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Understanding the local state, service delivery and protests in post-apartheid South Africa: The case of Duncan Village and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, East London

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology

Supervised by Dr. Prishani Naidoo and Dr. Melanie Samson

Johannesburg 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University. Where I have used the work of other authors, I have properly acknowledged them and I have not copied any author or scholar‘s work with the intention of passing it off as my own. All the interviews and informal conversations that have been conducted for the purposes of this research report have also been cited correctly and I have not passed off any of my participants work, suggestions and quotes as my own.

Signature……Date……2015

Patricia Ndhlovu

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DEDICATION

To the people of Duncan Village who continue to struggle for a decent life…

ABSTRACT

This research report rests on the argument that community protests are a reflection of different understandings of a decent life by protesters and state representatives. South Africa's democracy has been characterised by continuities in community protests, mainly targeted at the state or its representatives. Interestingly, most scholarship is biased towards interpreting these protests from a community perspective with limited attention to the state-centred perspective. This ethnographic study explores subjectivities constructed around community protests by Duncan Village and the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in East London. It employed participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect data from state representatives, community members and protesters. The study shows how meanings of a decent life are constructed by different actors, and how these meanings inform the state's approach to service delivery. It further explores the understanding of protest action from the perspective of state representatives and the protesters. It concludes that contestations over the scarce resources have led to the forging of and contestations over new identities like *inzalelwane* (born and bred) and *abantu bokufika* (newcomers) as these identities inform how state resources are allocated in Duncan Village. Furthermore, the installation of prepaid electricity metres, which is part of a project to electrify shacks, has exacerbated poverty in Duncan Village. Residents have resorted to protests to challenge what they consider to be threats to decent life. Through their experiences with the BCMM, protesting communities have come to realise that the state prioritises business interests at the expense of the interests of the marginalised masses. This has led to protesters assigning new meanings and significance to the old repertoires of protest. For the residents of Duncan Village, as long as the perceived promises of a decent life remain unrealised, the state and/or its representatives (BCMM) will continue to experience protests in the unforeseeable future.

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Imfazwe mayiqhubekeke ijonge phambili maqabane – Aluta continua!

ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AEC	Anti-Eviction Campaign
APF	Anti-Privatisation Forum
BCMM	Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality
CBD	City Business Centre
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
GEAR	Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MECLGTA	Member of the Executive Council for Local Government and Traditional Affairs
POPs	Public Order Policing Services
OWCC	Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
TV	Television
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER 1

Duncan Village – a township lost in history?

1.1. Introduction

This study is premised on the argument that community protests are a reflection of different understandings of a decent life by protesting communities and those who represent state interests. The study has revealed that there are different understandings of what constitute a decent life in Buffalo City, East London in the Eastern Cape Province. These understandings inform how the local state delivers basic services to the disadvantaged communities and how community members respond to what they believe to be an attack on their free access to basic services which defines their understandings of a decent life. Twenty years after the dispensation of democracy, the post-apartheid government has not been able to fully address the inequalities of the past for many poor South African townships.

Duncan Village is one of the townships that have played a significant role in the anti-apartheid struggle. In the post-apartheid era, it was identified as one of the six townships for the Presidential Projects under Urban Renewal Projects in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (PDP) policy document for development purposes (RDP White Paper, 1996), and received massive funding for development. However, twenty years after democracy, this history may seem to have been erased as the township conditions continue to deteriorate. In this thesis I argue that in fact, the introduction of cost-recovery policies for basic services such as water, electricity and refuse removal, etc. that force residents to be responsible for their own consumption have deepened the levels of poverty in Duncan Village. Contestations over the scarce resources have led to community fragmentation. In

Chapter 3 I argue that new identities such as *inzalelwane* (born and bred) and *abantu bokufika* (newcomers) have been forged and contested as they inform ways in which state resources are allocated in Duncan Village. These community divisions have posed challenges for collective mobilisation of the struggle for a decent life. The previously disadvantaged groups who continue to remain excluded from accessing basic services post-apartheid have mobilised within their communities using local networks of state representatives to access state services. While mobilisation at a community level has led to a consolidation of some gains for the marginalised, some groups that are not well connected have remained marginalised. These have mobilised and taken to the streets to seek for recognition from the state. The project on the electrification of shacks through prepaid metres in Duncan Village has been viewed by those who represent the state as improving the lives of the informal settlement dwellers. However, the fact that residents are required to purchase the electricity before use, this has been understood as a commodification of basic life by residents as I argue in *Chapter 4*. These different understandings of a decent life inform the interpretation of protest actions in Buffalo City.

Those who represent the interests of the state have viewed and interpreted protests as irrational actions by communities that lack knowledge on the subject of service delivery. On the other hand, protesting communities have viewed their protests as a struggle of a decent life, a fulfilment of the promises of democracy. Through their experiences of engaging the state, protesting communities of Duncan Village have come to realise that BCMM responds differently to the needs of the masses and those of the business. The realisation that the state places much interest on business over the interests of the masses has led to protesters giving new meanings to the old repertoire of barricading the freeway. This repertoire has been used as a deliberate strategy of distracting business to call for the attention of the state in Duncan Village as argued in *Chapter 5*.

In pursuing this, the study brings in the role of the state at the centre of the analysis of protests as it remains the main target for protesting communities. This is done by exploring understandings of protests from the perspective of those who act in the interests of the state and from the protesting communities, exploring different meanings that different stakeholders attach to protest actions and how these understandings reinforce the relationship between the state and community. To achieve these aims and objectives, the study adopted a qualitative methodology involving a short ethnography in Duncan Village.

This research report is based on a case study of forceful occupations and vandalism of low-cost houses in Mekeni road, (Mekeni houses[1]) in Duncan Village, East London. In June 2012, some of the residents from one of the informal settlements of Duncan Village, Florence Street, forcefully occupied and vandalised Mekeni houses in protest action. Given that there is a high demand for housing in post-apartheid South Africa, more specifically in the BCMM it was interesting to explore why residents of Florence Street would forcefully occupy and vandalise Mekeni houses.

It is important to note that I am a community member of greater East London. I grew up in Peddie; a town situated eighty-seven kilometres away from East London city centre and I moved to Quigney suburb in the East London city centre in 2000. Duncan Village has always been seen as 'that' township with residents who always barricade the highway in protest. This was noticeable because the Mdantsane access road or Black road[2] (on whose edge Florence Street informal settlement lies) is the main road leading to the city centre. Residents of Duncan Village, particularly Florence Street, are famous for barricading the Mdantsane access road and it is always frustrating for those travelling to the city centre to find the road closed by protesters. Moreover, unlike other townships where formal houses are separated

[1] Mekeni is one of the streets in Duncan Village and the houses that were built along that road are called Mekeni houses.

[2] Also known as a freeway in South Africa or motorway internationally.

from the informal settlement, there is no separation between formal houses and informal settlements in Duncan Village. Given lack of services such as toilets, water and electricity in the informal settlements, it was interesting to explore the relationships between residents of the formal and informal parts of Duncan Village over use of basic resources. To explore these relationships, it was important for me to spend some time as a community member of one of the Duncan Village informal settlements. I therefore lived in Ford Street, Duncan Village from the 17th of July 2014 to the 25th of August 2014. I lived in a shack (see image 1) with a family of three, a single mother with her two children.

