EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 "The State of Local Governance" Publication places emphasis on (re)claiming local democratic space as a means of engaging/realising the significance of enabling inclusive democratic practices, which offer value and legitimacy to community realities. Otherwise, these spaces tend to become places of exclusion and narrowness.

With the 2016 municipal elections looming, the theme of (re)claiming local democratic space is critical in cultivating a relationship between local citizenries and elected representatives. The papers in this publication share experiences of the manifestations of institutionalized and to a large extent passive local democratic spaces in South Africa, which have often lead to mistrust between different interest groups. Furthermore, the papers advocate for (re)claiming local democratic space through meaningful partnerships, participation, and active citizenry as well as the use of different modalities and technologies to encourage and support the voices of local communities. A recurring theme in the publication is the need for meaningful citizen-state engagement that is cultivated by the role of intermediaries in an attempt to achieve the true nature of democracy.

The introduction by the GGLN Secretariat sets out to define what is meant by local democratic space, and considers the ways in which it emerges in the South African context. It argues that local democratic space is a space where power, resources and influences are negotiated, and that the inclusivity of such a space is contingent on the recognition of difference and diversity. In South Africa however, state-driven processes of governance remain largely unresponsive to the needs of the people. This has resulted in a significant decline in public trust in the state, and in independent efforts to reclaim local democratic space. The introduction also considers the roles that various stakeholders play, and some the tactics they use, in processes of claiming and reclaiming. It concludes by summarising the papers and *In Profiles* presented in this year's State of Local Governance publication.

The Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) *In Profile*, places emphasis on the potential of civil technology to expand participation in civic and democratic space. This paper draws on PMG's experience with regards to the creation of People's Assembly website and its usage. This case study is meant to demonstrate that technology has the ability to make citizens feel more engaged within democratic space as well as able to connect with political representatives, with the ultimate goal of making elected officials more visible and accountable.

Open Democracy Advice Centre's (ODAC) paper investigates the role of Access to Information (ATI) in democratic space, how it is negotiated and the instruments that are able to equalize the imbalances of sharing and utilizing information, whilst highlighting the key challenges facing ATI in South Africa. The purpose of this paper is to develop best practices within this context that are flexible to the ever-changing atmosphere of democratic space and that encourage real dialogue. This will notably contribute to enhancing effective voices in democratic space.

The *In Profile* by The Eastern Cape Communication Forum (ECCF) focuses on how Media Literacy Training (MLT) is able to improve citizen access to reliable information that can shape communication around

important developmental challenges in an innovative manner. ECCF profiles the implementation of MLT in Helenvale in Port Elizabeth, an area characterised by poverty and various other socio-political complexities. The implementation of MLT has proven to be valuable in improving citizen perceptions about the capacity to engage with challenges that are emerging within their local democratic space.

Afesis-corplan highlights their experience in the development of upgrading plans for 32 informal settlements in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM). BCMM is used as a case study to demonstrate a useful model that was adopted in developing upgrading plans for informal settlements, which identifies the role of residents in formulating and implementing these upgrading plans as a critical component. The paper argues for a participatory planning process that is both supported by social facilitation and by local government, in order to allow for the creation of democratic spaces that foster accountability as well as community involvement.

The Development Action Group's (DAG) *In Profile* examines the potential role that civil society intermediaries can play in fostering and protecting democratic accountability and receptiveness in urban governance arrangements and socio-economic dialogue. The paper particularly hones in on DAG's piloted Development Facilitation/Active Citizenship internship programme, which is intended to strengthen the capacity of youth from disadvantaged communities in leadership and community-based change agent skills.

The Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) argues that the City of Cape Town's inadequate capacity to engage in meaningful participation as well as the inappropriate understanding and utilisation of the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) contribute to the narrowing of democratic space. The paper demonstrates that innovative forms of co-finance can be significant enablers of inclusionary practice and collaborative platforms between the urban poor, intermediaries, and local government. The paper also examines how co-finance in the form of a City Fund as a model and tool can enable deliberation and local democratic space.

In the face of an acute housing crisis and the recent sale of the former Tafelberg Remedial School in Sea Point, Cape Town sparked the Reclaiming the City (RtC) campaign. The RtC is an endeavour that strives to bring about urban justice in Cape Town, in order to prevent the disposal of well-located public land. Therefore, Ndifuna Ukwazi's *In Profile* describes the motivation for the campaign and its strategy, successes and challenges.

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) analyses recent examples of state responses to dissent, whereby communities use provisions in the Constitutions to express their concerns.   The paper highlights the systemic problem whereby South Africa's current political atmosphere allows for the South African Police Service (SAPS) to respond to protests through arbitrary action, discrimination and persecution without appropriate grounds or the concern for accountability. Therefore, democratic space is consistently and increasingly being narrowed and undermined. The paper argues that in this context, litigation has proven to be a significant and effective tool in defending both civil and political rights of citizens/communities across South Africa.

The *In Profile* by Planact focuses on the organisation's Participatory Governance Programme in small mining town communities in the Mpumalanga Province, which are often characterised by hopelessness and a

tendency to retreat from local democratic spaces. The programme's intention was to enable communities to play an active role in engaging with local mining companies and to encourage the participation of communities in the formation of Social and Labour Plans, in order to safeguard corporate social investment and responsibility, and empower communities' democratic rights.

Local democratic space is characterised by state and citizen interaction that shapes public debates, politics, and opinions, which is often marked by the encounter of difference. Therefore, local democratic spaces have a tendency of inviting contestation. Isandla Institute's paper argues that in order to have a functioning and effective local democratic space, tolerance is vital. The paper also examines recent manifestations of intolerance in South Africa, and suggests that the underlying factors and these manifestations need to be curbed to enable local democratic space.