councillors, Fetakgomo Local Municipality officials and ward committees. However, this practical exercise of active citizenship is hampered by a number of factors.

Secondly, the WSA satellite office cannot provide information about when O&M water cut-offs and water-sharing will occur, which would enable the women to protect their livelihood activities from the lack of adequate water. The main decision-making authority on O&M water cut-offs and water-sharing, Groblersdal is about 110 kilometres away from Strydkraal and Apel and so inaccessible to the women of these two villages (Molose et al. 2011b). The WSA also states that its mandate is limited to domestic water service provision and does not include productive water supply (Molose et al. 2011a). The Strydkraal and Apel areas lack water resource management structures, such as CMFs and WUAs, to facilitate engagement between government and women on productive water needs and challenges (Loate et al. 2012). As a result, the women's organisations struggle to engage effectively with the WSA, and women continue with water use practices (including using domestic water for productive purposes) that are unsuitable for their water supply and limit their livelihood activities (Molose et al. 2011b).

Thirdly, weaknesses in the ward committee system negatively affect relations with local government. According to the Fetakgomo Local Municipality, resourcing of the ward committee system is necessary but difficult because of budgetary limitations (Loate et al. 2012). Ward committee members do not understand the water sector adequately to represent the women's concerns related to domestic water supply needs and challenges (Loate et al. 2012).

Lastly, the women of Strydkraal and Apel have also approached the traditional authorities regarding water-related issues (Loate et al. 2012). However, communicating their water needs and challenges to local government through a go-between – the traditional authorities – is not as effective as it could be (Loate et al. 2012). Women of the two villages are denied a crucial non-state access point for active citizenship on water-related issues. This means that the success of active citizenship in Strydkraal and Apel depends largely on the state encouraging women to participate through available, invited, participatory structures established by the state. The inference is that the participatory structures in the two villages are not adequately developed or designed to respond to women's water challenges and needs, which affects active citizenship.

Local government and CBOs have an important role to play in assisting women to better comprehend their rights in relation to water and livelihoods, the way the water sector operates, and the participatory and decision-making processes and structures of local government (Loate et al. 2012). The citizens' voice model is potentially a good way to achieve sustainable cooperation between women, local government and CBOs. The following section examines how such a model could benefit the women of Strydkraal and Apel's active citizenship, and what changes would have to be made to the model to fit the conditions of the villages.

A MODEL FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The Raising Citizens' Voice in the Regulation of Water Services Project is a Department of Water Affairs project that was implemented by the Mvula Trust in the Ekurhuleni Metro. The project focused on citizens' public education and involvement in local monitoring of water and sanitation services (Smith 2009). At the core of this project is a participatory model – the citizens' voice model, which is premised on citizens being empowered to hold local government to account and having a structure through which they can engage with local government to monitor and solve water and sanitation problems (Smith 2009). The short-term objective of the model is to raise public awareness about the workings of (and their rights to) water and sanitation services. The medium-term objective is to transform this public awareness into increased public capacity to monitor the services. The long-term objective is to facilitate greater civil society involvement in the strategic planning of water services and, in doing so, to realise third-generational rights through a broadened decision-making process that maximises second-generational rights (Smith 2009).

The model seeks to capacitate citizens and use monthly "user platform" meetings between citizens and local government officials to discuss water and sanitation service-delivery challenges and solutions (Smith 2009). These meetings are crucial for institutionalising engagement on water and sanitation services, providing a channel for citizens' increased expectations on accountability that comes from their capacity-building. Moreover, exposing citizens to the limitations and challenges of service delivery could change their views that local government is not trying to provide high quality water and sanitation services. The citizen's voice model can help the women of Strydkraal and Apel to engage with local government and

overcome the challenges that they face, such as their limited knowledge about the workings of government structures, the tendency to view other organisations competitively, the lack of financial resources, the broad geographic spread of their locations and different interests.

A CITIZENS' VOICE APPROACH FOR WOMEN OF STRYDKRAAL AND APEL

The citizens' voice model is centred on local government acting as a partner for engagement with citizens. It benefits citizens, local government and community development by facilitating communication between local government and citizens, thereby ensuring cooperation in service delivery and development, and managing conflict (Smith 2009). Consequently, the model could help to lessen incidents of community protests by creating better and increased cooperation between local government and citizens. Better engagement with local government through the user platform would benefit women by forewarning them of O&M water cut-offs, water-sharing and the water tariffs to be paid.

However, in the context of Strydkraal and Apel, a purely local government-centred model would not work, as the Fetakgomo Local Municipality has no legal function to provide water services, and the women face water challenges related not only to domestic but also to productive uses. Legislatively the WSA is only responsible for domestic water use, and so the model would have to be broadened to include the DWA and DoA – the government departments that deal with providing and facilitating the use of productive water in rural communities.

The citizens' voice model would also need to be adapted to suit the specific priorities of rural areas. The model was previously used in a peri-urban setting, in

Ekhuruleni Metro, where the approach was to contract community facilitators. This may not be realistic in rural areas that lack human and financial resources. Focusing only on a participatory user platform may also not fit the situation in Strydkraal and Apel, as the WSA has significant capacity constraints and women want to assist the WSA with O&M to ensure that domestic water supply is not negatively affected.

The capacity-building component of the model should also include aspects related to emergent productive water use issues. This is because some of the domestic water service challenges, such as O&M and water-sharing, arise out of women using domestic water services for productive uses. Raising awareness of efficient productive water uses and alternative and supplementary water sources would benefit both productive water and domestic water use.