The BCMM is the institution responsible for delivering services in Duncan Village as the township falls under its constituency. To bring in the analysis of the state in protests, it was important to interview BCMM officials as state representatives to understand their approach to service delivery and their understandings of Duncan Village protests. Living in Ford Street gave insights on the livelihoods of informal settlements dwellers as I had never experienced the life of informal settlements before. Using the bucket toilet system for six weeks while I was staying in Duncan Village allowed me to understand why residents of Duncan Village framed access to basic services as a decent life. In my experiences of living in Duncan Village, I had some direct experience that there is no decency in living in an informal settlement that lacks almost all basic services. This research report is therefore a reflection of my own personal experiences of living in an informal settlement, and making sense of the narratives of the life stories and experiences of the people of Duncan Village and BCMM officials. In presenting the findings of the study, I tried to retain reflexivity and remain neutral as a community member of greater East London and as a Masters student from Johannesburg doing research in a black township. The following section presents the research problem.

1.2. Research problem

Twenty years after the democratic dispensation, community protests remain a major challenge and concern to South African citizens, media and the government despite a lot of literature trying to understand them (see Booysen 2007; Atkinson 2007; Alexander 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011). This means that it is a phenomenon that needs to be revisited. Moreover, the local state or state buildings such as the libraries, clinics, community halls, etc. remain the main target for protesting communities. Protesters either march to the local municipality offices to present their memorandums of grievances or they burn down the state property demanding to be listened to by state representatives. In other cases protesters tend to target local state representatives such as the ward councillors or the mayors. They burn down their private property such as cars, houses, and in some cases they go to an extent of killing them, accusing them of corruption; nepotism and lack of service delivery (see Alexander 2010; Harber 2010; case studies in Von Holdt et al. 2011; Duncan 2014). Although the local state has remained a major target for protesters, most literature on the subject has focused on understanding community protests drawing from the voices from below in these communities whilst almost oblivious to the perspective of the state. The common scholarly literature cited and the media give the perspective of protesting communities and the views of the state as represented by community members, i.e. expressions of how the state has failed to attend to their grievances and how state officials have responded to the protesting crowds. Our common encounter with the state in the literature is when protesters march to the municipal offices or burn down public property and/or property for local state representatives. The state either responds by sending police to monitor or disband protests or by calling off certain state representatives. However, not much is known of the position of the state on how protest actions are understood and interpreted by those who represent the interests of the state.

The main aim of this study is to bring in an understanding of the position of the state in community protests. This project draws from a short ethnographic study to bring together an understanding of community protests from a perspective of protesting communities and that of those who represent the interests of the state. By so doing, the project brings in the state at the centre of the analysis of protests. By exploring these different understandings, the current study attempts to open a discussion on ways in which the state engages protesters and the interpretation of protests from a local state perspective.

1.3. The research questions

This study was guided by the following main question:

What do community protests in Duncan Village and the related state responses from the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality reveal about understandings of a decent life?

In addition, the following sub-questions were probed:

- *What informs the allocation and distribution of state resources in Duncan Village?*
- *What are the different understandings of a decent life by residents of Duncan Village and BCMM officials?*
- *How do different stakeholders understand and interpret protest actions in Buffalo City?*

The remaining part of this chapter presents the background information to the study of protests in Duncan Village and Buffalo City. I begin by locating BCMM and Duncan Village within the broader South African context. I then discuss the background to community struggles and protests in South Africa and Duncan Village. The last part of this chapter presents an overview of the chapters in the remainder of the research report. The following section presents a background to the study of protests in South Africa.

1.4. Locating the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM)

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) is located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The province has an estimated population of 6 562 053 million people (Census 2011; BCMM Integrated Development Plan 2014/15:24). It is also regarded as one of the two poorest provinces in South Africa along with the Limpopo province. The total population of Buffalo City is estimated to be 755 200 million people and the metro contributes 11.5% of the Eastern Cape provincial population (Census 2011; IDP 2014/15:27). Eighty-six per cent of the population is African; seven per cent is White; six per cent Coloured and one per cent Indian or Asian (IDP 2014/15:27-28). Forty-eight per cent of the population is said to be living below the poverty line (IDP 2014/15: 32). The BCMM constitutes fifty per cent of the total number of the informal dwellings for the whole province with the highest number of them in Duncan Village. Duncan Village is located within this province that is characterised by high levels of inequality, poverty and dominated by informal dwellings.

1.5. Background of Duncan Village

Duncan Village is a black township that was established in 1941. It was named after the then Governor of East London, Patrick Duncan, who oversaw the opening of what was called a 'leasehold tenure area' in the East Bank location and named the area after his name, hence Duncan Village (The Mdantsane Way, March 2013). The township is located about five kilometres away from the East London city business centre (CBD). It has an approximate population of 16 380 which is predominantly black.

Duncan Village is divided into six wards with each headed by a ward councillor. There are no clear divisions between the informal parts and formal parts of the township since most shacks are planted on the open spaces within formal houses. Most of the formal houses were built by

the apartheid government. The informal parts of Duncan Village are made of zinc and wooden shacks. Some of them are lined with cardboard inside that is used as a ceiling or lining to protect the occupants from extreme weather conditions such as hot summers and cold winters.

In the informal parts of Duncan Village residents use communal stand-alone toilets that are provided by the municipality and stand-pipes located mainly at the edge of each informal settlement. These communal toilets are shared at least by a hundred to three-hundred people depending on the size of the settlement. There is a strong reliance on the bucket system for daily activities particularly in the informal parts of Duncan Village. Residents prefer to use the bucket system since in many areas toilets are far from their shacks and they are dangerous to use especially at night.



Image 1: The external (made of wood) and internal (lined with cardboard) parts of the shack where I stayed during my research at Ford Street, Duncan Village: Photo by Patricia -1/08/2014.

When the research for this project was being conducted (2014), most informal areas were reliant on illegal electricity connections. However, the municipality was piloting a project on the electrification of shacks using the prepaid metre system. There is a general sense of insecurity in the informal settlements of Duncan Village due to high levels of crime, flooding and shack fires caused by illegal connections and flammable energy sources that are used. The history and the background to the township are crucial for understanding livelihoods and

struggles of the people of Duncan Village in relation to the historical and present realities of the South African black townships. The following section explores the background to community struggles in South Africa.

1.6. Background to community struggles and protests in South Africa

The current study occurs in a context where forms of state-community engagement have been characterised by protest actions for a considerable history in South Africa. Dating from the apartheid era, protests have been understood to be the main mechanism for engaging the state by mostly poor black communities. Under apartheid, the marginalised poor negotiated their forms of exclusion and informality through non-payment in the form of rents and services boycotts (Naidoo 2007:59). Informality in this context is understood as those forms of existence that are considered to be illegal by the state.[3] Until the mid-1970s, black Africans were considered as temporary residents in the urban city. Consequently, the apartheid government made very little public investment to develop black townships (Posel 2004:279; Barchiesi 2007:54). In the late 1980s, with increased industrialisation and demand for cheap unskilled labour in the cities, the formal restrictions on African urbanisation were lifted but there were already serious housing backlogs. Seekings (2000:120) notes that with the increase of this demand, newly urbanised workers invaded land and they established squatter settlements. The apartheid government responded to this situation by introducing forms of 'controlled squatting' by setting up 'site and service' schemes and building match-box houses "suitable" for accommodating the blacks (Seekings 2000).

