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The fourth president : possibilities for neighbourhood organising and change in suburban South Africa.

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The Fourth President: Possibilities for Neighbourhood Organising and Change in Suburban South Africa

Sociology Masters by Coursework
Research Report
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Abstract

This research report examines the nature of middle class activism in Melville, Johannesburg. It makes a contribution towards filling the gap on suburban activism in post-Apartheid South Africa. This report also makes a contribution towards the evolution of international thinking around 'your square mile' and local development and contributes towards the growing literature around building more participatory democracy. It also makes a contribution towards integrating the social science literature that tends to focus on 'structure' and the literature in the management/leadership sciences that focuses on 'agency'.

The leaders interviewed in Melville describe their primary motivations and these are coded and described. They emphasise meaning oriented motivations for themselves and instrumental oriented motivations when considering others based on Klandermans (2003) categories of motivation to participate. Leaders described the features of activities and these are categorized. An important finding is the relative importance of value polarities and working with the state in Melville when compared with the literature on participation.

A core part of citizens' experience of a country is at the local neighbourhood level. We need to find ways to build the field and practice of contextual local neighbourhood action in the current era that can help resolve some of the major problems that South Africa and other societies face.

Declaration

This serves to declare that this work is entirely my own and all copyright protocol and ethical requirements have been met.



Zapiro in the Mail and Guardian 24 July 2009

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I would like to thank all of the activists who have given so much to birth this country and this city. Your efforts have made us who we are. I would like to thank all of the people involved in Melville who gave me their time. You are an inspiration to all of us.

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1. Introduction

People across the world continue to face enormous societal challenges. The grand hopes of the nineteenth century utopians, libertarians, anarchists and socialists seem to be just that; hopes. We are a long way from an ideal society.

The 1990s were a period of harsh inward reflection and a shortage of lasting bold ideas from, in particular, the left. Some have postulated that the state-society-economy nexus seems to have found its final form in the liberal democracy and a co-opted civil society (Fukuyama, 1992). But the global financial crisis of late 2008 led to deeper questioning of the idea of unregulated capitalism, as the credit crisis and resultant negative economic impact swept across the world (Stiglitz, 2008; Krugman, 2011)

Within this complex world, Africa has its problems too. The ideals of the liberation heroes and parties have been cast aside as the continent faces what might be described as dysfunctional states, opportunistic corporations and ineffective civil society institutions. Despite some of the positive changes after the end of the 1990s in states such as Mozambique and Angola, one way to understand the current era is as the third wave of colonisation (after the colonial area and the cold war) as our oil and mineral wealth is required to fuel the growth of both the west and increasingly the east (Meridith, 2005).

Within this complex continent, South Africa has to chart its future. South Africa's birth, coming during the third phase of global democratic consolidation, has brought significant debate but not significant innovation on the relative roles of the state, business and civil society in the contemporary world. The path that has been chosen has had its positive and negative impacts, themselves contested. After fifteen years of the democratic era some of the early successes and failures of our society's evolution are clearly visible. There is something to look back on and analyse. Within this contestation there have been attempts to define a track record of what has been done well and what has failed (Diagnostic Report of the Planning Commission, 2010, Dinokeng Scenarios, 2009, Office of the President, 2008).

In April 2009, South Africa completed its fourth democratic election and Jacob Zuma took office as the fourth President. In spite of many successes and due to many of the failures there is a growing anger at the lack of service delivery.

Over the last few years there have been a range of these protests, from Khutsong to Harrismith to the frightening outbreak of xenophobic violence that shook us all in 2008. What is perhaps true is that there is frustration across the board at the way the state engages with the citizenry and little idea of how ordinary citizens can engage positively with the state.

The most recent case is the protest by residents of 220 towns that have form the National Taxpayers Union and have decided to withhold their rates and taxes collectively until the quality of service delivery improves (Marrian, 2009). Again, there was a significant protest over service delivery in Lenasia South (SAPA, 2009). And the news has covered extensive and intensive protest action (Mail and Guardian, 2009).

Citizen's mood (with regards the state) can be described as that of a thirsty person who has paid their five rand into the coke machine but found that the expected can does not drop into the slot below. Their anger might turn to rage but their options are limited to shaking (or breaking) the machine in an unreasonable hope that what they feel they are rightfully owed might emerge. There is action but it is rarely of the kind that delivers tangible positive impact on the ground.

On a more positive note, this anger was a large part of the rebellion amongst branch members at the National General Council of the African National Congress in Polokwane, Limpopo, in 2007. This has set the scene for a more dynamic relationship between citizens and the state. In particular the anger focused on Thabo Mbeki who had amassed considerable power at the perceived expenses of other people (Mangcu, 2008). It cuts across race, geography, class and even political party.

It is this paradox of high levels of citizen concern with ineffective forms of citizen action that is of interest in this report together with the potential opening that has emerged through the political changes that have taken place since Polokwane. There is an exploration here of the space that currently exists and whether it is substantial and offers possibilities for citizen engagement at the local level. The more direct question is whether the space for deepening democracy has emerged in middle class communities and neighbourhoods or whether the newer forms of activism and protest are linked solely with a groundswell of people in poor and marginalized areas.

In particular I am interested to understand what moblises and what demobilises, what engages and what disengages, what creates agency and what creates apathy amongst the middle class. I am interested in what moves these collectives at the local neighbourhood level. This is generally called 'participation'. The focus in this regard is on the motivations of community members and the features of participation in neighbourhood affairs. Cornwall (2002) argues that participation should be understood as a situated practice taking us away from idealized notions towards the actual places and particularities of specific contexts. This report documents research undertaken in 2010 and 2011 in the suburb of Melville, Johannesburg.

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the aims of the research. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 describe why this research is important and its limits and any potential ethical concerns. Chapter 6 provides an in depth description of the methodology at both the high level of paradigm and at the practical level of the method of data capture and analysis. Chapter 7 covers an overview of the literature on participation globally as well as in South Africa. Chapter 8 covers the research findings and observations. Chapter 9 places the findings into a conceptual framework for thinking about the key questions in this field and discusses the findings in relationship to the literature. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Reflexivity as a social theory aims to develop a fuller account of the way in which researchers impact and change the social setting that they are studying. It stems from a belief that this is what separates the social sciences from the physical sciences as social 'collectivities' are capable of self-inquiry and adaptation. In order to respect the reality that the researcher is both a resident of the suburb, active in local community structures and researching this same space, the report is written with significant use of the first person. This is done in order to make clear that there is a significant personal element to this work.

2. Aim

2.1. Primary Research Questions

The central aim is to understand the experience of neighbourhood activists in community initiatives in middle class South Africa. This is done through the eyes and experience of local community leaders in Melville, a suburb of Johannesburg.

The research explores three primary questions: what do the leaders believe motivates them to participate; why do they think others in the broader community choose to participate; and what are the key features of activities in the neighbourhood?

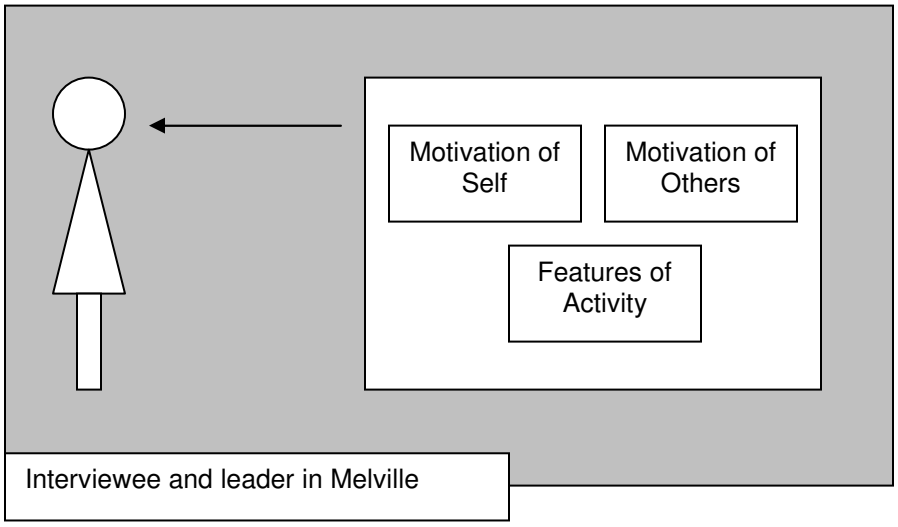


Figure 1: Primary Focus

In a broader sense this study contributes to an understanding of "what gets the middle class up off the couch" towards direct engagement with their local socio-economic and political context.

2.2. Specific Questions of Importance

Within the context of these three questions there are some additional specific questions that are of interest:

- What motivated the more active citizens to join a local initiative?
- What have they gained personally from being part of these initiatives?
- Do they believe their actions have helped the community and in what ways?

- How have they experienced their interactions with the state? What form has their initiative taken in relationship with the state? Is it confrontational, partnership, avoidance?
- What ideas do they have for getting more people involved?
- Do the respondents feel broadly positive or negative about South Africa at this time?
- What is the empowering / constraining effect of formal structures such as ward committees and community policing forums?
- What are the better organising techniques which can help people act together?

Some of the data specific questions that will need to be answered first are:

- What are the geographical/conceptual boundaries within which this research will take place?
- How do we define active and non-active citizens and neighbourhood leaders?
- What is the definition of formal and non-formal community structures?
- What is the difference between leading, organising and mobilising?
- What is the best suited respondent group?

2.3. Broader Research Aims

2.3.1. The lived experience

I was interested in the experiential response that people have to the world around them and took this as the basis for the analysis. I did not study the larger structural issues at play although these are highlighted and considered in the conclusion of the research especially in terms of what further studies might be required. There are theories for how the formal and informal local structures of the community operate and these would need to be considered in reflecting on people's lived experience in further work.

2.3.2. The current political moment

The study of middle class (mostly white) South Africa raises broader questions about the nature of our democracy, state-civil society relations and the participation of citizens in public life. I wished to explore what motivates citizens to act on issues of community concern. In addition to motivation I explored the barriers to participation in the way the participants understand them.

The current political moment adds an additional dimension in considering the actions of citizens at the neighbourhood level. How does this particular political moment discipline/constrain us from acting together locally?

I wanted to better understand how individual South Africans can better engage with their frustrations and find productive avenues for action. Within this, I was interested in how individuals internalise their role and responsibilities as citizens and how this compares with other countries. Is it possible to raise the civic consciousness of people to act more coherently? Or are we too constrained by the political system within which we find ourselves?

2.3.3. Race is post-Apartheid South Africa

People's experience of race matters in post-apartheid South Africa. In this context there is value in thinking about how race impacts on citizenship. And how this is entwined in the idea of the liberation movement as the party of government? The above question is of broader interest to students of post-colonial studies, and societies where minorities are living within majority states. But this dimension is not considered in depth for this report.

3. Motivation

3.1. Local Level Protest in South Africa

The first of three reasons why this research is important is connected with the increasing importance of so-called 'service delivery protests' across South Africa. These are a relatively new phenomenon in which diverse South Africans target the state at the localized neighbourhood / small town level. This is perhaps the primary site of activism and protest in contemporary South Africa. Much has been written about township activism and the activism of the black poor at the local level, but the suburbs and white activism have been less described and theorized. This research is important because it directly addresses this gap in the literature.

The study weaves together the experiences of people who are associated with the community structures in and around Melville. The suburb of Melville, Johannesburg is one of the more vibrant, historic and cultural suburbs of Johannesburg. There is some evidence in this report to suggest that there has been an increase in resident participation in the suburb's communal life over the last few years. One of the key interviewees, Liza de Wit, believes that "participation has increased between 2007 and 2010" with projects like Faan Smit Park (a proposed project to develop a derelict park), Graffitti clean up (ongoing projects to keep Melville clean of graffiti and 'tagging'), Melville Visitors Centre (a recently opened centre for arts and tourism in the suburb), School initiatives (to keep the schools property neatly painted and keep drug dealers away), City Improvement District (a proposed project to unify business owners on 7th street) and the Community Security Project (a private group security scheme). This potential increase in local neighbourhood activism makes the site of Melville of interest.

Habib and Schultz-Herzenburg (2005) explore two essential characteristics of functional democracy. They describe the requirement for substantive uncertainty in democracy. This is the realistic possibility of being removed from power if you do not deliver what the public expects you to – substantive uncertainty is uncertainty as to the winners of the game. They separate this from institutional uncertainty which is uncertainty with regards the future of the democratic system itself – the rules of the game. South Africa does not have significant substantial uncertainty because of the relative strength of the ruling African National Congress and the relative weakness of the opposition parties. In this regard it remains difficult for citizens to hold public officials to account through the ballot box. This, combined with the nature of the proportional representation system, can increase the levels of frustration.

Some of these issues are touched on in the introduction. They speak to the general frustration with state machinery, and associated poor service delivery. This frustration and the possibilities of pro-active citizen action occur on many geographic levels; continent, state, province and municipality. Engaging the public in holding our public officials to account at all these levels is important. But it is at the local level that significant portion of people's anger manifests. This study seeks to explore this local level activism in the middle class context.

3.2. International interest in the Big Society and "Your square mile"

The second reason why this research is important relates to what Brodie et al (2009) describe as an explosion of interest in the fields of volunteerism and public participation. There is an increasing interest in going beyond electoral democracy across the world. This is both in the developed and developing world. This is in response to the perceived weaknesses in a simple electoral system within the liberal tradition. The possibility of a more participatory democracy has been mooted as a solution to some of the more stubborn localised and large scale challenges.

The local and the neighbourhood have become increasingly important in this debate due to a number of phenomena. One of these is the decline in funding for the big state which is both a long term trend and a recent trend linked to the global financial crisis. This is true for large parts of the western world but not true in South Africa where the state continues to grow.

The United Kingdom is a relevant unfolding case study in this regard with the Conservative Party winning the recent national election based on a policy of the Big Society (Cameron, 2010). This is a contentious term that has its proponents and opponents. But its logic is that we need to move away from the current binary discussion of either a big government or a big private sector and instead turn our attention to the potential of much larger and more active localized community initiative.

The focus of much Big Society efforts has been around "your square mile" which is the immediate boundary of the neighbourhood within which citizens live. David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has built his vision on this idea.

"These are big changes, and they all show how serious I am about building a bigger, stronger society. They also show how different our approach really is.
In the past, the left focused on the state and the right focused on the market.
We're harnessing that space in between – society – the 'hidden wealth' of our nation. We understand that neither the pursuit of unfettered individualism nor top-down state control will achieve the results people want to see – good jobs, opportunities for their children, safer streets, a rich and rewarding life.

Cameron (2011)

This study records a South African middle class case study that can contribute towards the current 'explosion of interest' and debate on local neighbourhoods and citizen participation.

3.3. Linking leadership and social science

Thirdly and finally, this research is important because it makes a contribution towards the integration of the social sciences and management / leadership studies. The social science literature is strongly orientated towards description of the deeper patterns of society, social change and structure. It is generally less focused on the personal human capacities to intervene successfully to change this reality. Whilst the management and leadership literature, often predominant in business schools, is focused on the skills needed to organize and create change, whilst not sufficiently accounting for deeper structural patterns of society.

This research report is a contribution towards the ongoing debates between structure and agency and is rooted in the belief that a stronger focus on human agency in the social sciences would be of value in building the capacity of people to impact the world. A stronger focus on structure within the fields of leadership and management would help root these fields in a context.

4. Limitations

My study area is a suburb of around 2000 households in Melville. There are difficulties in extrapolating findings outside of the Melville area.

My personal involvement in the activities of the suburb is both a strength and a weakness and this should be acknowledged. I am unable to fully extract myself from the context and content of the study but I am able to offer an insider-outsider perspective.

I do not cover the material that looks at the critique of civil society. As an example, Encarnación (2003) explores the effects of negative civil society pressures and social-capital on the consolidation of democracy in Brazil. I assume in this context that a stronger more active community is a positive force in the South African and Melville context.

It is also important to note that my identity and my own purposes shape the broad landscape of this research. This is a conversation between myself and the world around me and I am not undertaking this work in the positivist tradition. A clear argument for this position is given in the methodology section.

I have focused on the view of leaders (who could also be seen as activists) in the community and not interviewed members of the community themselves. This means that there is a certain lens through which the data are understood and accounted for. This study focuses on the perspectives and interpretation of people who have stepped forward voluntarily into leadership roles in the neighbourhood.

There are some key fields that I have documented to shape the research. These are detailed in the literature review and especially global 'participation' literature especially in the European and American tradition, social-capital literature, suburbs in South Africa and activism more widely in the South African context. I have not explored the literature on race and in particular 'whiteness'. I have not brought a gender analysis to the study although there may be relevant arguments for including this in further work, especially as the majority of leaders interviewed are women.

5. Ethical Implications

In line with university and departmental guidelines submitted the final proposal for ethical clearance. All potential ethical questions were dealt with in the related documentation. The key ethical issue was the protection of the confidentiality of comments and interviewees when asked for. Being a participant in the life of this community and studying this same community raises questions around independence. It is argued here that there is no strong argument why in this case my independence should be compromised by familiarity with the community and the conditions within which the leaders operate. Although care has been taken to refer strongly to the data and describe in detail the methodology to ensure that this is fully accounted for.

6. Methodology

6.1. Orientation

As indicated in the introduction, to accurately reflect the intimate position of the researcher in relationship with this subject matter a decision has been taken to write significant sections of the report in the first person. This also represents a deeper philosophical orientation of the researcher towards a more subjective approach and connects with one of the core motivations for this research – to connect the social science focus on structure with the leadership literature on agency and subjectivity. This approach is also common within the ethnographic method where the interviewer spends a considerable amount of time in the field.