Promoting the on-going involvement of CBOs in the citizens' voice model has been difficult, in part because officials view CDWs as the vehicle for building citizens' capacity (Smith 2009). Officials are also unwilling to involve CBOs because of their mistrust of CBOs' advocacy positions on water issues (Smith 2009). This unwillingness to involve CBOs in the model may turn CBOs into an opposition front to the citizens' voice model, especially the user platforms. For the model to work in a manner that involves and maximises CBOs will require a shift in the mindset of officials, so that they can appreciate the support role of CBOs in active citizenship. Although no CBOs deal with water issues in Strydkraal and Apel, other CBOs that work with the women, supporting their livelihood strategies, should be involved. Their involvement will not only quell any potential opposition to the user platforms, but also CBOs can be used to build capacity and for advocacy in partnership with the local municipality, the DWA, the DoA and the WSA. This is particularly relevant in resource-poor rural areas, where government

institutions struggle with inadequate budget allocations. An exclusive community development worker (CDW) approach to capacity-building is impractical in rural areas because of the low number of available CDWs, the vast geographical areas that need to be covered and a limited transport budget. However, CBOs can in part lighten this human resource and financial load by helping to organise user platform meetings.

The citizens' voice model provides a way of allowing communities to develop their development agendas within a non-state structure, while continuing to cooperate with government officials as development partners. However, in order to promote functional active citizenship in Strydkraal and Apel, the citizens' voice model will need to be adjusted to accommodate rural dynamics, including user platforms and other productive water use institutions. Furthermore, the capacity-building element of the model needs to consider the dynamics of rural areas by including capacity-building in using productive water. With a modified model, community members will be able to effectively practice their citizenship and engage the state in securing and participating in their own development.

CONCLUSION

Active citizenship exists in Strydkraal and Apel, but its effectiveness is limited by a number of factors such as the lack of engagement among women's organisations, the lack of capacity to interact with government

institutions and officials, and weak institutions. Even though the women of these villages have used active citizenship to organise themselves and share resources to create and sustain their livelihoods, they have struggled to secure their emergent productive water needs through engaging with government. The citizens' voice model puts community and government relations at the centre of service delivery, so that their respective expectations and shortcomings can be understood.

The citizens' voice model would assist in dealing with the issues that limit active citizenship among the women of Strydkraal and Apel. Firstly, it would create direct and regular engagements between the women and government, circumventing the ward committee system, which has failed to connect adequately to the WSA. Secondly, it would build capacity among the women so that they understand the workings of the water sector and institutions and are able to engage on water issues. Lastly, CBOs could assist local government by providing capacity-building training to the stakeholders involved, as well as contributing their own human resources.

An adapted citizens' voice model could play a crucial role in providing the space for women in Strydkraal and Apel to engage on water availability, use and management. Livelihood strategies would also be strengthened by the women cooperating through the user platforms. The model could also create more cooperation between the women and local officials, thus decreasing conflict related to water service delivery.

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NOTES

- ¹ Founded in 1993, the Mvula Trust is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that was formed to deal with the collapse of basic water and sanitation services in the former homelands. It has developed into a crucial implementation partner for national, provincial and local government in water, sanitation, rural development and livelihoods development.
- ² The study relied on a qualitative research methodology, collecting data using in-depth interviews, literature reviews and focus group discussions, and analysing secondary data.



CONCLUSION

South Africa's democracy was built on the back of one of the most powerful examples of civic activism in modern history. The Constitution, which concretises South Africa's democratic state, confirms citizenship as a status associated with holding rights. The National Development Plan echoes this notion and adds the notion of citizenship as an active process by including active citizenship as one of the three cogs in the wheel of development. The NDP clearly articulates that the failure of the public, civic and market sectors to work together towards long term development objectives will derail the implementation of the plan for South Africa.

DUE TO the complexity of South Africa's history and current challenges in government, the vertical relationship between citizens/civic actors and the state is anything but simple. Similarly, horizontal relationships between different political and geographic communities are complex and infused with power dynamics. Active citizenship as a multi-dimensional notion needs to find meaningful expression in the relationship between civic actors on the one hand, and between civic actors and the state on the other hand.

The public and social sectors are jointly responsible for nurturing an enabling environment which allows for social cohesion. This publication makes a strong argument for local government structures to prioritise inclusivity in the development planning process by making sincere community engagement an inherent part of their operations. At the same time, civil society should support communities and marginalised social groups to allow for constructive engagement among civic actors and with the state. In addition to civic education, dialogue is an important methodology to enable listening, engaging, learning and collective visioning. A context that allows for constructive deliberations will better inform the development process and garner a greater level of trust between community and government. This will also hold therapeutic value for South African communities seeking to come to terms with the deep hurt of historical neglect and injustice.

With this publication, the GGLN seeks to make a meaningful contribution to understanding, animating and sustaining active citizenship. The key learnings offered here articulate that active citizenship does not happen in a vacuum nor does it constitute a simple definition. The context provides the canvass against which agency and identity is formed, claims are made and citizenship is assessed. Inequality, poverty and unemployment largely define this context, which calls for a radical political vision of participation in development to ensure transformative outcomes are realised. The absence of such a vision and of strong political will to engage citizens and civic actors in the development process will lead to counterproductive outcomes. Transforming political culture and fostering a culture of shared ownership among civic and public actors warrants a political theory of change which acknowledge the voice of (extra-) ordinary citizens in development.

Active citizenship matters; the wheels of development cannot turn unless each cog is lubricated and works in tandem with the other cogs.

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