Seekings (2000:121) notes that from 1982, issues such as rent and bus fare increments, shack demolitions and lack of houses in black townships sparked protests across the country in areas such as Pietermaritzburg (1982), Durban and Mdantsane (1983), Cape Town, Free State

[3] See definitions and debates on the theoretical and conceptual resources section.

and Attridgeville (1984). While these issues represented material grievances, the anger was vented on township councillors or Bantustan authorities who were seen as representatives of the apartheid state (Seekings 2000; Nasson 1991). Van Kessel (2000) draws from some of the violent protests that resulted in destruction of property and killing of state officials. Furthermore, township activists formed street committees and organised youths that were responsible for protecting rent defaulters and to prevent them from eviction. In some of the townships where electricity had been cut off there were volunteers who came in to reconnect the houses (Van Kessel 2000). While the main aim of the protests was to make the black townships "ungovernable", they were also meant to challenge the whole system of apartheid that prevented black Africans from attaining a decent life in the city.

In East London, and Duncan Village in particular, Bank (2005:16) notes that backyard shack dwellings have existed for more than a 100 years and have also sustained the apartheid state project on the demolition of informal structures at the height of the apartheid struggles. The East London government responded to black housing demands through 'controlled squatting'. Having failed to control the flocking of migrants from homelands into the city, the government responded by establishing Duncan Village as an overflow township (Morris 1981:88; Bank 1999:399). Bank (1999) notes how local political organisations of Duncan Village distributed open land for the landless people.

> As resistance mounted, township people began to reclaim the empty spaces created by the demolition of shacks and houses over the past two decades. In C Section, where open spaces had been created by the demolition of 'transit dwellings' during the 1970s, local residents and new arrivals started filling these spaces with shacks…In 1984, the houses of Gompo councillors were burnt down and their sites reallocated to homeless people. The DVRA also declared a township-wide rent boycott (Bank 1999:404).

Throughout apartheid, Duncan Village remained undeveloped owing to the problem of unavailability of land. As Bank (2011: 223) notes, the problem of lack of land for upgrading

purposes in Duncan Village has persisted in the post-apartheid state where development initiatives have posed certain challenges for residents. In 2003, the city council of Duncan Village announced a new master plan for urban renewal and development. While the model raised expectations and hopes about attaining the imagined better life characterised by housing development, for the purpose of implementing the project, it was required that residents be moved to other areas in order to clear some of the shacks (ibid.). These challenges have included illegal occupations of houses meant for relocation of the people of Duncan Village in new development areas such as Reeston[4]. The illegal occupations have seen residents of Duncan Village who have been lined for resettlement remaining homeless as their houses were illegally occupied and their shacks demolished as a municipal procedure for resettling shack dwellers (Bank 2011: 232). It is behind this background of housing development challenges and the related persistent forms of informality that the current study of protests in Duncan Village is understood.

While there was a formal development from the apartheid government in an attempt to formalise black Africans in urban townships, there was also a parallel development of shacks from those seeking economic opportunities in the city. These informal sites remained un-serviced as the apartheid state refused to recognise informal settlements. Echoing the views of many informal settlement dwellers, one participant interviewed for this project in Duncan Village noted:

> The apartheid government did not accord any dignity to us. They refused to recognise us and we did not receive any services in these informal settlements. *Sasilwisa urhulumene wobandlululo ngoba sasifuna ukupucula ubom'* (we were fighting the apartheid government because we wanted a dignified life). We won the struggle but still there is no dignity here. Where is dignity if you still need to fetch water with a bucket, use a bucket for toilet, you do not have electricity, you are sleeping in a one-roomed shack with your six children,

[4] A new location for housing development in East London identified as a settlement for relocation programmes

> these shacks can burn at any time, what about diseases? We are not free yet; we are still fighting for that dignity even with our own government (Interview with Nwabisa, 22/082014).

The conditions cited above provide a context within which an understanding of a decent life is framed and understood in Duncan Village. According to the participant, the struggles have continued and they are still fighting for a dignified life characterised by access to basic services such as proper housing, water and electricity that would allow people to live a healthy life.

In the early 1990s South Africans saw the negotiated settlement to end the apartheid rule and the transition to democracy. During this period many South Africans had their hopes raised with the belief that the African National Congress (ANC) - led government was going to improve their lives, a struggle that they fought for during the apartheid rule. These expectations were embedded in the slogan of the ANC, "a better life for all" and also on their Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy. The RDP became the election manifesto of the ANC and a programme for socio-economic transformation on which it came to power in 1994 (Nyman, 2001: 108). The popular view in the South African society is that the RDP was broadly redistributive in nature, as reflected by its commitment to providing basic material needs to the poorest citizens, including access to adequate housing, water and electricity (Koelble & LiPuma 2010:565). It is within an understanding of these promises of increased access to adequate housing, free access to water and electricity that made South Africans to believe that democracy would translate into improved socio-economic conditions and a realisation of a decent life.

However, with the transition to democracy the post-apartheid government has not been able to deliver much of the promises made during the liberation struggle. Although there has been significant figures indicating that the government has improved access to services such as housing, water and electricity, the statistical information has not translated into socio-

economic realities for most of the poor South Africans. More significantly, in February 1995, the South African government launched operation Masakhane (we are building or let's build) based on the claims of addressing inequalities of the past by allowing poor South Africans to work together with the government towards building the country (see McDonald and Pape 2002; Naidoo 2007). While there were justifications for Operation Masakhane, the realities of the project was that it was meant to urge residents to pay for services such as water, electricity, sewage and refuse collection, to do away with the culture of defiance and non-payment of the 1980s as discussed above. According to McDonald and Pape (2002:2), by 1997 it was clear that the main objective of Masakhane was to make black communities pay for their consumption. Masakhane became "the lodestar in the building of a hegemonic framework of cost recovery" (ibid.).

Cost recovery emerged as one aspect of the neoliberal principles along with fiscal restraint; export orientation; privatisation and corporatisation etc. These were premised within the framework of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy introduced by the ANC-led government as a non-negotiable economic policy in 1996 (McDonald and Pape 2002:2). The GEAR was premised on neoliberal ideology aimed at creating a fast-growing competitive economy by reducing state intervention on business; targeting unemployment through increased private foreign investment, restructuring of the public sector and flexibilization of the labour economy, among other targets (GEAR White Paper, 1996). While in other cities like Johannesburg the delivery of basic services was outsourced to private companies through the process of privatisation, in East London the provision of basic services has remained as the responsibility of BCMM. Cost recovery therefore remains a major method used by the municipality for making citizens pay for their basic services.

Cost recovery refers to "the practice of charging the consumers the full (or nearly) cost of providing services such as water and electricity" (McDonald 2002:17). McDonald (2002)

argues that for any cost-recovery to be effective individual household consumption should be measured accurately and regularly and that the service provider must be able to collect payments for services before consumption (McDonald 2002:19). For volumetric services such as water and electricity, cost recovery has been made possible with the use of more sophisticated technology of prepaid metres. A prepaid metre is a device that measures the exact amount of a service consumed while also allowing for marginal cost pricing (McDonald 2002:19). This technology forces users to purchase their services before consumption. This is facilitated by the use of electronic smart cards where units are purchased at a retail outlet and then entered into the prepaid metre with the use of an electronic "smart card" (ibid.).

As will be shown in *Chapter 4*, this is the main method used in Duncan Village and with the new project on the electrification of shacks through the use of prepaid metres. The introduction of cost recovery through installation of prepaid metres would mean that for residents to access basic services they need to have money to purchase the units first. Given the high rate of unemployment and levels of poverty in many poor townships, most residents do not afford to purchase these services. The denial of these services through commercialised access would mean that poor communities are denied access to basic services that define a decent life.