The first person is often used in the method of reflexivity. Reflexivity is commonly understood to have occurred for example, when an anthropologist studies a village in which she is living for some time. In addition it is intended to clarify and avoid any vagueness as to the agency of the actors and the researcher himself.

This is a study within the tradition of interpretive social science (Neuman, 1994) and is qualitative in nature. This approach allows for a deeper exploration not only of the what and where questions, but also of the why and the how questions related to community action. This justifies the use of a focused sample. It is also necessary to employ this method to understand the nuanced context of the individual life journeys of participants being interviewed.

The orientation of this study is towards a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory describes the generation of theory through the interpretation of data rather than the testing of an existing theory. It is often used in qualitative studies (Neuman, 1994). Good grounded theory results in a hypothesis through the generation of codes, concepts, categories and then theory from the original data. The coding and conceptualizing phase is described in detail later in this chapter. The model developed through the research is compared with the literature in the chapter on interpretation. Much of the literature review is provided to give context for this study.

The approach was influenced by the broad principles associated with Action-learning (Serrat, 2008*)*. Action learning was developed in response to the failure of traditional teaching methods to lead to behavioral change. In action-learning we start with the questions and challenges that

emerge through our everyday practice of a particular discipline, in this case community organising. We explore theory in a search for answers to these challenges. Actions are reflected upon through inquiry with other peers. Lessons are learned and then new intentions set and the participant in action-research examines the impact of changed behaviour in an ongoing cycle of act-reflect-learn-plan-act. This approach is common in management development where the personal skills of the manager are their tools in the execution of strategy.

The approach was also influenced by the method of appreciative Inquiry (AI) that has been developed by David Cooperider of Case Western Reserve University (Cooperider and Godwin, 2010). Appreciative inquiry is a method that looks at what is working in the system and then asks what we might learn from it that is relevant across other contexts. The basic difference with other diagnostic research is that is starts with what is working and where we want to go and is situated firmly in the present and future. It differs in this way from the more traditional method of problem identification and solving that is based on what is not working and is situated more firmly in the past.

6.2. Definitional and Boundary Issues

6.2.1. Geographic and situational

The site of research is the suburb of Melville in the 'leafy' suburbs to the north-west of the Johannesburg Central Business District in South Africa. Melville is of interest because it is a middle class suburb in which there are many different new South African identities in action; resident, student, activist, artist, black, white, young, old, English, Afrikaans.

Melville is going through significant change. In July 2010 the Financial Mail (Fontyn, 2010) described Melville as one of 'Johannesburg's problem children' with the highest crime rate in the northwest. And a place that has lost many of its core of arty and creative residents. They report how residents who bought properties in previous decades and renovated the old houses did not expect their suburb to degenerate as it has.

The report described how most of Melville's problems emanate from Seventh Street where "Residents have to contend with patrons' cars blocking driveways, litter, vagrants, dodgy parking attendants and noise." They describe a high turnover of businesses in the area with many good restaurants closing down. They also describe how residents in the area have become more active and contracted their own security and have plans to upgrade the suburb (Fontyn, 2010).

An article in the Business Day (Brenner, 2010) paints a more optimistic view and quotes residents of Melville as saying that "Melville is a great place to live — we can walk to good bookshops, coffee shops, the greengrocer or to pick up an art house DVD, and we can catch the bus to work. We chat to our neighbours in the street and while there's lots of upgrading going on, things are not too posh."

Melville is not representative of broader suburban South Africa in the sense that it has a large numbers of bars, restaurants and shops that attract a relatively high multi-racial patron base. Melville is an interesting site for contemporary analysis exactly because of this exceptionalism and what it might mean for the parts of South Africa that are attempting some kind of integration.

One of the key organisations in the suburb is the Melville Residents Association (MRA) which seeks to represent the interests of residents and owners of property. This is also a contested site in which other people in Melville, Business owners and students also demand a say. It is largely dominated by long standing home owners, mostly white, middle class and middle aged who are concerned about social change, crime and property values.

> *"The MRA consists of a gang of stubborn residents determined to keep Melville the quaint and charming suburb we have all come to love."*
>
> *Melville Residents Association website (2011)*

Interviews and participant observation took place with leaders of the MRA but also with community leaders outside of the MRA. This included leaders of the Melville Crime Sector Forum – a wing of the local Community Policing Forum (CPF). And business leaders, members of the local ANC branch and included leaders who are not aligned or responsible for any formal structure. The plans for the pedestrianisation of 7th street (the small but well-loved 'high' street in the suburb) and the associated City Improvement District were taken forward by individuals outside of ongoing formal structures. It is partly for this reason (the increase in structured and unstructured community organising) that it makes for an interesting site of analysis in contemporary South Africa.

I am not very active in the MRA, the CPF and other structures beyond attending meetings once or twice a year. But I am familiar with some of the planning. Prior to this research I had interacted with the structures through some street level community organising to deter drug selling. I have a good

relationship with participants in these structures and did not anticipate any difficulties in getting access from the right gatekeepers. This proved to be true.

Prior to the research it was my personal experience that local sites of community participation such as the local ANC branch (of which I am a member) and MRA were experiencing an increase in citizen activity measured in increased attendance at meetings and more vibrant committees.

6.2.2. Informants

In terms of conceptual vocabulary the term leader or community is used to describe someone living in Melville who undertakes a significant amount of voluntary work in order to benefit the suburb as a whole. They can be seen as activists but I use the term leader because it allows for a discussion of influence amongst participants in structures and the nature of followers in the suburb. By leader I mean someone who is respected and 'looked to' in terms of playing a central organising role by others. It does not mean an authority figure in terms of formalised and structured power although a leader in this regard may develop informal authority through their actions. The community itself is made up of leaders and a range of more or less committed community members who may or may not follow these leaders. The definition of community in this context often delineates between members who participate in some visible way with the initiatives undertaken by leaders and those who do not participate or whose participation is less visible.

The informants consisted of nine women and three men. Out of the twelve interviewees, ten of them were white whilst two were black. They were all thirty years old or above. All but one of the leaders interviewed live and own property in Melville. They could all be described as middle class professionals. Two of the leaders interviewed were businessmen whilst eight were community volunteers with a personal interest in improving the suburb. Most of the people interviewed know one another through different initiatives although they were involved in different structures. As mentioned, two were in business, two were part of the Melville Residents Association, three were part of the Community Policing Forum, one worked on the Melville Koppies, one worked for a recently opened Visitors Centre whilst one had involved herself only in a particular initiative.

6.3. Data Collections Methods

The majority of data has been gathered through personal interviews and conversation with leaders. The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews with 10 community leaders and 2 semi-structured interviews with people experienced in the field of community participation.

The interviews were carefully constructed to bring out the views of the interviewee as regards their own involvement, their experience of participation and their views on the reasons for community participation and the dynamics of the community. The exact unfolding of the interview was organic with different lines of inquiry explored when issues of particular interest emerged. Interviews were often done in people's homes or at coffee shops in Melville. Notes were taken in written form and then typed up after the interview.

I attended two community meetings in Melville and two community meetings outside of Melville in order to compare the interview results with the meeting experience of leaders inside and outside Melville. Meetings outside of Melville were attended in the suburb of Brixton which is next to Melville and has some similar dynamics.

6.4. Data Interpretation Methods

The data were interpreted by working through the hard copy print outs of all of the interviews. Initial clusters of responses were observed and coded with coloured pens. For example, responses that hinted at political orientation of the leader were categorized as PO whilst responses that related to motivation of the leader were labeled ML. The information was then captured in an excel spreadsheet with all the quoted responses related to different labels (for example all of the ML responses were listed below each other with the relevant interviewee identified).

Following this, clear observed patterns of data were identified through a second iteration of clustering. Where there were not sufficient responses to justify a position the information was excluded from this report.

The categories that had substantive interviewee information that were clearly coded included information on what motivates these community leaders to step forward; why they think the broader community choose to involve themselves; and what the dynamics of the community are.

Following the coding of the data and its more detailed categorization, a simple illustrative picture was developed to give shape to the interpretation of the findings.

The findings were interpreted against this model and analyzed in the context of the relevant literature.

7. Literature Review

7.1. The Components of the Literature Review

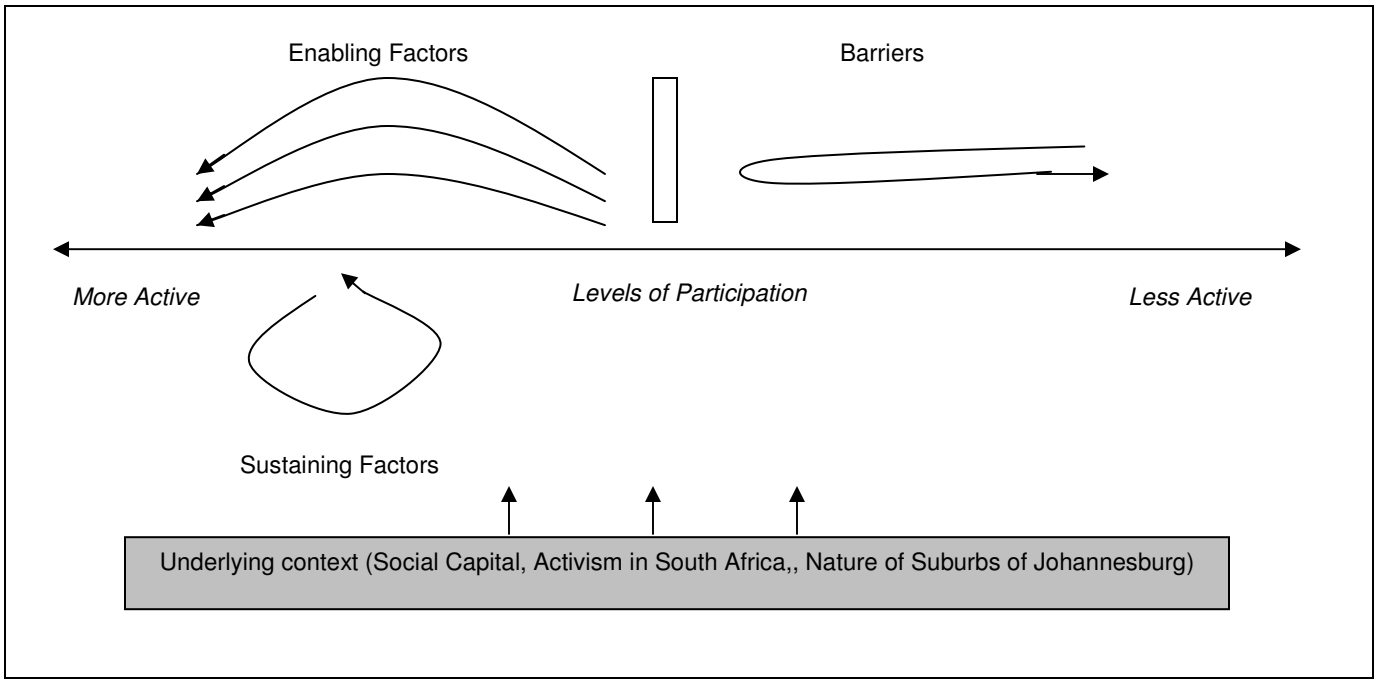


Figure 2. The Components of the Literature Review

The literature review is shaped by a map of the drivers of participation illustrated in Figure 2. There are a set of background or contextual factors that structure the participation field. These are a set of contextual factors that underpin any discussion of participation in Melville. The literature review begins with a focus on three main features of this underlying context: *social capital* changes (in particular looking at the USA and United Kingdom), *activism in South Africa* and the nature of the *suburbs of Johannesburg*.

This is followed by an assessment of the field of participation studies and in particular: the dimensions of participation, the *enabling factors*, *the barriers* and the *sustaining factors* in driving the levels of individual and collective participation (as above).

7.2. Underlying Context

7.2.1.Social Capital in the West

For democracy theorists it is important to provide space for autonomous associational life separate (but not divorced) from the state. The republished work of de Toqueville (2000) and that of Putnam (2000) are

anchors in this regard. Theories of social capital help to understand the nature of associational dynamics and the positive and negative characteristics of different forms of social connections and relations (both blocking access and opening doorways).

Putnam (2000) researches the state of social capital in the United States. He describes a decline in social capital in the US since 1950 and the resultant decline in the fabric of the country's social life. He believes this undermines the active civil engagement that is required from citizens to build a strong democracy. What is interesting to begin with, are the arguments that he dismisses as driving this trend.

The family structure has changed in the US. When the decline in the 'traditional' family is factored into the statistics it cannot explain any of the major declines in elements of social capital.

Similarly, religious engagement is down (a little) in the US when compared with earlier eras (e.g. the 1960s) but this cannot account for the decline of social capital along a range of non-religious arenas – e.g. bowling.

He also discounts the argument that social capital declines can be linked to the growth of the welfare state in the US by "crowding out" private initiative. Whilst he acknowledges it is possible that certain tax and incentive structures might have impacted on civil minded philanthropy, it is hard to see how government policy can impact on the number of people joining bowling leagues. His review of other nations in this regard makes for interesting reading. He argues that:

> *"amongst advanced Western democracies, social trust and group membership are, if anything, positively correlated with the size of government; social capital tends to be highest of all in big spending welfare states of Scandanavia. This simple analysis, of course, cannot tell us whether social connectedness encourages welfare spending, whether welfare states foster civic engagement, or whether both are the result of some other unmeasured factor(s)."*
>
> *Putnam (2000, p 281)*

Can it be argued that the declines in Social Capital are caused by the nature of capitalism and the role of the market in contemporary times? One argument Putnam sees against this theory is that America has had a market economy for several centuries yet during that time social capital stock has varied considerably. A constant cannot explain a variable. One element of the role of the contemporary market economy could hold

true – that the decline in the local independent stores (and the increase in multi-national capitalism) can mean a decline in the civic responsibility of business leaders. Local business leaders and elites, responsible to multi-national groups, do not have the same incentives to invest in local areas. He shows this to be true for a range of US cities. But, again, it is unclear how a change in the investment patterns and involvement of local business elites could impact on attendance at a church fair, or a local poker night with friends.

He also looks at race as a feature of US society that might play a role in this decline, One common hypothesis is that the great gains of the civil rights era led to a white flight from public space (this theory is worth connecting with the Melville experience). But the decline in social capital has impacted on all race groups, and the decline in social capital amongst whites who favour segregation, oppose segregation and blacks (in general) is essentially identical. Reversing the civil rights gains of the last thirty plus years will not reverse the social capital losses.

Putnam points to the aggregate loss of membership in a range of voluntary associations and institutions that have not been replaced by new membership based institutions. Although the number of people who bowl in the US has increased, the number of people who bowl in leagues has decreased.

Bowling Alone (2011) describes a decline over the last 25 years of 58% in attendance at club meetings, 43% at family dinners and 35% in 'having friends over'.

In terms of causes of this erosion of social capital, Putnam attributes 25% to television (and the resultant privatization of leisure time – he does not consider the internet), 10% to urban sprawl, and 10% to additional work commitments (2 career families). But more than anything he attributes 50% of the decline to a shift in attitudes towards civic engagement across this generation when compared with previous generations.

Slightly complicating the allocation of contributing factors is the overlap between generational change and the long term effects of television. Perhaps 15% of the total change can be allocated to the joint impact of TV and generational change – the so called "TV Generation".

Putnam cannot account for perhaps 15% of the causes and attributes them to 'other' unknown factors.

Staying with the US experience, Ravitch and Viteritti (2001) pick up on the striking metaphor of 'bowling alone' to analyse the state of American democracy. Some have critiqued Putnam's hypothesis that civic

involvement is in decline, rather pointing to the ways in which its form is changing and moving, becoming more temporary, emerging in new spaces (like soccer clubs). They quote sociologist Robert Wuthnow who looks at the highly mobile nature of contemporary society when compared with the geographic enclaves of the past and how people are increasingly looking for communities of interest, less defined by geography, more needs based and temporary and that these forms constitute a replacement for the "bedrock community associations of yesteryear".

But concerns remain, that as people move towards more narrow politicized agendas, national foci and fluid forms of organizing that there is an associated loss of common purpose. It is on this loss of common purpose that the authors focus. They are equally concerned with the significant changes in the nature of civil society (which they see as the 'the non-commercial aspect of communal life that exists somewhere between the individual and government').

> *"Whether civil society in America is in the process of degeneration or regeneration, whether the values that serve as the foundation for democratic governance have been lost forever or are undergoing a healthy readjustment to changing conditions, there are sure signs about the present situation that cannot be ignored."*
>
> Ravitch and Viteritti (2001, p3)

They draw attention to the complexity of the embrace of diversity studies which emphasises people's roots and difference rather than "the common stock of American ideals". They lament that something in the very politics of education is hollowing out the spirit of the public school.

On a slight tangent, Salomone (2001) tries to reconcile the need for respect for diversity with respect of commonality. She does this by moving the goal posts from a 'common school' to a 'common education' (you can choose your school but some things in the curriculum remain) that is based on a "bottom line of essential commonalities" where "idiosyncratic views cannot fall bellow that line" for "if there exists no ascertainable set of such common commitments that bind us together as a nation, then the whole republican project falls apart." This is essentially a debate on the thickness of the common culture. If it is too thin there is a risk of disintegration of the collective and what unites 'us', if it is too thick it denies what some Muslim Americans affirm is "a right to cultural reproduction". Whilst this is a tangent on the general analysis of civil society across the US, it is a useful case study that can be analyzed in the exploration of South Africa's own nationhood and common sense of citizenship.

