



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

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



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MANY NORMATIVE assumptions are built into the discourses on participation and development. Perhaps the most apparent is the splitting of concepts into false dichotomies, with the most obvious of these being the view that ‘participation = democracy’ versus ‘non-participation = ineffective governance and development policies’. This dichotomous presentation of action or inaction in relation to democratic outcomes is not always useful to an understanding of the challenges involved in the

lived realities of the poor. In 2005, the African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE) published an analysis of citizen mobilisation on issues of governance in Khayelitsha based on a series of case studies (Thompson and Matheza 2005). This qualitative study revealed quite high levels of community engagement both at grassroots level and with local government leaders, but it was difficult to understand from the study what was working and what was not.

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

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

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

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

SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Ranking of community concerns, 2011

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

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

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

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents do not rank local government interventions highly when it comes to addressing the problem of crime in

their respective areas. The overwhelming majority of residents surveyed rate local government as performing ‘badly’ or ‘very badly’ in this regard. This is a useful finding in relation to statements on the part of government that have implied that dissatisfaction with policing is a phenomenon common mainly among middle-class ‘white’ communities (see Thompson and Nleya 2010 for further discussion of this point).

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

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

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

Leaders’ confidence in the ability of both local government and community governance structures

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Service-delivery satisfaction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

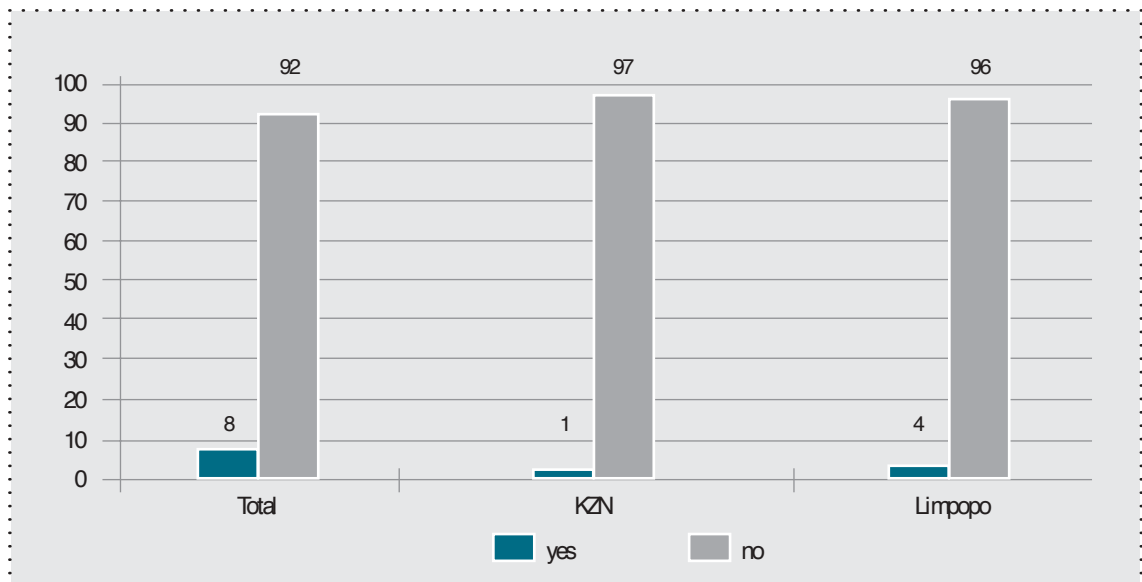
Are your local councillors:	Khayelitsha (%)	Langa (%)	Delft (%)
Able to perform their tasks?			
Not at all/Not very competent	66	62	46
Experienced in managing public-service programmes?			
Not at all/Not very competent	73	62	47
Concerned about the community?			
Not at all/Not very caring	78	68	54
Honest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

Although the qualitative data had shown some community concern with the effectiveness of local representation, the quantitative data plainly underlines communities' lack of faith in the councillors in these areas. This appears to account for much of the 'governance gap'. In other words, there appears to be a very real failure to include ordinary citizens in formal invited spaces in such a

way that their inputs are perceived as meaningful. Figure 1 affirms this by illustrating that, despite a carefully designed process of communication spearheaded by local government and driven by local sub-councils, the degree to which the average resident is even aware of participatory processes related to the development of local integrated-development plans (IDPs) remains minimal.

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Figure 1: Awareness of integrated development plans



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

Table 7: Attendance at public meetings

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

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN INVITED AND INVENTED GOVERNANCE SPACES

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

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

In contrast, Table 8 shows that most survey respondents are not involved in participatory spaces on a regular basis. The most committed form of involvement or participation is through the religious groups. Many attend street-committee meetings that

are open to all—that is, meetings to which everyone in a street (or micro area) is invited via loudhailer.

Table 8 shows that there is very little involvement in the regular (usually weekly) organisational and problem-solving meetings held by street committees.

It can be deduced that the actual composition of street-committee membership and direct involvement tends to vary very little over time. This presents a somewhat different picture from the information gathered from SANCO members, who often claim a very broad level of community support, trust and commitment in street committees (Thompson and Conradie 2011). This is not reflected in the quantitative data, however (see Table 8).

Similarly, Table 9 shows that political deliberation with ward councillors over issues pertaining to communities is a rare occurrence for most people in the three areas surveyed.

Table 8: Levels of involvement and participation in organised groups

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

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

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

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

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

Tables 10, 11 and 12 usefully reveal the links between participation and agency. The data indicates

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 12: Participation in protest action

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

effectiveness of elected local representatives, as well as that of local and national government.⁵

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

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NOTES

- ¹ Pers. com. Robert Mattes—Professor Mattes is director of the Centre for Social Science research at the University of Cape Town. He is also a founder and lead researcher in IDASA's Afrobarometer governance survey. See www.idasa.org for more information on the Afrobarometer.
- ² The understanding of invited and invented spaces is consistent with the definitions provided in previous GGLN State of Local Governance (SoLG) reports referring, on the one hand, to more organised, government created spaces for participation, and on the other, those created by communities themselves.
- ³ Our sample size was 300 respondents per area. This was determined after consultation with leading Afrobarometer researchers to ensure compatibility with Afrobarometer data and to ensure adequate sampling size. The margin of error on approximately 300 households is between 5 and 6%, well within internationally accepted norms for research surveys.
- ⁴ Interview with Councillor Mlulami Velem, 10 October 2011.
- ⁵ The data on perceptions of national government is not included here due to space constraints.