The introduction of cost recovery and privatisation policies have been seen by many South Africans as a compromise democracy and an attack on the poor (see Barchiesi, 2004; Bond, 1999; McDonald & Pape, 2002; Naidoo & Veriava, 2005; Naidoo 2007; Marais 2011). Naidoo and Veriava (2004:71) argue that the introduction of cost recovery in the delivery of basic services is a direct attack on the life experiences of the poor. The system of cost recovery has been seen as defining and treating residents as modern consumers or customers before they are considered to be citizens (Khunou 2002:74). This would mean that citizenship

in a capitalist society is characterised by an individual's ability to pay in order to access basic services. The struggles that have emerged in response to these policies have been understood as struggles against commodification of daily life (see Naidoo 2007). In the context of this study, struggles against cost recovery policies in Buffalo City are understood as struggles of the commodification of a decent life since a decent life is understood to be access to basic services. The installation of prepaid metres would mean that basic services have been put into a market to be purchased, i.e. commodifying them. However, these policies did not go unchallenged. The South African state has seen more community struggles re-emerging to challenge these forms of exclusion post-apartheid. The following section explores post-apartheid struggles.

1.7. Background to post-apartheid struggles and protests

In 1997 following the enforcement of the duty to pay for basic services residents of poor townships were already organising to protest against evictions and cut-offs from electricity and water and also boycotting payments of municipal services (Ballard, Habib, Valodia and Zuern 2005; Gibson 2006). The period around 2001, with escalations of various forms of privatisation and cost-recovery, saw an emergence of new post-1994 organised groups that have been understood as new social movements. The new social movements emerged in response to the failures of the democratic state to realise the dreams of a decent life that were imagined by many previously disadvantaged South Africans. They became an organisational space for fighting specific issues that directly confronted South Africans (McKinley and Naidoo 2004:9). Although these new social movements shared some aspects of the pre-1994 movements (i.e. songs, slogans, some of their membership), they emerged to take up the spaces that were opened by the traditional political and civic organisations such as the ANC local organisations, South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), the United

Democratic Front (UDF), etc. These were organisations within which community struggles were organised and carried out. After the democratic transition, these organisations seem to have offered few alternatives to the state policies and therefore little support to affected communities. Naidoo (2007) notes that after the introduction of Masakhane, the ANC local branches and the SANCO members were very active in discouraging the culture of defiance and encouraging South Africans to be responsible citizens through paying for their own consumption. The new social movements therefore emerged to offer some alternatives to the new service delivery approach. Where the state had argued that there are no alternatives to the means of providing basic services, members of the social movements with knowledge destroyed the prepaid metres and re-connected the households that were already disconnected to water and electricity (see Naidoo and McKinley 2004; Naidoo and Veriava 2005; Naidoo 2007). These movements were understood to be new because they were the first movements post-1994 to situate themselves outside of, and often critical of/and antagonistic towards the ANC and the broader Congress movement (Naidoo forthcoming 2015:437). Drawing from the experiences of the TAC, Mbali (2006: 149) argues that what is new about the post-apartheid social movements is their ability to challenge the state directly by drawing from South Africa's new democratic constitution to forward their aims. However, due to increased state repression, difficulties with accessing resources and internal battles, these new social movements were reaching their demise by 2004 (Naidoo forthcoming 2015). What is important is that the struggles undertaken by these movements were aimed at realising the promises of a decent life compromised by commodified access to basic services.

Although the new social movements were reaching their demise, community struggles continued to escalate around 2004. Most protests organised at community level were concerned with issues of service delivery and struggles related to municipal demarcations, notably in Harrismith, Free State Province and Matatiele (Atkinson 2007: 57). As many

protests were taking place in the poorest parts of the country particularly informal settlements and black townships, this led to the characterisation of these protests as a "rebellion of the poor" by Peter Alexander (2010).

Issues of service delivery such as access to housing, water and electricity among others, remained on top of the agenda for most of the community protests leading to the coining of the term "service delivery protests" by mainstream media to refer to such protests (Naidoo forthcoming 2015). Community protests in South Africa have since been understood and characterised as "service delivery protests" regardless of their causes and nature. This has led to some of the senior state officials arguing that these protests should not be homogenised as they include work related and municipal demarcation issues (Mantashe 2014). Nonetheless, all the issues noted by Mantashe have an impact on service delivery in one way or another. It is within this understanding that community protests in South Africa are largely understood as service delivery protests. In the case of Duncan Village, most of the protests that were studied, as will be shown throughout the report, were related to issues of service delivery. Although some of them had to do with issues of corrupt councillors, nepotism and lack of communication, all these issues impact on service delivery and a realisation of a decent life as imagined by some of the residents of Duncan Village.

Some of the protests in post-apartheid South Africa have been attributed to factional politics by individuals who want to benefit from state resources (Harber 2009; Alexander 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011). Repertoires of protests have included barricading of main roads and the burning down of public infrastructure such as libraries or clinics, and private property such as houses and cars for local state representatives. Most of the protesting communities have claimed that they take to the streets to destroy infrastructure after exhausting all legal mechanisms of engaging the state. These observations have led to the characterisation of

actions that include burning of infrastructure and barricading of roads as "*a smoke that calls*" for the attention of state officials (Von Holdt et al. 2011).

Incidents such as the xenophobic attacks of 2008, the death of Andries Tatane in the hands of the South African police, and the Marikana massacre of 2012, are some of the post-apartheid major events that gained international attention in relation to protests. This has led to the labelling of protests as "violent service delivery protests" (Von Holdt et al 2011; Naidoo forthcoming 2015). Since then, some of the popular media has characterised community protests as "violent service delivery protests". However, Duncan (2014) argues that labelling protest as "violent protests" informs the ways in which the state responds to protests as they are already perceived to be violent, therefore responding by use of heavily armed police.

From the evidence provided thus far, not much has changed from the apartheid state concerning grievances and repertoires of protests. Issues of housing and access to basic necessities have remained on the top of the agenda. This would mean that the previously disadvantaged communities have not attained their imagined democracy, that is, "a better life for all". Drawing from the fieldwork observation of protests in Duncan Village, it can be argued that protests have become part of the culture in Duncan Village. Every time when electricity went off, children as young as five years were seen unconsciously gathering tyres and calling for protest action to bring back electricity. The study of community protests in Duncan Village can therefore be understood as a continuation of the struggle for a decent life. The following section discusses the theoretical and conceptual tools used in understanding the study of protests in Duncan Village.

1.8. Theoretical and conceptual resources

To understand the nature of the relationship between state and citizens in post-apartheid Buffalo City the current study is drawing from Gramsci's (1971) model of state-civil society and Chatterjee's (2004) notion of political society. In understanding the establishment of informal settlements and struggles for basic services within informal settlements I will be drawing from Holston's (2008) concept of insurgent citizenship. The application of Gramsci and Chatterjee allows for an understanding of the post-apartheid state and conceptions of citizenship. An understanding of the state is central to understanding the provision and distribution of state resources in post-apartheid Buffalo City. This is also important for understanding ways in which conceptions of decent life are understood by different stakeholders. The notion of political society is central in understanding perceptions of the informal settlements or forms of illegality from the perspective of the state. The intersection of the notion of a political society and insurgent citizenship[5] is also useful in understanding the struggles of informal settlement dwellers and their ways of accessing state resources. This also informs an understanding of citizenship among residents of Duncan Village.