There is also relevance in considering the additional US experience in city gentrification. In particular I am interested in the experience of Brooklyn New York where a young hip white community began to move into the brownstone buildings and begin a process of renovations. This started in the 1940s but sped up in the 1990s. This experience is documented in Osman's 2011 book *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*. She describes a process where white, college educated, idealistic, young professionals began a search for authenticity outside of the suburbs. They returned to run-down inner city neighbourhoods to live and renovated old brown brick buildings. There has been a resurgence of interest in the local and in the neighbourhood as a reaction against many of the elements of contemporary life.

One of the critical questions that need to be asked is whether we are experiencing and will experience a similar increase in focus on localised neighbourhood work, activism and volunteerism in the suburbs of South Africa and what that might mean for the future of Johannesburg.

This sets the scene for exploring the patterns of voluntary participation and associational life in the suburbs of South Africa. To what extent is the experience of the US – a largely urban society, relevant to the suburbs of South Africa and white society here. It is not stretching too far to assume that there are parallels to draw due to our exposure to US media, values and consumption patterns and our historic ties to western values and ideas.

7.3. Activism in South Africa

7.3.1. Contemporary Struggles

South Africa today is characterized by high levels of community protest at grassroots level. This is often political in nature and aimed at securing services from the state.

The Good Governance Learning Network (2001) documents the current state of public participation calling current formal "invited spaces" of participation inadequate. They describe how citizens have increasingly turned to "invented spaces" to voice their concerns and that these spaces a should be more formally engaged by the state even though they are not democratic utopias and can still marginalize people on the fringes. Much of the focus for local neighbourhood and community dissatisfaction has been in poor areas amongst the poor and marginalized.

There is an interesting case emerging that involves middle class protest outside of traditional channels (voting and formal institutional public participation channels). May (2011) gives an overview of the experience of five local municipalities in which rate payers associations are withholding rates.

May describes the nature of the actions being taken, their legality and makes some recommendations for the strengthening of structures for resolution of these issues. Her key findings were that the withholding of rates had a significant political impact even though the financial impact was small (around R10 million across 35 towns). The political impact was to increase mistrust between ratepayers and political authorities.

The disputes were found to relate to specific challenges and issues in service delivery that the authorities often acknowledge and are regularly documented in for example, auditor general reports. This provides a factual basis for beginning to work together to find solutions. Municipalities respond to the withholding of rates in a variety of ways from aggressive legal approaches by for example shutting off electricity, to more engaging responses and dialogue. May suggests that the fact that there is some engagement in even the most bitter of struggles provides a basis for moving forward towards solutions.

A breakdown of communication was found to be a common theme. It was found that had communication been effective then some of these disputes would not have run as far as they have.

It was finally found that representative organs of council (the executive committee of the Mayor, for example) had played no role in resolving these disputes. May therefore suggests that the mayoral committee structure is inadequate as it is subject to party caucus decisions and suggests a more democratic and inclusive committee structure.

In terms of recommendations she suggests that resolution of disputes is necessary and possible provided parties stay focused on the particular problem and not perceived motivations. Practical leadership and open communication from both sides is needed. And finally she suggests some improvements in the structure of local government.

What May is describing is an uncommon and extreme example of a common and ordinary set of dynamics where political minorities, often middle class and non-ANC voting, feel like they are not receiving the service delivery that they deserve and feel bitter towards a state that they believe is riddled with corruption, maladministration and incompetence. This pattern plays out in suburbs like Melville where the DA has won the most recent local elections.

Narsiah (2011) explores some of the theoretical questions raised by what she sees as the hollowing out of participation institutions and the violation of the spirit of citizenship that they were intended to embody.

She is supportive of the idea that social movements even when organized to protest against the state, can be involved in structures where deliberative decision making can bring the parties together to agree on a solution and action steps. She is critical of the ANC as a technocratic and centralizing power and the role of cadre deployment in limiting real participation and dialogue. She sees current participatory structures as rubber stamping the decisions of authorities and as authorizing the marketisation of public life. She is concerned that the types of structures that exist in South Africa at the local government level can actually facilitate what James Ferguson (1994) refers to as a better system of political control. This is captured by Ramjee and van Donk below.

> *"The South African local government sphere is in a state of rapid flux. The municipal elections in 2011 add a further degree of change and uncertainty to this already challenged and complex context…Low fiscal reserves, poor management, service delivery backlogs, rising community protests and the pressures of a developmental local government[are only some of the contestations that only just begin to scratch the surface in terms of what local government has to urgently address…The recurring nature of these protests bring to the fore two interconnected and glaring facts. First, the state, including local government, has not responded to the needs repeatedly raised by communities during protests and, as a minimum, failed to communicate clearly as to why these needs and concerns have not been fully addressed. Secondly, the structures and processes to express dissent, set in place by local government legislation, are inadequate and have failed to provide the space for the fair and inclusive expression of voice, particularly for the poor and marginalized of South Africa."*
>
> Ramjee and van Donk (2011, p10)

7.3.2. The Anti-apartheid Struggle

It is useful to situate the research within the broader historical context of citizen activism and participation in South Africa. The apartheid state, illegitimate and undemocratic, offered little opportunity for substantive and progressive public participation. Whilst there was some level of engagement (for example through the white liberal parties), the voice of the people was forced by circumstance into operating outside of the formal structures of the state.

The broad struggle for democracy overshadowed other battles (for example economic battles or struggles for municipal services) and umbrella movements like the United Democratic Front operated as a home for many people active in society. The country of that time could be characterized by high levels of involvement of people, especially black South Africans, as people sought to make the country 'ungovernable' and force the apartheid government to the negotiating table.

What happened after 1994 once a democratic and legitimate government came to power? Ballard et al (2006) give a broad overview of the first 12 years of democracy (1994-2006). They describe how civil society and citizen activism in general was hollowed out by the inclusion of major unions and some Non-government Organisations in formal alliance with the ANC government. Many civil society leaders within the 'struggle' also opted to participate in the formation of a functioning democratic government. They theorize that this created a leadership vacuum which inhibited the emergence of newer social movements.

This was also combined with a change in the funding relationship between, in particular, international donors and South Africa, from empowering grassroots struggles to empowering the newly formed state. There was also a new and complex relationship that emerged between social movements and a legitimate government. Was it anti-progress to protest against a democratic government that members of social movements elected? They write that:

> *"A new chapter in the South African political history was opened on 27 April 1994. It marked the moment when leaders of South Africa's anti-apartheid social movements entered the corridors of power. As has happened so often in newly liberated countries, the euphoria of the political transition led many to expect that the need for adversarial social struggle with the state was over."*
>
> Ballard et al (2006, p1)

Although by no means uniform (some unions maintained an adversarial role) the character of civil society-state relations was largely collaborative with the incoming government opening opportunities for Non-Government Organisations and Community Based Organisations to participate in the supply of state services. This collaborative relationship was facilitated by many formal corporatized structures to facilitate partnership such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and funding agencies such as the National Development Agency (NDA).

But the honeymoon ended early. Some opposition found form in a protest against specific policies such as the adoption of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) economic framework that led to opposition from the labour movement and others on the left. Other opposition emerged in the attempt to secure services for people when government failed to do so. Examples here include the work of the Treatment Action Campaign and the Landless People's Movement. And thirdly, opposition emerged that actively resisted some state policies and their enforcement such as by the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee. By the late 1990s these early forms of protest were becoming significant if small formations and of interest to academic study. Social Movements in the view of Ballard et al (2006) are politically and/or socially directed collectives, often involving multiple organisations and networks, focused on changing one or more elements of the social, political and economic system within which they are located.

What is interesting when reflecting on the early emergence of these forms of popular struggle against the state is the difference between these struggles and the localized 'service delivery' struggles of the mid 2000s and recent years which have less specific issue foci and involve broader locally based struggles to secure a broad range of services promised by the state but not sufficiently delivered since 1994. These have become popularly known as 'service delivery' protests. There was little sign and certainly little documentation of these broader community protests. The beginning of these 'service delivery' protests might be said to have begun in August 2004 when around four and half thousand young people, many of them school pupils occupied the N3 outside Harrismith. On the first day of this protest twenty-four children were arrested and one, Tebho Mkhonza, was shot dead (Pithouse, 2011).

A summary of these changes is illustrated in Figure 3.

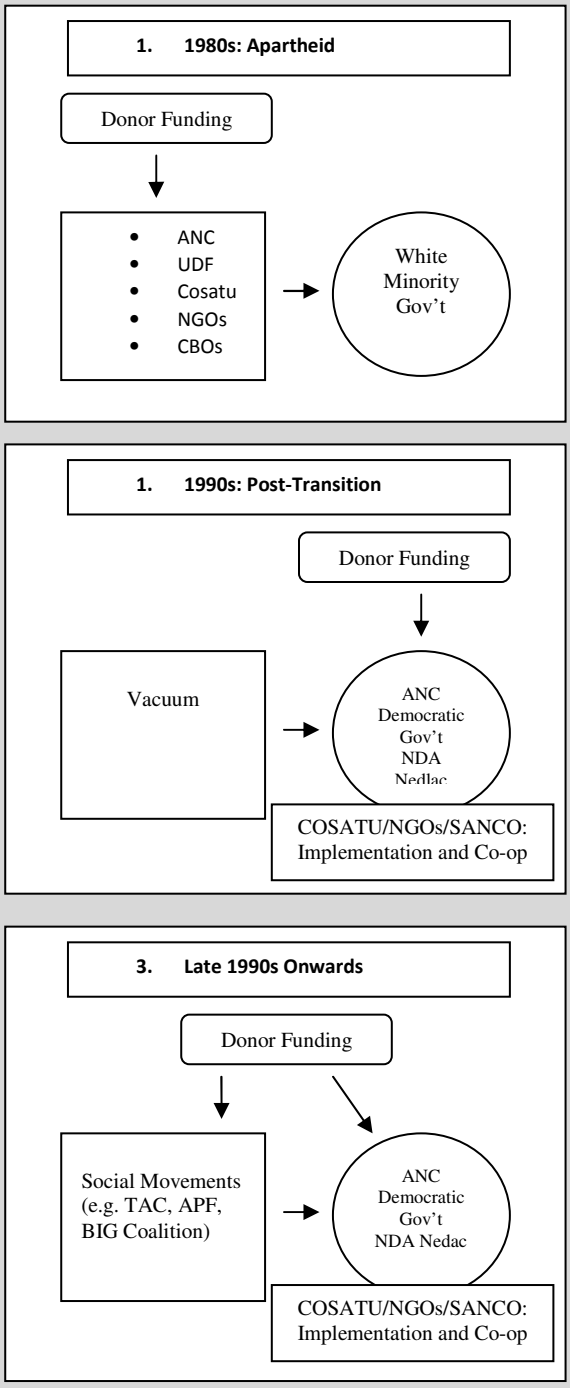


Figure 3. The re-invention of South Africa's social movements (after Ballard et al, 2006)

7.4. Suburbs of Johannesburg

Cornwall (2002) argues that participation should be understood as a situated practice taking us away from idealized notions towards the actual places and particularities of specific contexts. We can include the online world as a place that needs to be considered in this regard. This brings in the idea of community and neighbourhood or a community of interest. It can also include an analysis of the nature of the place where participation takes place. It can be 'closed' where special people meet, 'invited' where powers that be open it up in particular ways or 'created/claimed' where normally less powerful participants themselves create the place for their own participation. We can also examine the geographic scale of action which can be local, national or global.

Philo (1993) writes of the importance of place and space in understanding active citizenship and lightly touches on the relationship between citizenship and people's relationship to public space. This is an important consideration when thinking about local action which seeks to organize people according to a sense of place. Space, place and the local context matter.

7.4.1. Suburbs and Gated Communities

Much of the contemporary research in South Africa focusing on the suburbs, has been concerned with the development of gated communities. Gated communities are often suburbs where a high number of access roads have been fenced off and there is no access or access is controlled by security guards. In this sense public space has been demarcated for private use. Gated communities are a major feature of the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. They have been studied by a number of theorists who have tended to focus on space, spatiality and place (Hook & Vrdoljak). Landman (2000) provides a comprehensive overview. Her focus is on the real and practical context within which the decisions to gate suburbs are being made. She cites a number of positive and negative elements in thinking about the issue.

Positive aspects include the potential reduction in crime permanently or temporarily, the potential reduction in the fear of crime and the provision of psychological relief. Gating can also lead to an enhanced sense of community, ownership and responsibility.

Negative aspects include the creation of a false sense of security, the displacement of crime to other areas, the reduction in the response times to emergencies. It can also divide communities, cause fear to increase and cause social exclusion.

Ballard (2005) is critical of the racial and class nature of gated communities and asks whether this evolution is not an attempt by white South Africans to enforce apartheid in the private realm after it no longer exists in the public political realm.

> *"The fear of mixing that once drove the colonial and apartheid state projects, as with many modernist projects around the world, is now a privatised fear. Initially it was hoped that the property market would ensure that suburbs would retain their character sufficiently, and that upwardly mobile black individuals could be assimilated into the established norms. While this has indeed played out in some places, the property market was bypassed in other places by the arrival of informal settlements. More active mechanisms were therefore required by those keen to avoid encounters with others."*
>
> *Ballard (2005, p16)*

He sees gated communities as suburbs that no longer trust the state to perform a series of functions on their behalf. He also sees this trend in South Africa as an extension of what is happening globally. He sees this related to ideas and identities of whiteness rather than simply being a normal response of the middle class to the inability of the state to meet basic needs. Although he does acknowledge that there may be convergence between the ways in which whiteness is playing out and the local norms of the middle class including the black middle class.

7.4.2.Privatised Public Space

In addition to formalized gated space, other forms of 'softer' privatization have occurred and are occurring in the suburbs of Johannesburg. Dirsuweit (undated) describes this phenomenon through an examination of 44 Stanley Street (a recent retail development) and the Melrose Arch (a recent live-work-play multi-use space).

She argues that this evolution is a response to the discontent with standard suburban spatial form and the rejection of the traditional shopping mall. These solutions seek to resolve some of the contradictions of the standard idea of the suburbs by creating spaces that are supposed to be more inclusive, safe, less alienated and decaying.

But as Dirsuweit described, a number of authors have criticized this idea arguing that these forms of space are an extension of traditional planning and retain many elements of exclusion and traditional means of security (cameras and guards rather than social networks and community).

Security is the key driver of the increase in gated communities across South Africa. Gated communities are also a global phenomenon (Grant, 2005) and have been documented and researched across both the developed and the developing world.

In the USA and Brazil, case studies provide well-documented evidence about the factors driving gating. Other authors have revealed the way that fear of crime and social segregation contributed to the proliferation of gated communities in the USA. High murder and kidnapping rates drive enclosure in many Third-World cities (Landman, 2003). Residents of gated communities want to live where they can control public behaviour and avoid crime in their communities. These studies highlight security as a key motivator for people to move into gated developments.

Be´nit-Gbaffou (2008) also describes an evolution in the suburbs that involves a strong community response to crime in a range of differing relationships with the state. In the opening to the paper she describes a security project in Athol, one of the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

> *"There is no road closure here and no vigilantism. This is an extreme form of neighbourhood watch which seems to infringe the law only marginally. It is, however, quite violent in the racist behaviour it generates and legitimises. The neighbourhood watch principle indeed encourages residents to notice and to report on everything out of the ordinary – a pedestrian in the suburb, an unknown face, etc. It epitomises what Foucault foresaw as the 'future of the penal system', where the social order norms and the surveillance tasks are devolved to and integrated by the residents in a manner that inhibits the development of state policing."*
>
> Be´nit-Gbaffou (2008, p94)

She explores the different place and space based subcultures that are emerging across Johannesburg where differing norms are being promulgated into public space. She is particularly interested in non-gated communities where access is at one level open to all and where the constitutional rights of all citizens are respected but where on another level local community structures such as neighbourhood watches, private security operations and community security initiatives seek to implement norms which may go against the

constitution (such as racial profiling, prejudice against the very poor) or may at the very least be building a society that we do not logically want to create (lacking in tolerance towards pedestrians, hard-hearted, callous, fear-based and prejudiced)

She also describes the local forms of security and community policing in the township and points to the illegitimate description of township community policing as good whilst suburban community policing is bad. The dynamics of 80s township revolution have found form in the contemporary area in forms of community justice and vigilantism. What is happening in the suburbs is happening in a similar way in the suburbs. Extra-constitutional norms have been and are being established to deal with the crisis of crime by local communities – norms that do not align with the bill of rights (such as the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty).

She draws attention to the dominant discourse of crime prevention (target hardening, quick arrests, zero-tolerance) and the less talked about (and focused on) social and poverty problems which are the root cause that people turn to crime.

As with gated communities, organized middle class communities are asserting themselves, not just in South Africa, but globally. Baud and Nainan (2008) detail this movement in Mumbai India where middle class residents of Mumbai are increasingly opting out of formal political structures such as ward communities and, instead, working through 'advanced locality management' groups which would have some similarities with residents associations in the South African context.

Any activism and neighbourhood organising in Melville needs to be situated within this broader city-wide dynamic.

7.5. The Field of Participation

7.5.1. Dimensions of Participation

The experience of the United Kingdom, the United States and the western world in general is relevant when considering the experience of suburban life in South Africa. The suburbs of Johannesburg are mostly inhabited by white South Africans whose cultural and identity roots, whilst increasingly African, are decidedly western and intimately wound up in their ancestral roots in Europe. In addition, the contemporary cultural influences of the United States are prominent.