Studying the state poses a number of challenges as different authors give different understandings of the state. There is a lack of consensus on the definition and the role it plays in society despite agreement on its role as an object of political practice and analysis (Abrams (1988 [1977]). From a Marxist perspective, the state represents class power for those who own the means of production. In his understanding of the state, Gramsci (1971) defines the state as political and civil society where the political society embodies the coercive apparatus whilst the civil society accounts for the institutions of consent. He argues that the state elicits society's consent, persuades and legitimizes the status quo (Gramsci (1996[1971]:56). He

[5] These concepts will be elaborated below.

theorises this relationship as ideological hegemony. Hegemonic ideology presents the interests of the dominant class as the interests of all (1996 [1971]:180-181). Fundamental to the effectiveness of the hegemonic ideology is an economic base, which allows the dominant class to offer material concessions to the subordinate class (Gramsci 1996 [1971]: 181-182). Following the same tradition, Milliband (1970) argued that "the state in a class society is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of the economic interests which are dominant in them (1970:57). The main role of the state is to maintain a continued domination and not to prevent it (ibid.).

A pluralist perspective on the other hand views the state as an independent institution that prevents any one class from assuming a permanent position of dominance over the other (Dahl, 1963). From a Marxist perspective and responding to Milliband, Poulantzas argues that the state is relatively autonomous from any class domination and this is facilitated by the separation between the economic and the political (1969:251). He argues that the state is a system which embodies repressive apparatus on one hand and ideological apparatus on the other (Poulantzas 1969:251). Domination of any class at any point is determined by class struggles.

While the pluralist perspective of understanding the state may be useful, it poses certain challenges to the South African context. It is useful in that it gives the state a concrete form through identified institutions while also valuing the existence of ideologies in the understanding of the state. However, in South Africa the relative autonomy of the state seems to be limited. Poulantzas argues that there is an element of domination at particular periods, the South African state seems to have maintained domination by the business class. As it will be shown in *Chapters 4* and *5*, the South African state has served and maintained the interests of the capitalists and those of the masses have been attended to for the purpose of moderating state-society relations.

Gramsci's notion of state and civil society serves as a point of departure in understanding the South African state. However, it is limited in that hegemonic ideologies continue to be challenged in South Africa as marginalised people mobilise within political society to access state resources from which they are excluded. The realisation that there is a form of class domination maintained through hegemony is relevant in South Africa as Gramsci notes that the interests of the dominant class, and perceived interests of the subordinate class, are presented as if they are the only viable interests and any alternative is impossible or utopian (Gramsci 1996 [1971]: 181-182). The debates concerning the introduction of privatisation and cost recovery policies in South Africa centre on the hegemonic neoliberal principles that are premised on the argument that there is no other alternative to service delivery (see Naidoo and McKinley 2004; Naidoo 2007).

David Harvey argues that for neoliberalism to be successful, the state has to ensure that it creates and maintains an institutional framework that is appropriate for the flourishing of the free market (Harvey 2005:2). The South African state can be understood as having followed this path for a very long history. Literature on the apartheid state and township resistance shows that the apartheid state service delivery was skewed along racial lines. Given that race was a defining feature of class during apartheid, it is clear that the state focused on servicing white suburbs and industrial areas. As McDonald (2005) notes in relation to the privatisation of electricity, black Africans have been excluded from the electricity grid in the apartheid era and this has continued into the post-apartheid era as electricity subsidization is mainly meant to enhance competitiveness of the markets while blacks continue to pay full costs. Writing on privatisation of public goods, Samson (2007) also notes how the post-apartheid state has continued to divide services along racial and class-based divisions. Samson argues that the state's approach to street cleaning services perpetuated gender inequalities, racial divisions and inequality in working class areas where residents could not afford to pay extra for

services (Samson 2007:121). In business areas of historically white suburbs, privatisation of refuse removal has been met with efforts to maintain dignity by provision of security and paid-for cleaning services. In townships, services were left for voluntary projects by women forced by their circumstances to expose their lives to all forms of exploitation (Samson 2007:121; 2010:419). As will be shown throughout the report, the post-apartheid state continues to serve the interests of business and basic services have been commoditised and have therefore become barely accessible to the poor.

Chatterjee (2004) defines political society as a form of society which possesses distinctive features in terms of its relations to the state apparatus (status, rights and economic conditions). This model explains how governments provide uneven services and welfare to the marginalised population groups. He argues that the notion of civil society applies to Western societies because it represents a high ground of modernity. According to Chatterjee (2004), in post-colonial societies, the inherited nature of the colonial practices seems to undermine the primary requirement of modern citizenship as the legacies of colonialism continue to deepen marginalisation and inequality (Chatterjee 2004: 32). Drawing from the experiences of post-colonial India, Chatterjee (2004: 27–51, 53–78) argues that poor people access the state through mediated networks facilitated by a range of intermediaries which distribute municipal resources and basic services to 'illegal' population groups. According to Holston (2008: 34), insurgence "describes a process that is an acting counter, counterpolitics, that destabilizes the present and renders it fragile…" It is an insurgence that begins with the struggle for rights and dignified life characterised by acts of reclaiming land and services (ibid.).

The application of Chatterjee's notion of a political society and Holston's concept of insurgent citizenship is useful for understanding the situation of the people of informal settlements in Duncan Village. As has been noted in this chapter, informal settlements have

been established through forms of insurgency by black populations who were formally excluded from urban development. Attempts to recognise the emerging black settlements in the city through "controlled squatting" have had very limited progress in eradicating and controlling informal settlements. In South Africa throughout the apartheid and in post-apartheid state, informal settlements have remained classified as places of illegality until recently when they have been recognised for upgrading purposes (IDP 2014/15) as part of the Millennium Development Goals that aimed at eradicating slums by 2014.

The phrase 'informal settlement' is usually used interchangeably with slums or squatter camps. In South Africa these are commonly known as *imijondolo* or *isiqiki*/*esiqikini* (as commonly known in East London). According to the Cities Alliance (1999) cited in Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006:2), slums are "neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor. The United Nations (UN) Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), defines slums "as any area that met the following six criteria: lack of basic services, inadequate building structures, overcrowding, unhealthy and hazardous conditions, insecure tenure, and poverty and exclusion" (UN-Habitat 2005a, cited in Huchzermeyer and Karam 2006:2). In Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006:2), the definition for informal settlements is restricted to "those settlements of the poor that have developed through unauthorised occupations of land". For the purpose of this study, I draw from this definition of informal settlements. As much as the other two definitions on the slums fit into the conditions of Duncan Village as informal settlements are characterised by lack of infrastructure and overcrowding, I refer to the definition on informal settlements to emphasise the supposedly 'unauthorised' occupations of land. This definition is linked to understandings of informality from the point of a political society and from Holston's understandings of insurgent citizenship. As Chatterjee (2008:73) notes in relation to the squatters of Mumbai, they are considered 'illegal' because they have violated norms of

property by squatting and hawking on public lands. He then notes that the struggles of the marginalised – "politics of the governed" - "give empirical form of a population group the moral attribute of a community" (Chatterjee 2004: 57). More so, Holston (2008:34) notes that insurgent citizenship is a form of insurgence that begins with the struggle for rights and dignified life characterised by acts of reclaiming land and services (ibid.). The struggles of the informal settlements therefore become a struggle for recognition of citizenship.