Brodie et al (2009) have written a comprehensive review of the field of 'participation' in their paper 'Understanding Participation: A Literature Review'. This review focuses on literature from the fields of community development, volunteering and public participation. It is largely dominated by research in western democracies. They posit an 'explosion of interest' in the field of participation over the past ten years. There are four primary reasons why it is seen as a good thing. Firstly it is seen as a way of ensuring the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Secondly it is hoped that through higher levels of participation, there will be a corresponding increase in social cohesion. Thirdly public participation is seen as a means through which state and social services can be more effectively and efficiently provided. Finally participation has been associated with individual and personal benefits from learning new skills, gaining a sense of confidence, through to the satisfaction gained from influencing social change. In one Zambian language participation translates as "to be part of or to give oneself to what is going on" (Gwaba, 2003). Participation has a rich history beyond the current policy buzzword. The relationship between states and citizens has occupied philosophers and social scientists since these disciplines were invented.

They refer to a range of conceptual frameworks for considering participation including public participation (voting and participating in local government structures), social participation (participating in church or local groups) and individual participation (including the everyday politics of fair trade consumption, donating money or signing a petition).

A second useful conceptual framework to consider is that of civil and civic participation. Civil participation refers to 'horizontal' participation and the associational life of residents associations, sports clubs and faith groups. This falls under social participation above. Civic participation refers to 'vertical' participation in the affairs of the state and is often the domain of the field of 'public participation' as referred to above. They draw on the early theorizing of democracy and participation including the recently republished work of de Toqueville (2000).

There has been some research that links the increases in individual participation with a decline in the belief in the potential for traditional politics. Brodie et al (2009) chart an increase in the localism agenda in the United Kingdom and to some extent the US. In particular the election of conservative Prime Minister David Cameroon, on the platform of the 'Big Society', has increased the focus on the potential of participation and localism.

One of the recent historical trends described by Brodie et al. is the rise of individualism and its impact on the nature of civil society. This has not so much affected rates of participation as the approach people take.

Young people are motivated by a sense of individual purpose, by self actualization, rather than obligation to state or society. They suggest that this gives rise to multiple identities, less formal participation and a broader international interest. This has been further encouraged by the growth of new technologies and especially social technologies and platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Brodie et al see three key drivers of changes in participation. The first is the crisis of democracy and new governance spaces through the decline in formal political participation and an increase in co-production and empowerment. The second is the change to civil society driven by the internet, fears of cooption and overstretch in civil society and changing legal frameworks. And the third is the change in the nature of citizen action through individual more fluid organizing around place, interest and identity.

Brodie et al (2009) structure their paper to give an overview of the history and drivers of participation (as detailed above), the techniques of participatory activities detailed below and the actors (further below).

Techniques of public participation (Involve 2005 cited in Brodie et el, 2009)

1. Appreciative Inquiry
2. Citizen Juries
3. Citizen Panels
4. Community Empowerment Networks
5. Consensus Building / Dialogue
6. Consensus Dialogue
7. Deliberative Mapping
8. Deliberative Polling
9. Deliberative Meetings of Citizens
10. Electronic Processes
11. Focus Groups
12. Future Search Conferences
13. Participatory Appraisal
14. Participatory Strategic Planning
15. Planning for Real
16. Open Space Technology
17. User Panels
18. Youth Empowerment Initiatives

Table 1. Techniques of Public Participation

There are a number of different models of participation and frameworks for understanding it depending on where the author is focused. Overall Brodie et al (2009) summarise a set of spectrums that can help to

classify or analyse the type of participation being considered and describe its nature. These spectrums are detailed below.

Dimensions of Participation (Brodie et al, 2009)
Unstructured → Structured Informal → Formal Passive → Active Individual → Collective One-off → Ongoing Unpaid → Paid Reactive → Proactive Self-interested → Altruistic Resisting Social Change → Driving Social Change

Table 2. Dimensions of Participation

Brodie et al (2009) feel it is important to focus, not just on activities and structures, drivers and the historical context but more importantly, who gets involved and why?

Below are a set of typographies of different types of people who participate. This is based on a small scale qualitative research study carried our by the Henley Centre in the United Kingdom (Harrison and Singer, 2007: 55-59 cited in Brodie et al, 2009). Individuals' attitudes and activities concerning engagement, community, public services and politics were profiled against their personal time, energy and money budgets. Findings from this study resulted in an 'engagement segmentation' and the classification of five key groups of actors

- **Community bystanders** are the least engaged across a range of activities and less likely to participate even passively. The authors suggest that a disproportionately high number of lower income people and older people fall within this group.
- **Passive participants** engage in 'easy' activities, such as socializing with neighbours, using local leisure facilities and participating in local school events. Passive participants are said to be disproportionately middle income and middle aged. It is also suggested that passive participants are often parents and typically tired, short of time and energy, and feel unwilling to do more.
- The **community conscious** have a strong belief in the values of community and in a sense of community where they live. They are described as making things happen in their community, though they are not necessarily 'political' or engage in local politics. The community conscious are

said to be disproportionately women. Like community bystanders, they tend to be older, but are much more affluent and although they feel time pressures they are not low on energy.

- The **politically engaged** focus on local activities, such as local planning meetings and public consultations. They may also write to newspapers and their MP, or canvass for their local party, but do not socialise with neighbours or go to local leisure facilities. They are said to be in the oldest age group, the most affluent and frequently male.
- The **active protesters** put their time and energy into going on demonstrations and writing letters to newspapers. According to the authors they tend to be less satisfied with their local area and this, they suggest, may drive their participation.

This is a useful framework for considering the case study of Melville especially with regards to the depth or level of residents' involvement.

Another way of looking at the types of people who participate, draws on the results of the Citizen Audit, analysed by Pattie el al (2004) and cited in Brodie el al (2009). The authors identify three types of political activist that are not based on depth or level of commitment but on personal style.

- **Individualistic participants** are people who purchase or boycott particular goods for political or ethical reasons; they are also more likely to donate to or raise money for an organisation, sign petitions, display a poster or wear a badge with a political message, and vote in local government elections with the aim of influencing political outcomes. The middle-aged, the rich and the better educated are more likely to be individualistic participants.
- **Contactors** are individuals who contact public officials and are also more likely to engage in other contact with politicians, organisations, the media or legal personnel. Contactors are more likely to come from among the poorer members of society.
- **Group activists** form groups of like-minded people or take part in demonstrations and political meetings, and may also participate in illegal protests. That is, they participate in or initiate collective action. The young and highly educated are more frequently found to be group activists.

For Boyte (1993, 2008(1), 2008(2), 2009(1), 2009(2); Boyte and Mehaffy, 2008) participation can be political/systemic/transformative or narrow/naïve/idealistic. He comments on some recent studies in which high school community service programmes found that citizenship training programmes had depoliticised the field and that issues of "self-esteem" and "capacity to persevere in difficult tasks" were seen as objectives of the programme. He believes that learning

about politics and power is often absent and that the resultant activism tends to be highly moralistic, personalized and not informed by the true nature of problems. What Boyte calls for is a civic education that teaches students to map their political environment and their own activities in civic terms. He uses terms to describe the concepts required in a more ideal training as "practical", "public-spirited", "power" and "public space".

This has important implications because of the role of the middle class in potentially consolidating progress through increased activism in alignment with the needs of the poor, or through the opposite, their departure from public life and public space and the lack of alignment with further structural social change.

7.5.2. Enabling Participation

Brodie el al (2009) suggest that the reasons people participate and the reasons they say they participate are diverse. In terms of volunteering research, Rochester et al (2009) highlight four explanations in the volunteering literature.

The first are Socio-economic factors where people with higher education and income volunteer more than those with fewer resources. This analysis reflects a UK bias and should not be taken as indicative of the South African situation. In fact it would be intuitive to assume in SA that there is less volunteerism in upper-middle income areas when compared with traditional township communities and traditional rural areas due to the assumed stocks of social capital and potentially strong norms of reciprocity. My own time in Alexandra township will confirm how residents themselves see themselves as a generous community. There may be a racial dimension to the South African context where white South Africans in the urban setting may follow a stronger western value system whilst urban black South Africans, due to a variety of factors including apartheid brutality and rural linkages, may be more interconnected and communally driven.

The second explanation relates to opportunity or access. This is connected to people's social networks – people volunteer because they have been asked. The third explains historical and cultural factors at the societal level. This will determine for example, how people volunteer (in self help groups, churches or online). The fourth is the individual motivation. In this context some people might have personalities that are inclined towards volunteerism.

There is also literature that looks at why people say they volunteer but it is hard to know if what they say are the 'real' reasons because of the bias towards being humble, for example or saying what they think is the right response.

Klandermans (2003) describes three drivers that account for most of the collective political action in society. These drivers are the desire to change circumstances (instrumentality), the desire to belong to a group (group identity) and the desire to give meaning to one's life (meaning).

And then Clary el al (1992), on the subject of volunteering, describe a broader range of factors that drive people, including:

- acting according to deeply held beliefs about the value of altruism
- volunteering to learn and experience new things
- volunteering to develop ones skills with the hope of career advancement
- participating to align oneself with ones peer group
- volunteering to enhance ones self esteem
- using volunteerism as an escape mechanism

Later work by Clary et al (1992) added volunteering because one believes that what goes around comes around, volunteering to eradicate particular personal problems, volunteering to build social networks and volunteering to be recognized for the contribution. All in all this research covers the psychological factors that motivate people.

There are also the trigger factors that can shape people's participation. They include 'being asked' as the most obvious. This points to the role of social networks in influencing volunteer behavior.

Michael Quayle (2010) in his workshop presentation on the potential for a higher level of pro-social action in South Africa, explored the nature of behavioral change from a psychological perspective. He looks at habit formation and the contributing factors towards changing ones behavior.

Many theories of behavioral change look at attitude, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms as the key elements that need to be aligned for a change in behavior to occur. Attitudes are a factor in social change and point to the need for the promotion of good values and personal character. In short your attitude

determines your altitude. Perceived behavioral control refers to the belief one has as to the potential to change the situation. Subjective norms refers simply to how I think others will respond to my actions.

He explains that these three factors can only account for 27-39% of changes in behavior. In other words as Quayle writes "even when attitudes are firm, the behavior is possible, it is perceived as normative and the person intends to carry out the behavior…it is still very uncertain that they will. Something is missing".

This something, and critical in his view is the "normative element of group membership" that is a vital contributor towards changing behavior. We change because the people around us change or they represent the new norm to which we wish to belong. "People who identify together mobilize together". Without a pro-social identity that supports and validates pro-social action there will be no pro-social action. In particular he raises the important elements of group identity, culture and habit formation as critical when considering sustained changes in norms.

This opens up the question, when exploring higher levels of participation, of the need to consider street, family, peer and friend dynamics in the understanding of social change – beyond the individual characteristics of the individuals involved. Together with the ways in which habits form and the nature of the broader culture.

Malcolm Gladwell (2010) in his article on the potential of online social networks to support social change and revolution, argues that weak connections between people (those associated with Facebook and Twitter for example) can encourage and mobilize people to make small easy pro-social behavioral shifts. Weak ties with their loose connections can bridge divides and can help bring in new ideas, information and little bits of help. But he does not believe that these weak networks encourage people to take radical (and potentially dangerous) action.

Is his elegant style, he tells a story of four college students, during the US civil rights struggle, who, on the 1st of February 1960, sit down at a lunch counter in a place that refuses to serve African Americans. He writes that the four students who first sat down at the lunch counter were terrified. "I suppose if anyone had come up behind me and yelled 'Boo', I think I would have fallen off my seat" one of them said.

But they did not fall, and returned to the counter day after day, sparking a movement in which starting with the four, on the Monday swelled to eight by Wednesday, three hundred by Thursday, six hundred by

Saturday. Some seventy thousand students eventually took part, eventually engulfing the US south in a civil-rights war that lasted a decade.

For significant radical revolutionary action, where sacrifice is required, it is the strong social networks that matter. He goes further (at some level supporting the arguments of Quayle (2010)) in arguing that "what matters is not ideological fervour but personal connectedness" – what matters is that people close to you are significantly involved. It is these strong ties that bond people tightly and act as the glue required to stand together, fearful but resolute, against a dangerous enemy. On a side note, he also argues that for revolutionary and risky action a hierarchy is required to organize a strategic campaign and online social networks are poor organizers of hierarchal action.

Community participation is, at a deep personal level, tied to views of the world and oppression, freedom and liberation. We can see ourselves as oppressed when we believe that we are victims of the nation's fate, and do not believe we are able to influence the future of our society.

Two influential individuals have contributed significantly to thinking about freedom, Paolo Freire and Steve Biko. Biko and Freire can be used as a lens to reflect upon the experiences of the middle class even though they were confronting the apathy of the poor and oppressed because of self-defined views of middle-class power.

Freire, from Brazil, is well known for his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2000)*. Mayo (1999) compares the work of Gramsci with the work of Freire. In this context I am interested in Freire's conception of the educator being firmly on the side of the poor. For Freire to be neutral is to side with the oppressor and to continue to educate within the system of power and privilege is to be neutral. For Freire authority should never result in authoritarianism. Freire matters because he came to experience the enormous power inherent in the poor, to be their own liberators, when they are involved in a learning process that allows them to do so. The poor and marginalized come to recognize their capacity to influence the world, and in the context of this study, this element of self-power is equally important when considering the constrained potential of the middle class to contribute towards social change.

Of importance in the South African 'liberation' and 'freedom' literature and in this field is Steve Biko and his ideas of black consciousness (Biko, 2002). Biko's thinking about black consciousness can be extended to consciousness in broader terms and in this context 'South

African consciousness' or 'citizen consciousness'. This is not to diminish the continued importance of developing black consciousness but to ask the question of how this influential set of ideas and provocations could be extended to cover black and white citizens working under a broadly democratic nation and black majority government.

Biko's thinking around self sufficiency and independence is relevant for the neighbourhood context. A good example would be the Zanempilo Clinic built under the auspices of the Black Community Programme in the 1970s. Biko saw the struggle to restore Africans as equals as having two phases. The first was psychological liberation and the second physical liberation.

> *"All in all the black man has become a shell. A shadow of a man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity"*
>
> Biko (2002, p 29)

> *"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."*
>
> Biko (2002, p 68)

Psychological liberation is as important now as it was then, and is important not just for the black poor but for all South African individuals and communities who do not feel empowered to change their circumstances.

7.5.3.Barriers to Participation

Brodie et al (2009) suggest that there are a number of barriers that decrease the participation of people in community and civic responsibilities.

One of the key barriers to participation is the complex institutional environment in the public realm. Sometimes community leaders themselves are a hindrance to increasing participation, often denying access to others. This can be due to their leadership style or their prejudices.

Perceptions about 'the usual suspects' can create a barrier with people feeling like they are outside the clique and that their views will not be included. It has also been suggested that the fear of being separated

from the crowd can act as a barrier towards participation, especially in leadership structures. Often this can relate to questions of social identity with people not participating because they do not see themselves reflected in the people participating.

Lack of personal resources including education and financial resources can also limit participation. And the knowledge of the structures within which to participate can also limit involvement. As can psychological elements including someone's confidence.

Lack of time has been attributed as a barrier towards participation but when analysed, it is often the case that those who participate do not have more time than those who do not. So lack of time can be seen as a psychological barrier rather than a practical one.

Peter Block (2009) in *Community: The Structure of Belonging* sees the greatest barrier to participation as the structures within we meet. At the centre of his thinking is the belief that a change in the way we relate can radically improve the quality of neighbourhood action and therefore improve our communities and the world around us.

Block defines community as a place where we belong – that is where we are not an outsider. But within which I am also an owner and co-creator. His book is about how to create a 'beloved' community. And therefore how to structure the experience of belonging, above the randomness of chance and individual hospitality. He focuses on structure because it can be created by anyone, leader or not, and does not depend on leadership style or inclination. It is therefore available to everyone.

Too often the 'problems of community' are on the centre of the table, rather than seeing community an enabler of a future different from the past. In other words what we call urban problems are actually the result of a breakdown in community and if we fix community, we will fix those problems. He is critical of the expectation that leaders can get more done within the current relational context and is calling for a shift in this relational context which will provide the framework for getting more done.

To get to this future requires a substantive transformation that in his mind is "a fundamental shift in context". The core question for Block is:

"What is the means through which those of us who care about the whole community can create a future for ourselves that is not just an improvement, but one of a different nature from what we have now?"

Block (2009, p5)

He is concerned that the transformation of large numbers of individuals does not lead to a transformation of communities.

"If we continue to invest in individuals as the primary target of change, we will spend our primary energy on this and never fully invest in communities. In this way, individual transformation comes at the cost of community".

Block (2009, p5)

He is critical of the cult of leadership (as in "if only we had better leaders we could …") and favours ordinary people working together as citizens. He believes it is our love of leaders that limits our capacity to create an alternative future. Some reasons to be skeptical of the power of citizens coming together are well founded, because mostly when citizens come together it does not make a difference. This is because too often citizen groups default to the form of engagement that traps progress – identifying problems, find fault and blame others. Too many citizens get involved when they are angry.

"If we keep engaging citizens in traditional ways then no amount of involvement will make a difference. The way we currently gather has no transformative power. This is what needs to change, for if we do not change the way citizens come together, if we do not shift the context under which we gather and do not change the methodology of our gatherings, then we will keep having to wait for great leaders, and we will never step up to the power and accountability that is within our grasp."

Block (2009, p41)

Peter Block identifies a range of productive actions that can change the nature of how we gather, and through this, change the outcomes. He describes what is needed from each of us – to become a citizen. The antithesis of being a citizen is to be a consumer or a client.

Consumers believe that their needs can be met by the actions of outsiders, whether those others are elected officials, top management, social service providers, or the shopping mall. He sees the provider-consumer transaction as the breeding ground for entitlement and disempowers people. The reduction of democracy to voting is the reduction of democracy to the public to consumers of elected officials and this leads to the focus on campaigns as marketing and product management.