In his understanding of the use of the word *citizen* in Brazil, Holston (2008) noted that the word carried with it a sense of anonymity or that of a stranger; "a John Doe – a person in fact without rights" (Holston 2008:4). According to Holton, *citizenship* "is a measure of distances and a means of distancing people from one another. It reminds people of what they are not…" (Holston 2008:5). The conception of citizenship is therefore a mechanism for distributing inequality among different social groups (Holston 2008:7). In the volume *Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship*, Bryan S. Turner (1993) argues that the question of citizenship is structured around two issues. The first issue relates to social membership in highly differentiated societies and the second speaks to questions of inequality derived from the question of efficient and equal allocation of resources (Turner 1993:2). He then argues that the focus on unequal distribution of resources in a society places the concept of citizenship within the debate on inequality, power differences, social class (Turner 1993:2-3).

Drawing from understandings of citizenship by Holston (2008) and Turner (1993), citizenship in this research is understood in relation to the question of distribution of resources in the post-apartheid Duncan Village. The word citizenship in this research is used in relation to access to resources in such a way that those who have access to state resources are considered to be full citizens. By challenging the failure to provide basic services in the informal settlements through forms of insurgent citizenship, residents of Duncan Village have

made significant progress towards their struggle for citizenship. As Chatterjee notes, "when people mobilise in political society, they can affect the implementation of governmental activities in their favour – hence, have expanded their freedoms by using means that are not available to them in civil society" (2004:67). These theoretical and conceptual tools are important for understanding both community relations within Duncan Village community and state-community relations in Buffalo City. The following section outlines an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.9. An overview of the chapters

Chapter One has presented the background to the study of protests in Duncan Village in relation to the broader context of protests in South Africa. The chapter also outlined the research questions and theoretical tools for understanding this research project. *Chapter Two* presents the research approach and an overview of the research methods that were used in gathering data for the purpose of this project. Through a qualitative study, data for this research was gathered through participant observation, focus groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with both community members of Duncan Village and BCMM officials in order to understand the state-community relations.

Findings of this research project are presented in *Chapters Three*, *Four* and *Five*. *Chapter Three* discusses ways in which state resources are allocated and distributed in Duncan Village. This informs an understanding of community relations among residents of the formal and those of the informal parts of Duncan Village. Contestations over scarce resources have led to a creation and forging of new identities for the purpose of including or excluding other groups from state resources.

Chapter Four presents understandings of a decent life from a perspective of the representatives of the state and those of Duncan Village community. Drawing from the project of the electrification of shacks, the chapter argues that the use of prepaid metres as part of cost recovery policies has led to commoditisation of basic life and deepening of poverty in Duncan Village. This has been challenged by residents through different tactics, including using local networks of state officials as well as illegal conditions to undermine the project.

In Chapter Five I present understandings of protests from the views of those who represent the interests of the state and from the protesting communities. The chapter argues that through their experiences of engaging the state, protesting communities of Duncan Village have come to realise that BCMM responds differently to the needs of the masses and those of the business. The realisation that the state places greater interest on business than the interests of the masses has led to protesters giving new meanings to the old repertoire of barricading the freeway.

Chapter Six concludes that community protests are a reflection of different understandings of a decent life by protesting communities and those who represent state interests. In a community where the state does not efficiently deliver basic services, some residents remain marginalised and these forms of marginalisation are always challenged in most cases. As long as the promises of a decent life remain unrealised, BCMM will continue to be characterised by protests in the unforeseeable future.

CHAPTER 2

Research Methodology

2.1. Introduction

It is important to note that the current study was initially based on a particular case study of the illegal occupations and vandalism of Mekeni houses in Duncan Village. After the fieldwork the question had to be changed because the exploration of the case study uncovered some issues that were broader than the scope of the case study yet still relevant to the research problem.

The specific case study of the forceful occupations and vandalism of Mekeni houses was chosen because of its interesting nature and the puzzle presented by the reading of the case. In an area characterised by a large number of informal settlements as noted in *Chapter 1*, one would expect the recipients of the low-cost houses to celebrate the moment and embrace the opportunity of owning a house. However, residents of Duncan Village had a different approach to the new houses of Mekeni and this included actions of vandalism in protests. It was therefore within this puzzle that the study was located.

Understanding of the case study of Mekeni houses was very useful in the shaping of this project. It presented theoretical and conceptual questions to be asked about different understandings of the state, protests and questions of service delivery at a local level. In order to address these questions it was important to understand the lives of the people of Duncan Village, particularly those in informal settlements. This research therefore incorporated a participant observation method whereby the researcher stayed in Duncan Village to gain an in-depth understanding of the informal settlement from an insider's perspective. In order to understand different perspectives on the local state, meanings of a decent life and protests,

there was need to get first-hand information from different stakeholders. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews conducted with BCMM officials and community members of Duncan Village who provided their views according to their understandings and interpretations of the case. Since most of these community struggles are not individual experiences, focus groups were also conducted to capture the essence of shared experiences with both community members and members of the South African Public Order Policing Services (POPs). The data gathered was interpreted and analysed for the purpose of answering main questions informing the study.

The remaining sections of this chapter present the research methods that were used in the gathering of data, methods of analysis and the limitations of the study. In the first section I present methods and challenges of accessing BCMM and the Duncan Village community. In the following section I present the qualitative design and methods used which included participant observation, interviews, focus groups and document analysis. The next section presents my own experiences of being part of this research project, first as a researcher in Duncan Village and then in the process of interpreting the findings and analysing the data. The chapter ends with a discussion on ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

2.2. Accessing Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM)

Access to BCMM was made through formal application according to the requirements of the Knowledge Management, Research and Policy office. After submitting all the required documents, I was granted permission to conduct research in the Buffalo City municipality. The permission letter also identified some potential participants as a starting point. However, getting written permission to conduct research did not guarantee immediate access to the identified officials and other members of BCMM. I faced some challenges in setting up appointments with BCMM officials. In some cases appointments were set but they were

never honoured by officials. As Philip Abrams has noted writing on the difficulties of studying the state:

> Anyone who has tried to negotiate a research contract with the Home Office or the Department of Health will be aware that the extreme jealousies with which such agencies instinctively protect information about themselves. The presumption, and its effective implementation, that the 'public sector' is in fact a private sector about which knowledge must not be made public is all too obviously the principal immediate obstacle to any serious study of the state (Abrams 2006: 114).

It is expected that since municipalities are public institutions it would be easy to access them for information. However, my experiences of accessing BCMM were in line with general experiences captured in the above quote by Abrams. Among the two officials who were identified, I only succeeded in interviewing the Council Speaker. Efforts to interview the Head of the Housing Department were not successful and thus he was not interviewed for this project despite being identified as the main informant by the research office. The difficulties of accessing BCMM were not only important for understanding the extent to which the state protects information, but also raised important questions for the research. I came face to face with the challenge of accessing the state, as a researcher, and wondered about the experiences of poor citizens who do not have any resources when trying to access information and assistance from officials.

However, despite the difficulties in accessing BCMM officials, a breakthrough was made at the final stage of the research. The office of the Housing Manager identified some officials who were relevant to the study and emails were sent to them directly and to their heads of departments. I was also provided with a list of names and offices, stamped and signed by the office of the Manager (giving officials a permission to be interviewed). After providing proof of access to the housing department, officials were keen to participate in the study.

2.3. Accessing Duncan Village

It is important to highlight upfront that I am originally from East London, and I grew up in Peddie and Quigney as I have indicated in the introduction of this report. Although I have spent the last few years in Johannesburg, the rest of my family and relatives still reside in East London. I have relatives living in Duncan Village at C-Section and Ford Street. Accessing Duncan Village was not difficult for me but there were challenges in getting relevant participants for the proposed case study. I moved in to Ford Street and stayed in a shack with a family of three to facilitate the process of participant observation. Access to Area 8 Squatter Camp and Florence Street Informal Settlements was made through referrals to the people who had the information related to the case study of Mekeni houses.