In Block's view a citizen is someone who holds oneself accountable for the wellbeing of the larger collective. A citizen is someone who chooses to own and exercise power rather than defer or delegate it (Commitment is a promise with no expectation of anything in return). She enters into collective possibility that gives hospitable and restorative community its own sense of being. She acknowledges that citizenship is built not by specialized expertise, or great leadership, or improved services; it is built by great citizens. She attends to the gifts and capacities of all others, and acts to bring those gifts on the margin to the centre.

Block sees the social fabric of society created one room at a time, the one we are in now, and the small group as the unit of this transformation. It is formed out of the questions "Who do we want in the room?" and "What is the new conversation we want to occur".

The key to this new future is to focus on gifts, associational life and on the insight that all transformation occurs through language. Each step has to involve an aliveness and strategy evolves in an organic way. The essence of creating an alternative future (not just a slightly better one) come from citizen-citizen interaction that constantly focuses on the well-being of the whole. We all have the capacity, expertise and financial resources that an alternative future requires. The small group is the unit of transformation and the container for the experience of belonging.

He sees a series of conversations that are required (not necessarily in this order), the possibility conversation, the ownership conversation, the dissent conversation, the commitment conversation and the gifts conversation.

Within these conversations, there are a range of techniques Block suggests for building community and changing context small group by small group including reflections on questions such as:

- What declaration of possibility can you make that has the power to transform the community and inspire you?

- How valuable an experience (or project) do you plan for this to be?
- How much risk are you willing to take?
- What have I done to contribute to the very problem that I complain about?
- What is the gift you still hold in exile?
- What resentment do you hold that no-one knows about?
- What promise am I willing to make?
- And the very powerful series of questions: What is the story about this community that you hear yourself most often telling? What are the payoffs you receive from holding on to this story? and finally, what is your attachment to your story costing you?

In closing Block sees physical space as decisive in creating the community we want and much more important than we realise.

7.5.4.Sustaining Participation

This is an under-researched field within participation studies. Much more work has been done on why people do and do not participate. It has been argued that having a stable and settled life may lead to higher sustained levels of participation, especially in more formal non-movement based volunteering initiatives. Interestingly, the more stable life that can accompany full-time work, marriage, children and a mortgage and that sustains formal volunteering, is often the reason for exiting more activist and risky forms of participation (Doherty et al, 2003). Friendships made during participation have also been shown to sustain engagement.

Demographics, personality and types of motivation have not been found to influence the levels of sustained participation. Practical factors like moving house or jobs have been show to be a cause of people exiting participation. Some types of participation lend themselves to more sporadic involvement such as some older forms of environmental activism. However as the global green agenda increases this might change.

Jasper (1998) emphasizes the personal and emotional nature of activism and links this with the levels of sustained participation. He argues that complex interwoven emotions including frustration, compassion, anger, alienation and anomie, explain why people participate and why they exit. Passy and Guigni (2000) argue that once a connection between participation and participants three core life areas (work, study and family) has been connected this will sustain participation because the issue and field of participation will be strongly linked to a sense of self.

In terms of organizational and institutional factors, many people stop participating because of how the way they are treated by the organisation who could be undervaluing or over burdening them. Continuation is more likely if participants are managed in an explicit, developmental, supportive and appreciative way. Sometimes state creep and the bureaucratization of independent organizations has lead to participation declining.

Taylor (2003) has argued that community 'stars' can become victims as they are drawn into bureaucratized state systems that can lead to burn out an unsustained participation.

7.5.5.Sustaining Leadership

Parks Daloz et al (1996) in their book *Common Fire* explore how to live a life of sustained commitment in a complex world. They interview more than one hundred people, mainly based in the United States, who have led lives of commitment to a broad sense of the common good. They are particularly concerned with people who are able to embrace diversity of people and place. They found that on the issues of sustained engagement that these people had *conviction, courage, confession and commitment*.

The people interviewed in the book are not immune to being overwhelmed, discouraged and bewildered. But they do exhibit certain "habits of mind" that steady them in turbulent times and foster humane, intelligent, and constructive responses to the complex challenges that we face. These "habits of mind" exist in many leadership fields but they are particularly important in the complex social world that we are talking about here.

The habits they describe involve dialogue, getting into the shoes of others, systemic thought, openness to contradiction and practical wisdom.

They also describe the role of images, imagination and personal experience remembered as a set of images and stories with meaning that anchored their actions and sustained their work. This is what the authors mean when they speak of courage – the capacity to respond to a situation that demands a lot with a deep sense of trust and stability because of the embedded remembered and imagined memory. In this regard courage is not only (or not even) the overcoming of fear but rather the natural response to a situation, like going back for your child in a burning house – it was just the thing to do.

The authors also see, in the experience of leaders with sustained life long commitment, 'the struggle with fallibility". This is what the poet David Whyte (2003) calls "the bitter, unwanted passion of your sure

defeat" without reverting to the luxury of cynicism. Part of this element involves the costs of commitment. The impact on their children was of most concern to them but the impact on health (from stress and temporary burn out) and the lack of financial security was also a component.

Common Fire also covers the shadow motivations that enable people to live lives of commitment including the feelings that deal with agency (pride, the need to please, anger, fear) and those that are a response to pain (abuse, betrayal, oppression and vulnerability). This is the element of confession – the personal healing that is needed to sustain the work. The people researched were able to acknowledge these shadow sides of their own commitment. Rather than seal off from the shadows, they stayed open and worked with who they were.

This requires a voice in their heads that allows their shadow to be, to exist and to be loved and to live and to be treated with respect and patience. Burnt or destructive behavior occurs when parts of us are silenced. They were able to let the pain touch them, but not become lost in it, they were neither anesthetized or self-absorbed.

They followed mentors and other guides who helped them remain with the pain but also rise above it, they used this pain for motivation and channeled it into action, they understood that their own pain was part of the pain of the whole of humanity. They were willing to forgive themselves and others, time does not heal, often wounds can fester and get worse, but forgiveness and the acknowledgement of our wrongs and those of others heals.

> *'Often people burnout because they cannot relinquish what is beyond their control…And as one man said "I'm not God, I goof. I make mistakes all the time. I'm just doing the best I can, and I come with my own baggage; we all do." '*
>
> Parks Daloz et al (1996, p192)

Parks Daloz et al (1996) see commitment as responsible imagination, the ability to imagine a new world but to be rooted in this one:

> *"Having explored and reflected upon how citizens committed to the whole earth community are formed and sustained, we have come to believe that the answer to the two central questions – "How do people become committed to the common*

good?" and "What sustains them?" is finally the same. They are sustained by the very processes that have made them who they are. The people we interviewed have learned that they and all others are an integral part of the fundamental interdependence of life. Knowing this, when faced with a violation of what they know to be true, they cannot not act. Their commitment derives from knowing that we are bound to one another and to the planet…As an acorn takes root or a field flourishes in Spring, they grew into their commitment bit by bit."

"And although the conventional understanding of commitment often connotes a kind of fierce holding on, a determination to see a work through no matter what, we saw something quite different in those we studied – not so much a white knuckled grip and clenched teeth as an open hand and discerning heart. Thus, like many creative people, they often speak of feeling "drawn out" or "led" as if by some force or truth greater than themselves"

Parks Daloz et al (1996, p195)

And for some this was a spiritual calling such that quitting would be "spiritual death".

"As one person told us "it's not that we sustain a commitment; it's more that people like myself are sustained by the commitment".

Parks Daloz et al (1996, p198)

In terms of specifics Parks Daloz et al find very little sense of sacrifice among those interviewed. They rather speak of a "deep gladness" and the sense that this is what they love. And they find the strong sense of self connected to the work where "to quit would be to betray "one's most profound sense of self".

They also found that those they interviewed had a profound sense of connectedness to the world around them and were more open to collaborative work environments. They sought out mutually nurturing relationships with others. A thick body of research confirms that to sustain commitment requires knowing that there are others like the committed to the world, who might not be known, but whose mere existence was a model and comfort. In contrast burnt out activists often speak of feeling abandoned and lonely.

Family was key in this regard with many men saying that their children “humanized” them and that family had a special power as a “laboratory in being faithful”. They also had a sense that whilst it is important to act now, they are part of a much larger journey of life.

People like those interviewed, are often known as visionaries, who describe clear visions of the future, articulate goals and then invite others to join them. But this was not the case. They were more participatory, more focused on the “shifting circumstances” of the time and “proceeding in open ended ways”. Linked to this sense of fluidity and change is the belief that no-one knows the whole truth, as one respondent answered “You need goals but you can’t paint what the finish line is going to look like” and another stated “We are only asked to take one step that makes another step possible.”

7.5.6. Conclusion and Questions Raised in the Literature

The literature suggests a number of enabling factors and barriers people can face in participating in community life. This is based largely on the experience in the United Kingdom and in the United States. The literature categorizes some of the dimensions of participation once people become active. Some of this is presented in Table 2. Dimensions of Participation (Brodie et al, 2009).

There are many further questions in the local situation about the main features of participation. There are questions about what elements of the international literature are most relevant and how the dimensions above play out on in this context.

This study examines the issues raised through the eyes of the people taking leadership roles in Melville. It is not a broad analysis of the views of a variety of stakeholders. I am interested in understanding what participation looks like from the particular perspective of those most active – the leaders. I am interested in whether this perspective on the situation will shed new light on the global literature and provide some interesting and valuable lines of inquiry for further studies.

Few studies have focussed in any depth on the leadership questions. A critical question is what the leaders in Melville believe are the factors enabling (and preventing) more active participation of residents in the neighbourhood's affairs. And how they understand their own motivations and what sustains them. Is there congruence between what they see of themselves and how they see others?

I approach the summarizing of the data through three key questions:

- How do leaders in Melville describe the factors that motivate them?
- How do the leaders in Melville describe what motivates others in the community?
- What do the leaders in Melville see as the key features of being active in the public realm within the neighbourhood?

8. Findings

8.1. Context

Life course and life sphere history can be a powerful tool in analyzing how people participate and why. Work in this area draws together the macro level changes that might be occurring in society, the mid level changes that might be occurring in a community, and the micro level elements that might occur in ones job or family, or even within oneself. Passy and Guigni (2000) link spheres of life (friend, family, work, studies) with participation and proposed that the more interlinked they are the more sustained ones participation will be. This study concerns itself with how a range of leaders see their own experience and that of others. It captures both macro dynamics, personal life stage and more fluid processes such as chance encounters with friends and neighbours.

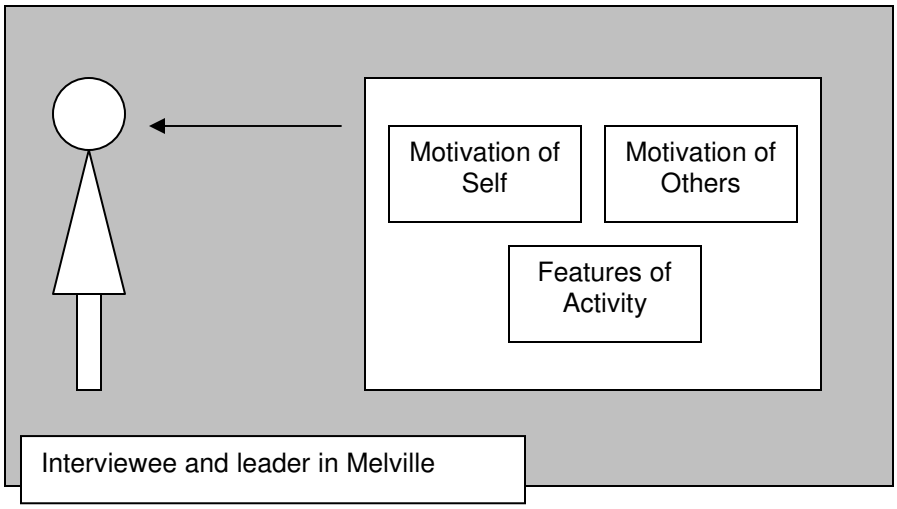


Figure 4. Primary Focus Areas

Long semi-structured interviews were completed with ten leaders active in creating change in the suburb and two people with significant experience working in these environments.

The people interviewed included a cross section from a variety of formal and informal structures and businesses. The informants consisted of nine women and three men. Two of the leaders interviewed owned shops on the main street and who involved themselves more extensively in the neighbourhood, whilst eight were home owners with a personal interest in improving the suburb.

The interviews were coded for the patterns of responses as detailed in the methodology section. Three major areas of focus emerged in people's responses (see Figure 1).

I break up these results into three main sections. What community leaders say motivated themselves to participate, what they say motivates others and what they say as the main features of activity in the Melville.

8.2. Self Motivation

There were eight core drivers in the way people stepping into leadership roles, saw their own motivation. These are detailed below in Figure 5. And then each motivation is detailed.

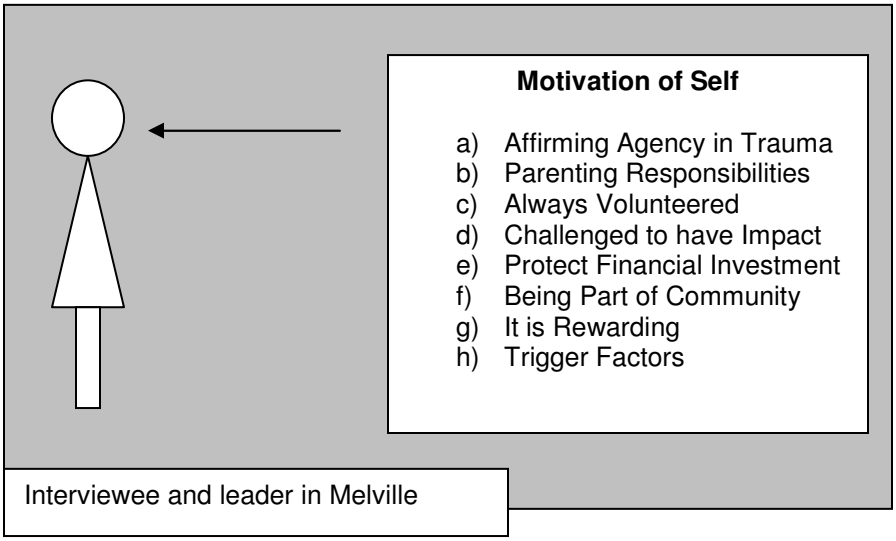


Figure 5. How Melville Leaders report their own Motivation

8.2.1. Affirming their Agency in Trauma

There are a wide range of reasons why people have become highly involved in Melville. Some people linked their high levels of involvement to their need to in some way affirm their human agency in the face of hostility and crime in the community. This was also often linked to specific incidents.

Thelma is an active resident of Melville. She previously lived in Parkhurst but was not happy there and is much happier in Melville. She is involved in the Sector Crime Forum of the

Community Policing Forum and some of the Residents Association Activities. She has a young child for whom she is concerned. She is also involved in the local branch of the African National Congress. She sees herself as someone who has always been involved in community activities. She was involved in an armed robbery in her home. She said that, "the armed robbery made me more active in affirming my space…as in I had a lot of fear after that … it is about reclaiming my space…overcoming that fear."

Like Thelma, Gareth is one of the younger generation of activists involved in the suburb. His wife and him were drawn to the suburb by its old school feel and because its charm but his involvement started after he was mugged in 2008. He remains positive about the area and passionate about being part of a community.

Cynthia, a long term resident of Melville, is Chairman of the Sector Crime Forum for Melville which is a sub structure of the Community Policing Forum of the Brixton Police Station. She is a practicing psychologist with an interest in the idea of 'hope'. She is committed to working through the formal structures and ensuring that there is an optimal relationship with the police. Cynthia's motivation was linked to this when she said "I would rather do something on the preventative side" than complain in the future about another incident.

8.2.2.Parenting Responsibility

Some people linked involvement to their parenting responsibilities. For Thelma this was also a critical factor as she says, "you are bringing a person into this world and you need to create a safe place for them…In some sense it is an extension of motherhood… ".

Kerry is the Deputy Chairman of the Sector Crime Forum for Melville, which is a sub structure of the Community Policing Forum of the Brixton Police Station. She is a long time activist who has been involved in the anti-apartheid struggle and is now involved in her spare time in Melville. Her past activism frames a significant amount of her current work and passion. She is passionate about working for a more pro-active and progressive society rather than a reactive one based on the fear of change. Kerry also wanted a safe place for the next generation, "fear does not motivate me" she said that she rather wanted a safe place for her son to live.

8.2.3. Always Volunteered

Others linked their involvement to a sense of passion for this kind of work. Often they have always volunteered in community affairs.

Wendy has been active in politics through a large part of her life. After leaving active politics she looked for something that she could do. She has devoted many years to the Melville Koppies, has been Chairman since 2001, and works closely with her husband, David. Melville Koppies is a Nature Reserve and a Johannesburg City Heritage Site. It is the last of the ridges in Johannesburg that is conserved as they were, prior to the discovery of gold in the late 1800's. There is evidence of both stone age and iron age living on the Koppies (Friends of the Melville Koppies). She is both the Chairman and Treasurer of the Melville Koppies Management Committee. She is incredibly passionate about this work and describes her work on the Koppies as like a drug. It is something that gives her great rewards. The Friends of the Melville Koppies run a range of research initiatives, organize walks and study tours, employ full time conservation staff and manage a comprehensive set of projects. Wendy was looking for something to do after being heavily involved in local politics before.

Kerry has always been an activist and there is some sense of this being a deep part of a personal identity. She said that "my motivation is around the need to be an activist and to be part of creating a better society". Her actions are an expression of her long term activism and volunteering, as she said, "my community seemed a good place" to do it.

For Thelma this had been ongoing, "I used to feed car guards. I have always been alert to and involved in community issues and the neighbourhood".

8.2.4. Challenged to have an Impact

Other people described the entrepreneurial challenge and the opportunity that attracted them into leadership roles. Marie-Lais is the owner of the relatively new Melville Visitors Centre. She is a creative person with a background in advertising and writing. She has lived in Melville for nineteen years, seventeen of which are in the same house. She has been involved on and off in Melville over the years. She started the Long Long Table which was a well known fundraising event that involved coordinating all of the restaurants in placing tables in the street for an evening of fine dining. She describes this as a social experiment to see how people can work together.

This took up a significant amount of time and her career suffered. She is organising a Melville Poetry Festival in late 2011. Marie-Lais said "I can't resist the challenge. I am useless with business, but socially entrepreneurial. It is the challenge" that attracts me.

Liza is one of the key leaders in Melville and the Chairman of the Melville Residents Association (MRA). She has been living in Melville for thirty years. She is well respected and for many people, the backbone of the MRA. She works in the leadership consulting field for a large consulting firm. And has been involved in the suburb for many years. The Melville Residents Association. Liza was bored and looking for a challenge, "I was bored and wanted to make a contribution. Richard was the chairman at the time. I took on the security portfolio and then Richard resigned and I became chair" and "results keep me going. I don't like to fail ... I wanted to test my skills."

Heidi is a journalist and writer, probably best known for her book *Dinner with Mugabe* which traces Mugabe's life beginning with a dinner that she had with him thirty years ago and ending with a recent interview. She runs an established guest house called *The Melville House* on fourth avenue. She worked tirelessly on a project to pedestrianise Seventh Street and develop the Faan Street park. This project took a considerable amount of energy. It failed to take off due to a range of reasons including a lack of agreement on property leases and the global financial crisis. She is an independent thinker and writer with strong determination to succeed. Heidi said that, "I really wanted to achieve something".

Whilst Cynthia said, "I like a tough challenge but once it is done I want to do something new".

8.2.5.Protecting Financial Investment

Johan is a prominent proactive business owner on Seventh Street. He has developed a number of properties and owns a Guest House, restaurant and bar. He has close to twenty years experience working in Melville and started investing significantly in the area in 2004. The recession and the problems Melville faced from 2008 onwards led him to invest further in the area. In general terms he has been more happy doing his own thing, but was drawn into community structures because of the state Melville was in and his own financial investment in the area.

Johan's involvement was linked to his financial investment in the area. "All of a sudden it was the recession. Business started closing left right and centre. I realized that there was not an easy way

out. The best way out was to take on more. There was no safety net. There was no easy way out". Gareth also spoke of this when he said, "Whenever I am flat, I have an overall financial investment that gets me going".

8.2.6. Being Part of a Community

Gareth has also been motivated by the joy and pleasure of being part of a community saying, "when I have a connection to a place and I can add value" I become involved. Gareth believed he might not be involved in the same way if he lived in Randburg. Or as Cynthia said "It is good to feel part of a community". Johan mentioned that one of the reasons he likes Melville is that there is an energy, narrow streets, koppies and it is a little village".

8.2.7. It is Rewarding

And it was clear that sustaining work required rewards. Cynthia said that, "it is rewarding" and "there is a benefit to the community and to self", "as long as there is reward then it is worth continuing". For Cynthia it was helping and the connecting to community that is a fundamental human need especially in a city. And for Wendy it was "very rewarding" being a volunteer and "giving something back" and more provocatively "I love the koppies. It is a drug. I have to be there everyday. It is incredibly rewarding".

8.2.8. Trigger Factors

The literature speaks to two categories of reasons why people participate and volunteer in local initiatives. The first are the 'contextual' factors, which are more permanent and include age, economic considerations and the political times. The second are 'trigger' factors. These are the more practical reasons that lead to stepping forward, for example being asked, or attending an event, or suddenly having time on ones hands.

Gareth said that he had positive experiences through a local newsletter which encouraged him to become involved. Heidi mentioned meeting a guest in her B&B who specialised in pedestrianisation. He was in South Africa to work on the Rea Vaya (Bus Rapid Transport) system a few years ago. She said that, "he used to stay in Melville and he walked around" and that, "he inspired me even though I didn't know what I was chewing off".

8.3. Motivation of Others

8.3.1. Patterns in what motivates others

In addition to the substantive responses that respondents gave to questions around motivation, they also gave detailed responses to questions on the motivation of other neighbourhood residents. They saw one set of motivations for themselves and another set of motivations for others. These motivations for others are described below. There were eight key areas of motivation described. These are detailed below in Figure 7.

Annie McWalter works for a large social change initiative called Heartlines. Heartlines aims to create a tipping point where people can live out good values to make a significant difference to our country. They aim to create a national movement to do this, She is responsible for research. She is a young a optimistic South African and does not live in Melville. Her views are offered from a Heartlines perspective.

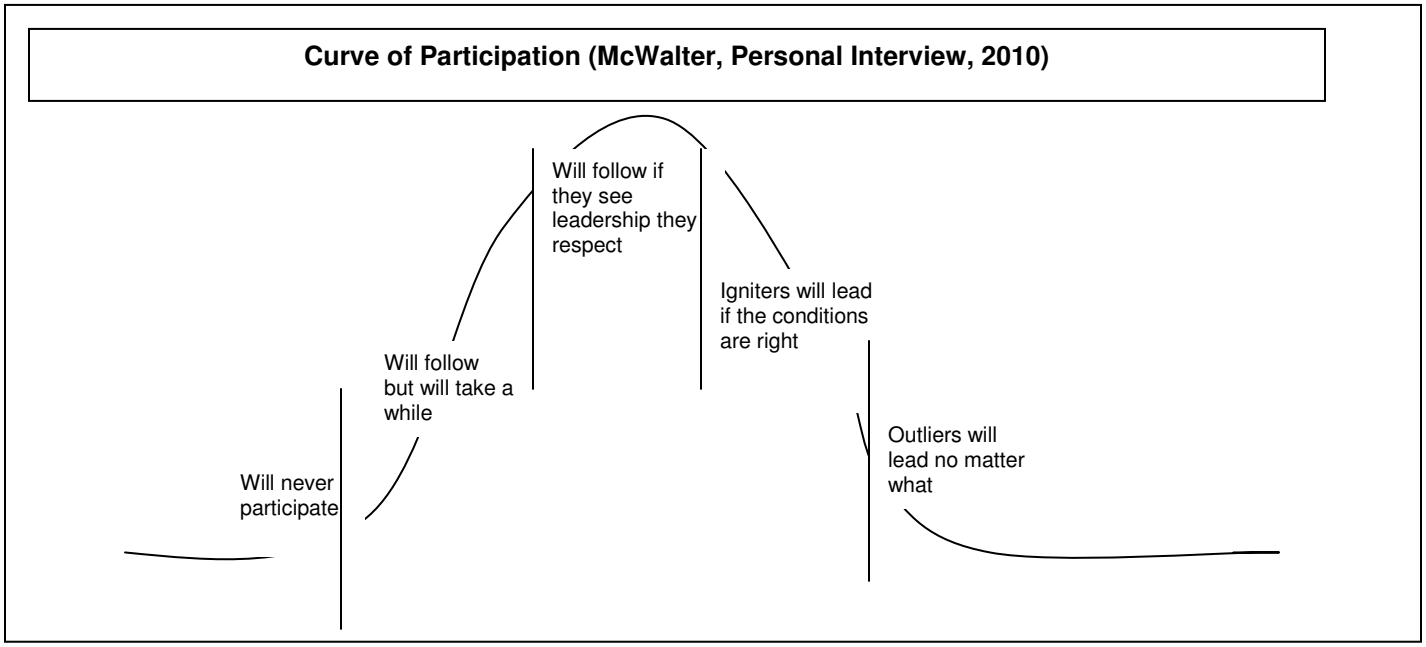


Figure 6. Distribution of Participation

Annie McWalter believes that people fall at different places on a broad curve. There are 'Outliers' on the right who will lead and take initiative no matter what the circumstances. Then there are what she calls 'Igniters' who will lead if the conditions are right. They will lead the 'Enthusiastic Followers' in the centre of the curve who will act if they see leadership. They are followed by the 'Late Followers' who will do so reluctantly. And then lastly those who will 'Never Participate'.

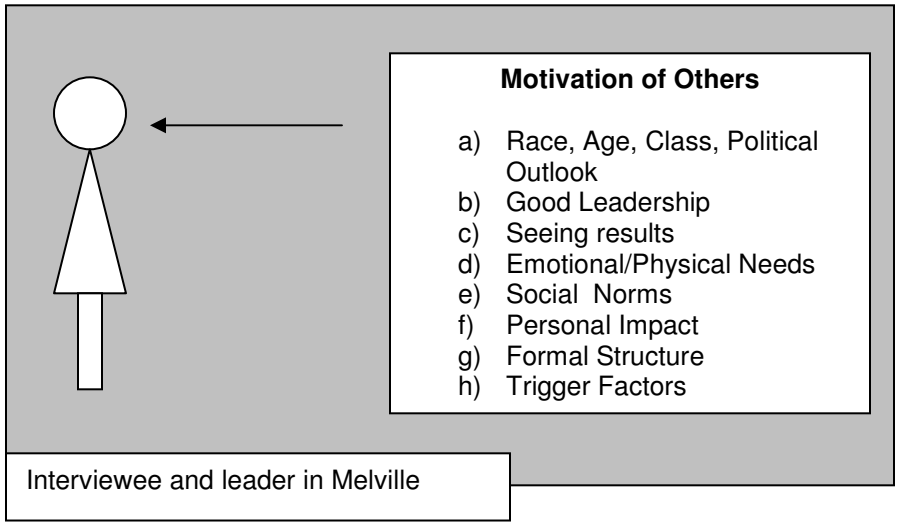


Figure 7. How Melville Leaders report what motivates others in the community

8.3.2. Age, Race, Class and Political Outlook

According to the leaders interviewed there are a number of contextual factors including age, race, class and political outlook that can shape whether other neighbourhood residents participate.

Wendy said that the reasons other people participate are age related and related to affordability. Those who do a lot of work are older and can afford to do it. Gareth spoke of the economic crisis of the recent years which had an impact on house prices and general instability. He also touched on the crisis in the SABC which stopped paying many suppliers and which employs many people who live in Melville. Thelma spoke of race and of the pattern of believing it is someone else's responsibility. She said that "We (blacks) tend to think it is someone else's problem".

Gareth said there needs to be "a balance between carrot and stick in getting people active". There were some key questions. In the context of the security initiative do you design a pamphlet based on the idea of making Melville safer (looking to a better future) or saving Melville from a potentially worse future? Such questions cut to the root of people's political outlook and can impact their participation.

8.3.3.Good Leadership

According to the respondents, there are different styles of leadership and approaches to a successful event. For Marie-Lais it was important not to make actions too organized. PR (Public Relations or good communication with the public) was key, especially one-on-one and viral communication. But it is important to create an environment in which each individual volunteer and community member "can own something and is part of a movement rather than a club". She had a lot of success with this approach when she organized the 'Long Long Table' fundraising event of a few years ago where each restaurant participated through providing a meal to guests.

There is a tension in deciding how to lead between the need to be democratic and inclusive whilst also not getting caught in community inertia. This came to a practical head in the case of the launch of the Melville Security Initiative where some people wanted to wait to get more people

on board whilst others wanted to get going with the initial members. Eventually the decision was made that “let’s get on with it” said Gareth.

Gareth also said that, “there was also leadership” stuff where Liza was critical. He believed it could not have happened without her. He believed she has provided the continuity and she was very organized. “She understands relationships and how things work” he said. Wendy believed that it is important for good leaders to recognize and value people’s efforts.

8.3.4.Seeing Results

A number of those interviewed believed that people needed to see results. Both Johan and Kerry believe people need to see something positive and need to believe in order to participate. One of the enabling factors in creating change at this geographic scale is the capacity of the community to act and participate. It is not always easy to mobilise the community as Kerry said “people need to see change and believe that if enough of us are involved, we can shift things” and that “people get frustrated and unrealistic with speed of change”.

Liza said “people get involved when they see success. It is important that there is a structure, an event, time and that it is exciting. But few have the time and energy to lead”.

8.3.5.Emotional and Physical Needs

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most significant case study in Melville over the last few years is the Melville Security Initiative. This is a community run collective security scheme in partnership with a private security company. How it works is that the Melville Residents Association chooses a preferred private security service provider. Residents are then encouraged to join that one scheme. The scheme is then held to a strict set of performance standards that it is required to meet. Every year the relationship is reviewed and a new service provider appointed if needed. It is a scheme where everyone ‘pools’ their private security spend and with a larger sum of money, a better deal for the community is hopefully secured. The security scheme was launched at a low point in the suburb where crime was at its peak. Liza believed the security initiative was more successful than other events e.g. clean up and student housing initiatives. The security initiative gave people hope that something can happen, cohesion and a sense of purpose, sense of achievement. The threat of crime brought people together and desire to protect something precious. Phil is an experienced senior manager in the City of Johannesburg and

lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. He lives in Melville but is not directly active in community and neighbourhood initiatives. He is one or two steps removed from the local dynamics and therefore brings an independent view from someone with experience across the city. For Phil it was especially difficult to sustain high levels of community participation in the suburbs where it is not about survival.

Liza described the lessons of this experience. When talking of the initiative's success she says that "there was a strong need", "At the launch there was a full church. Maybe biggest in Melville history", "It was crazy, there was no parking", "There was a desperate need and we were well prepared". Part of what made the initiative a success is that security is an emotional topic and is a basic human need. But she also believed it was more than a security thing, "it gave them hope and a dream" and "a vision for Melville that was bigger than before." At one level she believed it was philosophical rather than physical. The opening event was also well marketed and the suburb was unsafe. But she said that there "is more complacency now' in the operational phase and this is not was exciting for people.

I asked Gareth why he thought there had been this significant level of success with the security initiative. He felt that, "we were working in a greater trend in the city" where "we can't fall behind" (he is referring to the process where a suburb procures its private security from a single service provider) and "we were using the same service provider" as others. He suggested that "there was high levels of alcohol, opportunity crimes, a grimy element. House prices were on the line".

8.3.6.Social Norms

Cynthia believed that there is a need to inculcate a level of civil mindedness, "how do we help people see that it is not just about me?". Cynthia spoke of someone who had started coming to meetings through the motivation of the LeadSA initiative of Primedia (and others).

As part of the research, I attended a brainstorming meeting at the Melville Visitors Centre in March 2011. It is a lively and engaging meeting in which participants map the strengths and weaknesses of Melville and dream a little about what is possible. One of the negatives that I sense in the meeting is that the participants are expecting someone other than them to do something significant as a result of the meeting. Perhaps there is a deep social norm in the suburbs that making the neighbourhood better is not 'my' responsibility. This belief that 'they' should do

more (whilst potentially accurate in content) ensures that the individual involved does not take action themselves.

8.3.7.Personal Impact

It was felt by interviewees, the leaders in Melville, that people often begin with personal frustrations close to where they live. Cynthia, one of the more active residents of Melville, started with the "immediate concern of the staircase next door". She then joined the Melville Residents Association and the Community Policing Forum. It is in this context that community organizing skills are critical. Cynthia felt that "if you have an individual who can knit together personal concerns with the bigger picture then change can happen". Liza believed that people get involved when it bothers them personally. And she said that it is important that people get out of their heads and into action "there are too many opinions, we need hands".

8.3.8. Good Structure

I asked Liza about how you get more people acting collectively? She said that "you don't always know. Sometimes there is a leap of faith". She believed that in cases like with business where people don't necessarily work easily together that a structure is needed like the City Improvement District.

Phil is also of the view that "formalised structures provide the institutional mechanisms to sustain personal energy". But there is a tension here as volunteers often want to work outside of formal structures and are driven by very personal passions an independence that motivates them. Wendy felt that volunteers are mavericks who will do what, when and how they want. And that "if they are engrossed they will work many hours". Her experience is that when there is an increase in structure and bureaucracy there is a decline in volunteerism, "the first world legalities become a problem so now have lots of forms. This turns lots of volunteers off. It was fun. But no longer". This tension between structure of actions and informality is explored further in the section on the features of activities in Melville.

8.3.9. Trigger Factors

Liza spoke to the trigger factors when I ask her why she believes people get involved. According to her, people get involved because there is an event that they can plug into. Any event needs to be well marketed. There needs to be an issue that touches an emotional chord and a leader to create structure in which the 'ordinary resident' can do their little bit. That leader needs to be skilled at creating structure for participation, that leader must have the energy and discipline to hold or drive the event.

8.4. Features of Activity

In addition to a description of how leaders interviewed saw themselves and others, they also provided a description of the patterns that occurred when they stepped forward. These dynamics of the neighbourhood are described as the 'features of activity' below. There were five core patterns that emerged in interviewee responses.