I started by targeting participants who were friends to relatives and many others were identified through adoption of a snowballing strategy. The snowballing was to some extent voluntary from the side of participants. The voluntary nature can be identified through some statements such as “I have told you my story, maybe you can ask the people from the informal settlement. I can organise them for you if you want; maybe they have something different to say”; “This is the side of my story but the problem is more general, I can ask my neighbours to talk to you if you want”; “Do you still need some more people to talk to? If you need more I can organise them for you”; “You must come and speak to the people from my area. When are you free? I can tell them that you are coming”.

Once participants had been identified, it was easy to establish rapport because I shared the same language with community members of Duncan Village (i.e. isiXhosa). Moreover, the disgruntlement shared by the people of Duncan Village propelled them to talk to me. As will be shown in *Chapter 5*, one reason that was cited by the participants for their eagerness to

talk to people was that they wanted their struggles to be known outside the boundaries of Buffalo City.

My own identity as a black Xhosa woman and a Wits student remained important throughout the research process. While some of the community members viewed me as a member of their community who was doing a school project that presented an opportunity to vent their frustrations, some of them saw me as more of an agent than simply a university student. They saw an opportunity in that I am at university, residing in Johannesburg, and closer to popular media documenting investigative journalism, such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) *Speak-Out* and *3rd Degree*, and ETV's *Cutting Edge*. They thought that I would be able to get their stories to be investigated too. This became an ethical challenge for me since I had explained and promised my participants that the project is not aimed at bringing any developmental changes. I had to overcome the challenge by giving my participants contact details for the television programmes so that they do it for themselves. However, the experience facilitated the quality of information that I was able to gather. Some residents of Duncan Village trusted me with their crucial information, showed me some of their confidential documents and helped me to identify influential people in BCMM, particularly in the housing department. Although the confidential information could not be used or cited for the purpose of this research as it fell outside of the agreed terms of the research, it was very useful in understanding and interpreting some of the complicated issues during data collection and the analysis stage. Furthermore, despite explaining to the participants that the project was not attached to any developmental projects, they continued to believe that my presence in their community was going to bring some developmental changes. Coincidentally, a month after leaving the fieldwork site, some residents of C-Section who have been waiting for houses for a very long time received their houses and they

attributed this to my visit. However, through our telephone conversations I tried to explain to them that this had nothing to do with my presence in their community.

2.4. Qualitative Design

The research study adopted a qualitative approach which involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, using a case study of the illegal occupations and vandalism of Mekeni houses. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to study events in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people attach to them (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As Greenstein and Sitas (2003) have noted in relation to other studies, a qualitative approach enables the researcher to attain an insider's perspective captured through a thick description of events.

2.4.1. Case study

The research study used the case study of the illegal occupations and vandalism of Mekeni houses that took place in June 2012 as a starting point to understand broader issues on service delivery, protest, and understandings of a decent life in Duncan Village and Buffalo City. A case study is based on a micro-level understanding of the phenomenon, which becomes a building block for a broader understanding (Barchiesi 2007). A case study presents an opportunity for an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon that can illuminate bigger questions. It is more focused and allows for extensive investigation of a particular case. As such, the study of the Mekeni houses was used as a building block in understanding broader issues in Duncan Village and Buffalo City.

2.4.2. Participant Observation

The process of participant observation took place from the 17th of July 2014 to the 25th of August 2014. During this period I spent six weeks living in a shack at Ford Street, Duncan Village. I was staying in a two-roomed shack with the exterior made of wood and the interior lined with cardboard (see Image 1). I stayed with a lady in her mid-thirties and her two children, a boy and a girl, twelve years and three years old respectively. This was a challenging experience because I had not lived in an informal settlement before. Living in a shack brought me into the reality of relying on a bucket system for ablution. The use of the bucket system where I stayed was central to everyday chores of our survival. The bucket was used as a toilet, for bathing and for storing water. This experience was unprecedented for me; however, at the same it was crucial in understanding the livelihoods of the informal dwellers. Throughout the fieldwork, the experience of living in a shack allowed me to understand and interpret different perspectives given by those with experiences of living in shacks and those without.

Moreover, living in an informal settlement and doing research in Duncan Village and BCMM also came with its own challenges. On some occasions I was harassed by men who demanded some sexual favours and threatened to block my access to BCMM officials. They claimed that they had the leverage and were influential and connected. Some of them claimed they were the "foot-soldiers" of the ANC in the community. To overcome this challenge, I was clear to them that I was only a student doing my research, residing temporarily in the area and I had no intentions for any sexual relationships.

However, this experience, and the threats of blocking access to BCMM officials in particular, are crucial for understanding networks of accessing the state as will be discussed in *Chapter 4*. In my case, these were the people who had helped me to access some of the officials

initially. However, after refusing to give them sexual favours they also stopped helping me. In an impoverished community like Duncan Village, such experiences are alarming particularly when thinking about the importance of local networks in accessing the state. This raised questions about the experiences of many other women who reside permanently in Duncan Village and their struggles to access the state.

However, living in Duncan Village allowed me to understand the lives of the people of Duncan Village from an insider perspective, particularly those from informal settlements. At some point, like many television viewers, I had believed that informal settlement dwellers were exaggerating the case of the bucket system as I could not be convinced at the time that people can rely on a bucket system for their entire livelihoods. The experience enabled me to understand the struggles of the informal settlement dwellers and the meanings attached to demands for a decent life. There is barely nothing like a private life in Duncan Village. The shacks are clustered and all conversations from the next-door shack can be heard clearly. There are also challenges mainly for those living with their families in a one-roomed shack. Twenty years after democracy, one would expect South Africans to have transcended boundaries of the undignified life in the townships. Drawing from these experiences, one would not be surprised to see many residents of the informal settlements taking to the streets in demand for a decent life.

2.4.3. In-depth semi-structured interviews

The first phase of in-depth interviews was conducted between 17th of July 2014 and 25th of August 2014 followed by another between 7th November 2014 and 24th November 2014. Overall, thirty-two interviews were conducted in Duncan Village and BCMM for the purpose of this research. A total of nineteen interviews were conducted with BCMM officials of which fourteen were conducted with administrators and five with ward councillors. In-depth

interviews were conducted at two levels. Firstly with key informants: people with special knowledge on the subject. Participants at this level included administrators and politicians (ward councillors) who form the structure of the BCMM. As has been indicated, participants were accessed through referrals and identification by the relevant office i.e. the office of the Manager for Housing Department. Some were accessed through door-to-door visits to relevant departments as per their ranks and duties. In-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with BCMM officials, particularly the administrators were useful in bringing in an understanding of the state in relation to protests. There were no pre-defined samples because of the difficulties associated with accessing state officials. Participants were therefore interviewed according to their availability to obtain as much information as possible.

The second level of interviews was conducted with community members of Duncan Village including former ward councillors. The purpose of these interviews was to capture the real experiences of the people of Duncan Village and their daily interactions with the state for the purpose of understanding the state-community relations and implications for service delivery. The interviews provided some insights on the variations of protests in Duncan Village and the related state responses to protests, as well as understandings of a decent life.

A total of thirteen interviews were conducted with community members of Duncan Village of which two were conducted with former councillors. All participants were given an opportunity to tell their own stories, share and reflect on their experiences as community members of Duncan Village and/or administrators of BCMM.