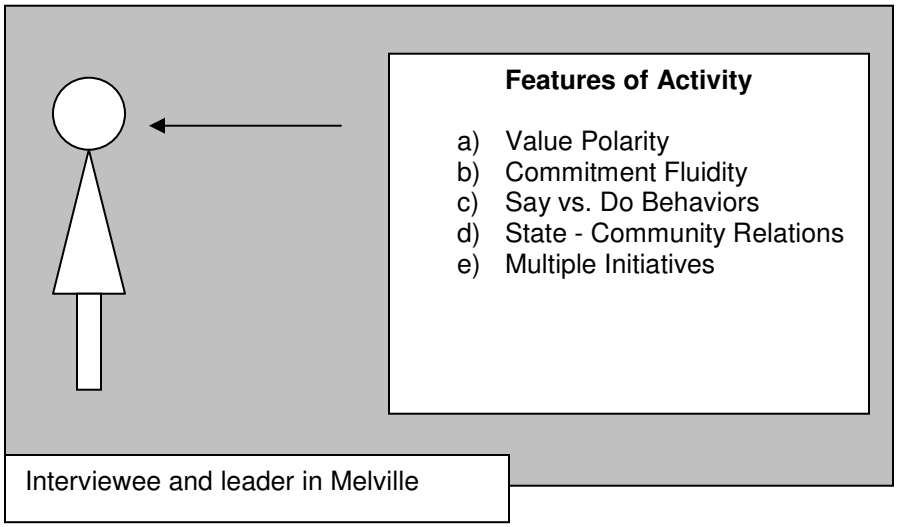


Figure 8. How Melville Leaders report the features of activity in community actions.

8.4.1. Value Polarity

Both amongst leaders and between leaders and the community there are a range of differences of opinion that are often based on a different set of values.

Some people may want to consult first whilst others want to act first. Some people want to work through formal structures whilst others want to work more informally. Some people are driven by a set of views on where South Africa is going that may be in conflict with the views of others. Although there are some common reasons why someone lives in Melville, this is not a community of choice like a political party or social movement where a clear set of values has been predetermined and an explicit or implicit set of norms are accepted.

Whilst there are some authority lines that can be relied upon when it comes to deciding what should be done, there is also a sense that everyone is equal. Managing the different polarities and preferences is key to making progress on the issues that face the community.

Community members in Melville are often driven by a passion to make a difference and motivated by a range of drivers as detailed above. But most have not been trained to manage the polarity tensions. This means that committee and intra-leader differences can lead to conflict and can be a barrier to action.

Wendy said that arguments do become personal even when they start as a debate on some external issues. Cynthia felt that perhaps because people are volunteering they don't feel they need to act with the same amount of professionalism they would in the workplace.

Annie McWalter believed the middle class is self contained in SA. She said this in reference to the middle class opting out of public sphere. She pointed to some of the similarities with the US and the broader global consumerist culture. In this context Melville is both an easier place to organize and lead, but also challenging. It is easier because of a certain community spirit and connectedness amongst a creative group of people. But it is more challenging through what Gareth described as "an appeal in a melting pot but it makes the target market diverse". What he means is that whilst it is attractive to be part of a diverse community it makes it more difficult to formulate a strategy. He said that, "you have a rich artist living next to a poor artist and for example some people are concerned about policing impacting the laissez faire attitude of Melville".

There are people who prefer to work collectively, often through systems and structures, and there are people who prefer to get on with the job, working alone if necessary. This is especially true for the business community who see the advantages in working alone. As Johan described "I got involved in the Residents Association. I never wanted to. I am very happy to do my own thing". At first he felt like "what the hell is all of this Melville Residents Association and Community Policing Forum" stuff. He feels as far as the business community is concerned that people pretend to want to work together but they don't. There is a deeper belief that, "let's first see what happens before we join in".

Heidi, who is a business owner, journalist and writer, is also comfortable working alone. Community meetings and operating in a collective public context can be very challenging. She said that “meetings are a nightmare. I don’t do meetings. I am a writer”. And she said that “it is this size” when she made a small loop with her index finger and thumb, “but it is politics none-the-less”, “and people view you in that light. You need to have a thick skin”. She felt that “a lot of people think democracy means they must be consulted all the time”.

Whilst for Liza the dynamics of Melville were quite specific, “in Melville people are very creative but have more difficulty making decisions and taking action”. It is essential that community members stepping into leadership roles, have some comfort with a balance between being participative and directive at the right times. As Liza said “I believe in a participative approach. When you lead something like this, you need to be more cooptive, you have to be able to deal with conflict, people are often unhappy that they could not get what they wanted”.

Ebrahim owns a bar called Six and a cocktail lounge called *Wish* on Seventh Street in Melville. He is one of the community orientated businessmen in the suburb and is committed to the area. He is well known through the popularity of his establishments and the ‘hip’ crowd who frequent them. He has philosophical views on the suburb and believes that most of the changes to Melville can be seen across broader Johannesburg. He has seen lots of the comings and goings over the years. Underlying a number of interview responses are the different views that people in Melville have where some are more motivated by the potential of positive change whilst many feel like they are defending a great suburb (and perhaps country) that is in decline. For Ebrahim an alignment of vision and values was an enabler for participation, in particular “A few years ago, merchants and residents had different agendas. Now most merchants and residents have the same agenda.”

8.4.2. Commitment Fluidity

Liza acknowledged that after a while “fatigue sets in with the committee … community work drains you … people are putting hope and trust in you”. Both the commitment of leaders and the commitment of followers is in flux. And this is a feature of the field of participation globally and certainly so in the context of Melville.

On the leadership side, there is the difficulty in sustaining efforts and burn out was mentioned by some of the interviewees. Members of the community stepping into leadership face an endless list

of problems and challenges. The work never ends and results can be small compared to the challenges faced. The work can involve interpersonal tension which can drain people of their passion. And in the case of crime fighting, the work can lead to being placed in situations of danger and requires good sense and significant courage.

For a number of people, seeing results was important to sustaining their involvement. One leader said "I try not to take it seriously and this allows me to stay involved and sustains me". For Liza, "results keep me going. I don't like to fail, I wanted to test my skills, and this community does test you. You need to stay calm". Thelma felt that, "seeing that you are making a difference in creating a safer Melville" was what sustained her involvement.

There is certainly a need for the community leaders to be thick skinned as both the community and the committee politics can be difficult to manage. Heidi spoke of the dynamics of "putting up your hand to act" and what that might signal to a frustrated public and Wendy felt that, "you need to be an eternal optimist with a thick skin".

8.4.3.Say vs. Do Behaviors

It is people's unmet promises that proved to be one of the most frustrating elements of working in community life. As Gareth said, "I can't work out why when we have around 300 families represented at a meeting and actively interested we only get 100 sign ups…". Whilst others also complained about the gap between intentions and follow through such as Wendy, "99.9% of people who volunteer to weed don't pitch. Things have changed. There are many competing alternatives on weekends and people are too busy for hands on work. It is hard for people to work…for no reward".

Cynthia indicated that people's charitable spirit is limited. People become focused on their immediate problem. They don't get community. She said that, "urban people only see their own boundaries". But it is more than just our isolation that makes getting things done difficult. There are also patterns of human behaviour at play. As Heidi said, "the single toughest aspect is people promising to do something and not doing it".

Energy and activity at the community level is inconsistent in this more generalized sense. As Phil, a local planner and experienced senior manager in the city described "from time to time there is an initiative that galvanises common interest" and that "often this is when Melville is at the

bottom of a cycle". He believed that "you can't expect individuals to engage in a sustained way over time, they have lives to lead". He felt that "engagement in the suburbs is normally around very personal concerns" and that "if you have an individual who can knit together personal concerns with the bigger picture then change can happen".

Gareth has seen that the leadership team in the security initiative feels like they are doing all of the pulling and there is not enough pushing (from the community). Gareth asked "Why do people show passion and interest and not deliver?" Whilst Heidi agreed saying that the experience gave her insight into politics, "it is incredibly difficult to pull people with you".

Heidi was of the view that when you do this work you are working with a "funny cross section of people" and another interviewee said that "people are quite immature. You are dealing with ordinary people and 'institutional capacity is lacking".

8.4.4.State vs. Community Relations

One of the critical features of community and neighbourhood life in Melville is the dynamic between all of the voluntary community efforts and the work of the State, Working with government can be enormously frustrating and lead to very few results. But at the same time the state has considerable resources and more impact can be made working together. Kerry and Phil believe that the state is under overwhelming pressure as Phil said "the city is one thousand times Melville".

As part of my observations, I attended a meeting of stakeholders on a visioning exercise for a local park in Brixton in late 2010. This was a meeting of about twenty participants. There was a clear momentum in this group around creating change in the park. They made significant progress in working with the police (who come to the meeting late) and who are enthusiastic about involvement. In this project, there is a real attempt to crowd in the state in order to ensure that any initiative of the local community can be leveraged. The overriding sense I got from this initiative is that lots of hard work is happening but that progress is very difficult due to the overwhelming nature of the challenges and the state's lack of capacity and financing in the scale required. One of the decisions facing leaders on a particular initiative is whether and how to work best with Government.

8.4.5.Multiple Initiatives

A key element that surfaced in the interviews was the importance of the dynamics of community and neighbourhood life itself. Because of the variety of motivation drivers at both the leadership level and amongst the community there are always a variety of projects and initiatives happening and there is not necessarily communication between them. The challenge of inter-initiative communication emerged at a brainstorming meeting organized by the Melville Visitors Centre (which is a privately run community centre that hosts events of community interest) that I attended in March 2011.

In an interview Liza recognised that there are a few people in Melville doing their own thing, "you have to give people space" and "you can't be too structured". Cynthia also emphasized the fluidness of community participation when she added that there are limits to the form that people can sustain in terms of involvement and then they will look for a new form. Melville is a diverse neighbourhood where the is no single authority that can "get the job done".

Even within an individual organisation Liza chose to create space for people to lead in a direction that they are comfortable with. I attended the Melville Residents Association (MRA) Committee meeting on the 18th of January 2011 in which eight people were present. Liza ran the meeting with authority but strongly encouraged people present to pick something they are passionate about and to run with it. She suggested that people don't do anything for longer than a year as they get burned out and that they pick something that they can work on alone. She suggested that it works better if the person working on a problem has a personal stake in it order to stay motivated to fix it.

The community of Melville is filled with projects and initiatives that are visible and also a range of micro-initiatives that may remain hidden. Someone may clean graffiti on their weekends without expecting reward or recognition. My neighbour pays for his garden service to mow any unkept lawns of the immediate neighbourhood without asking permission or notifying respective home owners. Whilst another resident of Melville has organized a few of the property owners around his house to pay in the order of R20 a month to cover the costs of someone to clean up litter in the immediate area.

There may be value in aligning different efforts and working with the efforts of the state. In terms of having an impact, Kerry believed that “organizational alignment is key. Brixton (Police Station) is a lot more accountable that it used to be”. But care should taken to believe that this is always possible and that people want to work together. The power of community, as Wendy and Marie-Lais believe, also lies in the freedom and independence to self-associate.

If one scratch the surface and begin asking questions then one finds a depth of initiatives and efforts to improve the suburb that are not always visible on the surface. This can be inspiring and humbling.

9. Interpretation of Findings

9.1. A Summary

This research was conducted with an open mind as to what information may emerge and in what form it could be described. What became clear during the coding phase was that the data could be described by three different but interlocking fields of community action. This is detailed below.

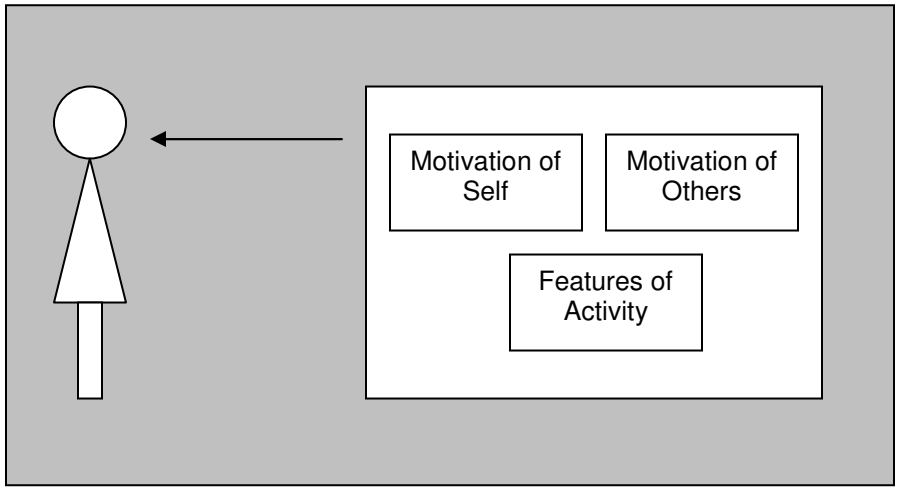


Figure 9 Primary Focus Areas

Detailed observations of the motivations of self, motivations of others and features of activity were captured and described in the previous chapter.

In exploring the theory in this field and the literature review it the work of Klandermans (2003) is key. His central conceptual framework is used as the basis for an interpretation of the findings. The motivations and features of activity are placed into his framework and then discussed.

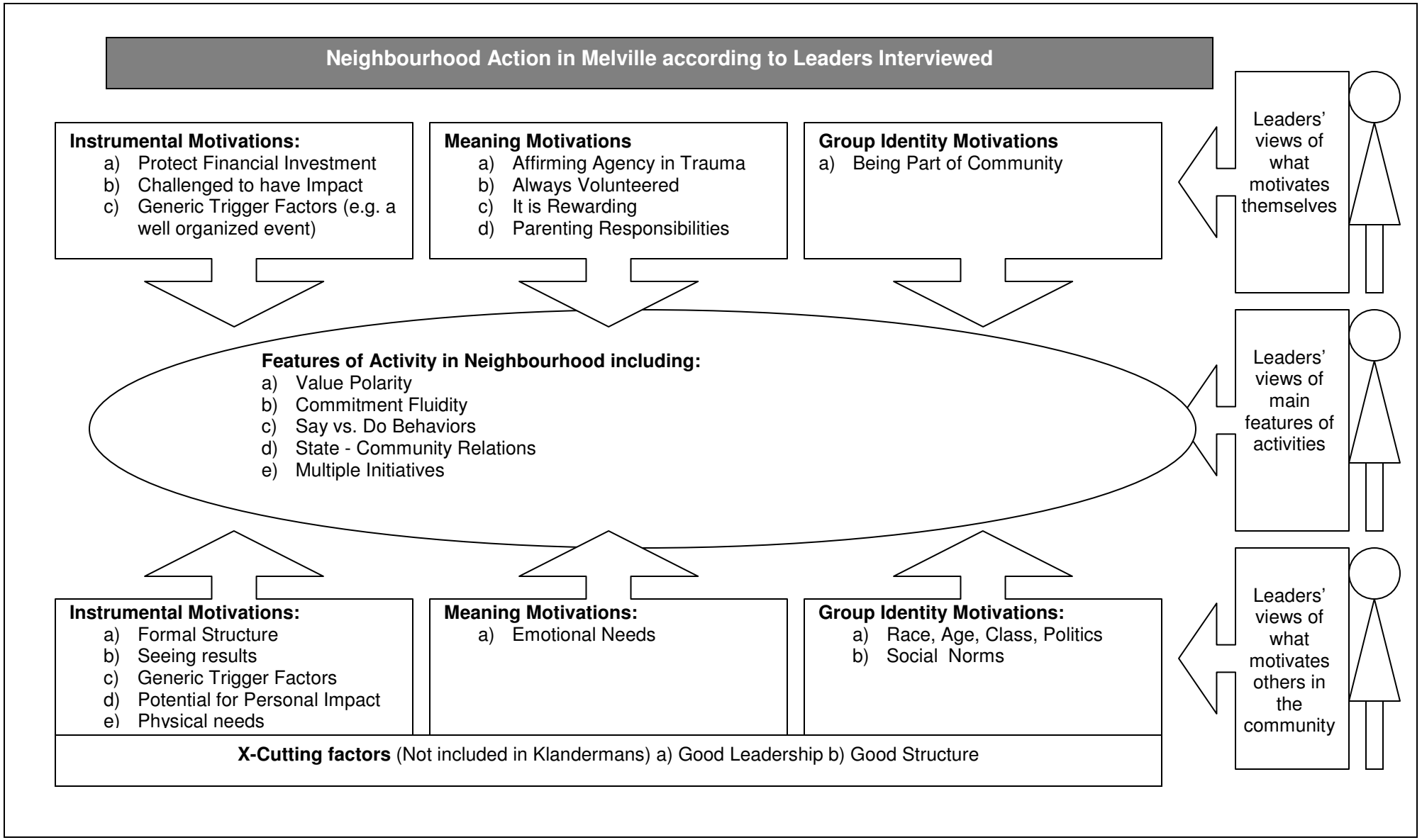


Figure 10. Motivations and Features of Participation in Melville compared to the framework of Klandermans (2003)

9.2. Discussion of the Leaders' Motivations

A leader in this context means someone living in Melville who undertakes a significant amount of voluntary work in order to benefit the suburb as a whole. What motivates leaders is important because it helps us understand the key drivers of sustained action. The decision to lead in the community arises through the interaction between a set of personal dynamics and a set of societal and neighbourhood dynamics. A leader for example may be called to make her street safe for her son to play soccer, or leads in response to a crime incident that drives her to affirm her agency.

Once a leader steps forward he or she often enters into a smaller community of other leaders. Sometimes these leaders work together although sometimes they work alone. There are a complicated set of dynamics at play that can be both empowering and frustrating. The most interesting outcome of this study is its importance within the Melville context and the gap in the literature around the conflicts arising from value polarities at the team/committee level and between different initiatives. The nature of these leadership dynamics is a key enabler or barrier in the achievement of a better neighbourhood. However leaders do not only have to deal with one another but also interact significantly with the community.

The literature describes some of what motivates someone to step forward in a leadership capacity, In particular Klandermans (2003) and Jasper (1998) are useful. Klandermans (2003) describes three drivers that support most of the collective political action in society. These drivers are; the desire to change circumstances (instrumentality), the desire to belong to a group (group identity) and the desire to give meaning to one's life (meaning).

Grouping what the leaders in Melville say about what motivates them, the following reasons for stepping into a leadership role emerge (linked to Klandermans three drivers):

- Meaning (Affirming Agency in Trauma, Parenting Responsibilities, Always Volunteered, It is Rewarding)
- Instrumentality (Challenge to have Impact, Protect Financial Investment, Trigger Factors)
- Group Identity (Being part of Community

One can see that for leaders in Melville meaning making and instrumentality were the dominant factors driving them to step forward.

This dominance of meaning is consistent with Jasper (1998) who emphasizes the personal and emotional nature of activism and links this with the levels of sustained participation. He argues that complex interwoven emotions including frustration, compassion, anger, alienation and anomie, explain why people participate and why they exit.

9.3. Discussion of the Motivation to be a Participant

The literature speaks to two categories of reasons why people participate and volunteer in local initiatives. The first are the 'contextual' factors such as age, economic considerations and the political times. The second are 'trigger' factors such as whether people are asked and know someone else who volunteers.

In terms of contextual factors Ebrahim sees that "residentially there are potentially two groups of people" in Melville around half who have been here 'forever'. The other half are young couples for whom Melville is a middle class stepping stone suburb. He also argues that Melville demographics are changing e.g. increasing black middle class. The fundamental negative element is people from outside accessing nearest middle class suburb.

The respondents confirmed the importance of trigger factors (such as a well marketed event) and contextual factors (such as age and financial situation). There were some interesting drivers like the impact of LeadSA (a national radio campaign) and then there are societal dynamics that can act to exclude and include people. These include race and the political persuasion of leaders. Both black participants interviewed indicated the importance for them of aligning to a leadership group in Melville that embraces further racial equality and is not seen as searching for an ideal South Africa of old. This is an interesting anecdote that should be further explored to test the assumption that political persuasion matters when black south Africans look to white south Africans than amongst white south Africans themselves.

It was clear across all the respondents that helping individuals realise that this is their responsibility and offering them the possibility of owning something is important. It was felt that people also need to see something positive and need to believe.

Figure 7. illustrates the different levels of commitment people will show towards issues. This can be compared with the model of Harrison and Singer (2007) who see politically engaged and active

protesters followed by the community conscious, followed by the passive participants and then the community bystanders in terms of the levels of energy and commitment.

Leaders in Melville tend to emphasise more straight forward explanations for why people involve themselves. Deeper arguments like the element of peer pressure and social identity were not mentioned directly by the leaders in Melville despite the importance given to these by Quayle (2010).

The literature does not explore in depth the difference between what motivates someone to step into a leadership role and what motivates someone to step into a participant role. Those in leadership roles when interviewed see the trigger reasons as significantly more important for broader community participants than for themselves. Liza in particular emphasizes the importance of structured opportunities for participants to step into.

If the categories of Klandermans are applied to the reasons why the broader community participates we get the following breakdown. Grouping what the leaders in Melville say about why others participate, the following reasons for stepping into a participant role emerge:

- Meaning (Social Norms, Emotional Needs)
- Instrumentality (Personal Impact, Physical Needs, Seeing results, Trigger Factors, Opportunity to have Impact, Protect Financial Investment)
- Group Identity (Race/Age/Class/Politics)

Issues like Good Structure (for participation) and Good Leadership are hard to categorize into Klandermans three categories. Leaders give different responses to the reasons for their own participation when compared to others. One very interesting observation is that leaders in Melville see the reasons why participants are motivated to be involved in the community as largely instrumental and under emphasize elements of meaning and group identity that they see as critical in their description of their own motivations.

9.4. Discussion of the Features of Activity

Brodie et al (2009) describe multiple dimensions of participation. These are listed below with the bold word indicating the dominant element favoured by leaders in the Melville area from my observations:

Unstructured → **Structured**
Informal → **Formal**
Passive → **Active**
Individual → **Collective**
One-off → **Ongoing**
Unpaid → Paid
Reactive → **Proactive**
Self-interested → **Altruistic**
Resisting Social Change → **Driving Social Change**

Being in a leader role requires a certain approach and the leaders are more likely to work in ways that are structured, formal, active, collective, ongoing, pro-active and altruistic. Amongst the people interviewed who are all highly active in Melville, there are underlying different persuasions. But most of the leadership group see themselves as driving social change looking towards the diverse democratic South Africa that they want to be part of. My sense on the other hand is that community members are seen to be 'gatvol' and are fighting a battle to maintain the suburb 'as it was before'. This may have important implications for understanding political orientation and its relationship with motivation in the suburbs. It could imply that people in the suburbs who believe in driving social change, are more likely to enter leadership positions, whilst people who are resisting social change may play a 'follower' role.

This is central in the South African context were these are often metaphors for deeper political perspectives. Often the desire to maintain previous standards is tied to a belief that South Africa has gone backwards under a democratic government and this can be connected with a deep sense of pessimism about the potential of post-colonial African self-rule. This view is most often held by more conservative elements of white society, although it can be more broadly attributed. Driving social change is generally a metaphor for a left-of-centre non-racial political outlook that embraces democratic change and supports further efforts by the state, and society as a whole, to reengineer the socio-economic and political system of privilege that maintained Apartheid. People fighting for change and those resisting change can often fall into different racial and ideological camps, even at the local level. Xolela Mangcu (2008) believes that white South Africans who are defensive and

blind towards the internalized racism and privilege create spaces for narrow black nativism that threatens the future of South Africa. Chipkin develops this logic in his argument that political power ultimately lies with 'the people', an imagined political community within the country and a narrow idea of who is South African. Narrow delimitations of the people, whilst politically attractive, can place the non-racial and democratic project at risk (Chipkin, 2007).

It is important therefore that white South Africans are encouraged to participate in the country as equals and see others as equals in order to cultivate a broad sense of who 'the people' are. Bringing white South Africans into an inclusive state is the work that Jansen (2009) describes in his book on his experience at the University of Pretoria. He is ultimately of the view that bringing the different histories into dialogue and demonstrating ones own authenticity as a leader, by struggling with the same issues, is critical towards making progress.

> *"Brokenness is the realization of imperfection, the spiritual state of recognizing one's own humanness before the forgiving and loving power of God. But brokenness is more; it is the profound outward acknowledgement of inward struggle done is such a way as to invite communion with other people and with the divine".*
>
> Jansen (2009, p 269)

Figure 10. describes the features of participation activity that participants will face in community actions. The key features that emerge from the research are Value Polarity, Commitment Fluidity, Say vs. Do Behaviors, State - Community Relations and Multiple Initiatives.

Describing the features of activity in neighbourhoods like Melville is important because it then allows for an inquiry into how to manage these dynamics. Some suggestions, based on the literature review, for doing this are given below.

1. How to manage the value polarities inherent in the Melville neighbourhood context?

One of the most significant outcomes of this study has been the focus that leaders put on the complexity of the leadership dynamics as a critical enabler and potential barrier to community impact. This is not covered in any depth by the participation literature. The leaders in Melville

describe the difficulties of committee conflict, the difficulties in sustaining their leadership and the risk of burn-out, the frustrations associated with the community dynamics (blaming, lack of commitment etc). These elements are significant and some leaders were able to deal with them better than others. This was often the difference between failure and success.

Nussbaum (1997) documents the experience of the town of Sutterheim in mapping a path of development in a post-conflict context, She believes that developing forward looking vision and a solution seeking culture helped to promote reconciliation and development.

2. *How will I sustain my own commitment and work with the fluid commitment of others?*

The leadership literature more strongly covers this element of community action. In particular Parks Daloz et al (1996) describes the key factors that sustain leaders committed to the 'common good' over the long term. They are particularly concerned with people who are able to embrace diversity of people and place. They found that on the issues of sustained engagement that these people had *conviction, courage, confession and commitment*.

The reasons that Melville leaders said sustained them included, getting others involved, seeing results and not taking it all too seriously. The people component can be draining and burn out is possible. In order to sustain involvement, there is certainly a need for the community leaders to be thick skinned as both the community and the committee politics can be difficult to manage.

There are a few different approaches highlighted in the literature and on the ground in Melville. Some leaders are more comfortable in a community organising approach such as Cynthia who believes that what can work is to get people together who are directly impacted and bring them together to empower and involve them.

Then there is a more sustained ongoing project management approach which is needed such as for the security initiative. As Gareth says of Liza "There was also leadership stuff. Liza was critical. It could not have happened without her. She has provided the continuity and she is very organized."

3. *How will I manage the gap between what people commit to and what they will follow through on?*

Perhaps the norms that govern business contracts or commitment do not govern community life and people do not feel the same sense of breaking a commitment when they say yes but do not follow through. Contracting can be hard for leaders to enforce with people feeling like they are just a volunteer and should not be held to their word. This can be the case amongst the leaders themselves and is certainly true of members of the community.

Peter Block (2009) in *Community: The Structure of Belonging* sees the greatest barrier to participation as the structures within which we meet. At the centre of his thinking is the belief that a change in the way we relate can radically improve the quality of neighbourhood action and therefore improve our communities and the world around us.

The nature of commitment is critical to understand in this regard. For Peter Block (2009) it is important to allow for conversations that allow for deep ownership, promises made with no expectation, commitment and dissent. He suggests asking questions like:

- How valuable an experience (or project) do you plan for this to be?
- How much risk are you willing to take?
- What have I done to contribute to the very problem that I complain about?
- What resentment do you hold that no-one knows about?
- What promise am I willing to make with no expectation of return?

Consumers believe that their needs can be met by the actions of outsiders, whether those others are elected officials, top management, social service providers, or the shopping mall. He sees the provider-consumer transaction as the breeding ground for entitlement and disempowers people. The reduction of democracy to voting is the reduction o the public to consumers of elected officials and not co-producers of services.

4. What is the preferred and most optimal relationship with the state?

Next door to Melville is the Brixton initiative to fix and maintain a large derelict public park. In this context, the state has been 'crowded in' and is playing a constructive role in improvements. But this is often difficult, frustrating work that can leave a leader with nothing to show after months of work. At the neighbourhood level in Melville leaders are making decisions about how best to work with or without government. This is a politically charged terrain in South Africa where white

citizens in particular can be quick to judge a black majority government and can be stereotyped as racist. Black activists who choose a more antagonistic relationship with the state can be accused of a betrayal of those who fought for freedom.

A second element of this dynamic that is critical in the South African context is that elections have not yet produced a change of government in Johannesburg. There is therefore a sense that there is nothing that can be done to improve the performance of the state and citizens should organize services for themselves.

Thelma raises these concerns by pointing to the conflict between private security companies and the police (who are not addressing drug issues in the suburb). Others like Johan are very disappointed in Johannesburg or council tourism for not focusing on Melville especially with all the guest houses in the area.

Phil said that "formal structures function better with well organised informal structures" and that "the state has limits, we need to sustain pressure, but recognise that with four million people, many parts of the city need more money".

The key question for further research is how local groups like residents associations can best work with the state to achieve their objectives? The literature on participation is not decisive in helping us answer this question. Taylor (2003) has argued that community 'stars' can become victims as they are drawn into bureaucratized state systems that can lead to burn out an unsustained participation. The literature on activism in South Africa in the 1990s confirms this trend (Ballard et al, 2006).

The Treatment Action Campaign is an example of how best to work with the state and sometimes took an adversarial or cooperative position depending on circumstance without loosing its independence (Ballard et al, 2006).

Some leaders like Wendy and Marie-Lais are more comfortable working outside of formal structure and they avoid systems. As Marie-Lais says when asked how to involve people "don't make it too organized". Whilst others like Kerry and Liza are more comfortable in this milieu. As Kerry writes "if you see yourself as accountable, you accept a set of constraints".

5. Will I align with other initiatives and if so how?

The literature describes a wide variety of reasons why people participate in public life and volunteer their time. Clary el al (1992) describe some of the factors:

- acting according to deeply held beliefs about the value of altruism
- volunteering to learn and experience new things
- volunteering to develop ones skills with the hope of career advancement
- participating to align oneself with ones peer group
- volunteering to enhance ones self esteem
- using volunteerism as an escape mechanism

Later work by themselves added volunteering because one believes that what goes around comes around, volunteering to eradicate particular personal problems, volunteering to build social networks and volunteering to be recognized for the contribution. All in all this research covers the psychological factors that motivate people.

The diversity of reasons for volunteering compared with the dynamics of value polarity mean that leaders should be open and have a broad and inclusive framework for working in community. Multiple projects, motivations and value systems are a healthy feature of public life.

A leader needs to understand their own personal style and the potential of value alignment or conflict and how best to manage it. There may be times in which it is better to allow someone to do their own thing, and times when more alignment is possible.

The literature review emphasized Salomone (2001) who tries to reconcile the need for respect for diversity with respect of commonality. She suggests that if the common culture is too ‘thin’ then there is a risk of degeneration of what unites efforts to improve suburbs like Melville. But if the common culture is too ‘thick’ it denies the democratic impulse and peoples’ freedom to do their own thing. Taking from this perhaps an alignment of purpose is important together with some common principles of action but project alignment or coordination may not be required to make progress.

10. Conclusion

This research report has examined the nature of middle class activism in the neighbourhood context in South Africa in the era of our fourth democratic president, Jacob Zuma. It is underpinned by the idea that it is the way in which local level community organising takes place that will determine much of the social dynamic of the country going forward.

This inquiry is of interest because it touches on questions of race, class and activism in a country in transition from minority to majority rule. This research report makes a contribution towards filling the gap on suburban activism in post-Apartheid Johannesburg. This is important because of the role of the white minority in the evolution of democracy as an indicator of the potential of South Africa to overcome the challenges that are faced in building a broadly prosperous nation. Whiteness and the suburbs are generally less well researched than studies of black South African realities.

This study also makes a contribution towards the evolution of international thinking around 'your square mile' and local development and contributes towards the growing literature around building more participatory democracy. It also makes a contribution towards integrating the social science literature that tends to focus on 'structure' and the literature in the management/leadership sciences that focuses on 'agency'. The integration of structure and agency can be useful in developing the field of contextual action which is social activism based on an intimate understanding of the fluid and fixed structures of society.

The literature reviewed raised important issues around enablers and barriers to participation and the factors that sustain involvement. It also highlighted the contextual factors that underpin the local context including the changing nature of social capital in society, the changing forms of activism in South Africa and the dynamics of suburban life in Johannesburg.

The work of Brodie el al (2009) is pivotal in framing the work of leaders in Melville. Especially the conceptual clarifications on the motivations for participation that Klandermans (2003) identifies as the search for meaning, instrumentality or community.

The leaders interviewed in Melville described their primary motivations as including:

- Affirming Agency in Trauma
- Parenting Responsibilities

- Always Volunteered
- Challenge to have Impact
- Protect Financial Investment
  Being Part of Community
- It is Rewarding
- and Trigger Factors

They emphasised different factors when comparing themselves to others. The emphasised meaning oriented motivations for themselves and instrumental oriented motivations when considering others based on Klandermans (2003) categories of motivation to participate. The leaders interviewed described what motivates others as including:

- Race/Age/Class/Political Outlook
- Good Leadership
- Seeing results
- Emotional/Physical Needs
- Social Norms
- Personal Impact
- Formal Structure
- and Trigger Factors

Leaders described the features of activities and these were categorized into the areas of:

- Value Polarity
- Commitment Fluidity
- Say vs. Do Behaviors
- State - Community Relations
- Multiple Initiatives

Putnam (2000) provides an important international reference point when considering the relationships of citizens with one another especially in the suburban context. But he offers us few solutions to the problems her raises. In terms of solutions, the works of Peter Block (2009) and Sharon Parks Daloz (1996) are key. Block helps us to consider how to structure the ways in which community members come together whilst Parks Daloz provides a theory of sustaining leadership for the 'common good'.

The description of the features of participation in Melville allows for an inquiry into how these dynamics arise and how they can be managed by those active in the neighbourhood. An important finding is the relative importance of value polarities and working with the state in Melville when compared with the literature on participation.

A remaining key element of successful community action that needs to be explored in further research is the choosing of a goal that can be achieved without going against the odds. With all of the complexity of Melville and the limited time that people stepping into leadership roles have, it is important that leaders pick their goals carefully. As Kerry described "big things peter out without capacity" and "it is important to "stay focused on core issues and not superfluous work". Some goals like stopping drug dealing have so far been impossible to achieve. Whilst other goals like enforcing the liquor laws and cleaning up graffiti have been more successful. Sometimes this is due to the leader involved but often it is simply that the goal is too difficult to achieve.

There are important questions to be asked about how to encourage much higher levels of citizen action and collective work. Too often it is a handful of people who do most of the work. Any subsequent work should examine how residents who have not taken on leadership roles feel. How do they see the suburb. Residents who are not active should be interviewed to understand why they do not feel motivated to be involved.

As described early on in the report, citizen's mood (with regards the state) can be described as that of a thirsty person who has paid their money into a vending machine but found that the expected can does not drop into the slot below. Their anger might turn to rage but their options are limited to shaking (or breaking) the machine in an unreasonable hope that what they feel they are rightfully owed might emerge. How to act for real change in South Africa is the question at the heart of this study.

The struggle against Apartheid took place in the international arena, in the armed underground and in formal political structures. But it was more intimately experienced home by home, street by street and neighbourhood by neighbourhood. The nation today is similarly experienced locally. We need to find ways to build the field and practice of contextual local neighbourhood action in the current era that can help resolve some of the major problems that the country faces. South Africa has a deep

and fractured history but remains wide open for those with the agency and the insight to have a societal impact. I hope that this research report has made a small contribution to this goal.

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