Of the thirty-two interviews conducted, only one was conducted in English with a non-South African international at the electricity department. Some of the interviews with administrators were conducted in a mixture of Xhosa and English and the bulk of the interviews were conducted in Xhosa because it was the preferred language. A maximum of three interviews

per day were conducted depending on the availability of participants, fatigue and exhaustion of the researcher and other unanticipated disturbances such as heavy rains. The length of interviews for community members, councillors and junior officials was between forty-five minutes to one-hour thirty minutes depending on the regulations that I had to make for the purpose of time management and the content discussed. However, those from senior officials were between thirty to forty minutes due to time constraints. Interviews with officials were conducted in their offices to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Interviews with community members were conducted in their homes for the same purpose.

2.4.4. Focus group discussions

The first phase of focus group discussions took place between 17th July 2014 and 25th of August 2014 followed by another which took place between the 7th of November 2014 and 24th of November 2014. A total of seven focus group discussions were conducted for the purpose of this research. It is important to note that when the study was proposed, the possibility of conducting focus groups was to be explored in the field considering the political sensitivity of the study. However, after spending a few days in Duncan Village, I realised that in fact focus groups were more favourable to the participants than face-to-face interviews. This was observed in cases where I started with a face-to-face interview and participants would call their neighbours to join the discussion and those interviews were turned into focus group discussions. This had implications for confidentiality promised to participants. However, most of them indicated that there was nothing confidential because these were shared struggles. This helped in facilitating access to more participants in one session that would otherwise have been used for one participant.

Noting the strengths of focus groups, they are seen as a source of empowerment since participants feel more empowered when they are in groups with other people that they share

the same experiences with (Wengraf 2003; Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Neuman 1997). However, there are also limitations associated with focus groups. Group dynamics are one of the weaknesses associated with focus group discussions. For example, in a focus group conducted with members of Eduze formal and informal settlements, group dynamics were noted. The participant from the formal settlement could not raise the claims about her experiences with the people of the informal settlement, an issue that many residents from the formal parts raised in face-to-face interviews. To redress this dynamic, I had to return to the participant for a follow up interview. Another dynamic that was noted was the age variation of the participants. When commenting on general issues of service delivery in Duncan Village, the young man from the backyard kept on saying, "I will wait for the elders to speak first and I will comment after". His comments were always more of an affirmation of what has been already said. To overcome this obstacle, I changed and asked questions that were concerning young people in order to capture the responses of the young man independent from the views of the elderly. Although there were such dynamics in some of the groups, this was not the case in the groups where participants came from the same setting. This experience had implications on understandings of the dynamics between the people from the formal and those from informal parts of Duncan Village (see Chapter 3).

2.4.5. Document analysis

The process of data gathering also included an analysis of institutional and mass media documents concerning Duncan Village, Buffalo City Metro and South Africa at large. Corbetta (2003: 287) argues that documents provide information about any given phenomena that exist outside of the influence of the researcher. The documents used were important for providing information that was not accessed through interviews or participant observation. This offered a different perspective on the study of Duncan Village and BCMM. Some of

these documents contained factual information as provided by institutions such as the Integrated Development Plan (2014/15) for BCMM; the Metro's Voice and the South African Constitution. Mass media included among other documents the local newspaper, the *Daily Dispatch* and other media reports. These documents were also useful for understanding some of the historical aspects of Duncan Village that were relevant to the study. However, as Corbetta (2003:306) has noted, institutional documents present the views of the institutions and what they want to be known to the public. Similarly, mass media documents also represent the views of the journalists writing the story who also have their own social and cultural biases. Therefore, great care was taken during the reading and analysis of these documents such that arguments made based on them were not presented as the concrete truth.

2.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity was very important for the purpose of this research. Kathryn Haynes in Symon and Cassell (2012) define reflexivity as:

> …an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcome (Haynes 2012:72).

Reflexivity in the study of protests in Duncan Village was critical given the subjective nature of the qualitative study; the real experiences of Duncan Village gained through participant observation; the political nature and sensitivity of the study of protests; and the fact the that I am a community member of broader East London. This led to a constant reflection on my actions, my position as a community member and as a Wits Masters student conducting research in Duncan Village and Buffalo City.

While identification with the community enabled ease of access and establishing rapport, it was important to separate that relationship from one's position as a researcher. However, there were some challenges that I faced in dealing with reflexivity due to my experience of living in a shack. This led to critical engagements with BCMM officials who were speaking from the position of the state and in some cases blaming shack dwellers for having high demands. In some cases I had to ask them if they had ever experienced living in a shack at any point of their lives. However, I had to make sure that my questions did not influence the responses of participants by not taking sides in the discussion.

The other important factor on reflexivity relates to re-writing and interpreting the narrator's story. Through the write-up process of this report the material presented has been carefully selected for the purpose of answering the research question informing the project. Furthermore, the arguments presented in this report are informed by interpretations of the stories of the participants where I attempt to create meanings out of their interviews that might not have been referring to the same thing or explaining the same phenomena. In trying to retain the agency of participants, while balancing with re-writing and translation of the narrators' stories, I have tried by all means not to represent the views and voices of the participants while telling their stories as captured by the recorder. However, there were challenges associated with translation given the fact that most of the interviews were conducted in Xhosa. The following section discusses issues related to translation.

2.6. Language translation

As has been indicated in the previous section, only one interview was entirely conducted in English and in this case there were no problems of translation encountered. Conducting interviews in Xhosa enabled the establishment of rapport with participants. It also allowed

participants to express themselves fully as they were comfortable with using their own language.

However, there were some challenges associated with conducting research interviews in a native language. The first challenge was that during the transcribing phase all interviews had to be translated to English to allow other readers to understand the content of the research report. Translating interviews from Xhosa to English was time consuming because I had to listen to the recorded tapes several times to be able to make sense of the content and to make sure that I put the right words into context. The second challenge was that in some cases it was difficult to find precise English words that could directly replace Xhosa words with the same meaning. It is important to note that if some of the phrases are removed from the context, they also change the meaning of the whole sentence. In grappling with the difficulties of translation, where there were huge differences between Xhosa and English words, and where Xhosa words had an embedded meaning that could mean something different when removed from the context, I have used Xhosa words and provided some footnotes to translate and explain. For example some of the words such as *isiqiki*, *igali/amagali*, *inzalelwane*, and *abantu bokufika* (see Chapter 3 for translations) are presented in Xhosa to retain the embedded meaning of the words as used in Duncan Village and East London at large. The following section discusses methods used for data analysis.

2.7. Analysis

All interview and focus group material collected for the purposes of this research project was transcribed through the process of playing, pausing to listen and replaying of the recorded tapes to turn audio data into readable transcripts. Once the data had been transcribed, transcripts were read several times to make sense of the data in relation to the research question and to come up with some relevant themes. As informed by Mouton (1996: 161),

there are two stages in qualitative data analysis. Firstly, the collected bulk of data was condensed into manageable proportions and secondly, I identified some recurring patterns and themes.

2.7.1. Thematic analysis

Interview transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly for the purpose of identifying recurring themes and patterns. The data was coded to come up with various concepts and themes. During the coding phase similarities and differences were noted for the purpose of coming up with a coherent argument. Some interview excerpts that were going to be used as evidence to support some arguments made in the research report were also extracted. Throughout the analysis process, I constantly kept in mind reflexivity in relation to my position as a researcher to make sure that my cultural values and research experiences did not influence the kind of the material selected and the interpretation of the data presented.

2.8. Ethical considerations

During the course of data collection I had to abide by the ethical standards of the University of the Witwatersrand, Buffalo City Municipality and Duncan Village community. I ensured that the study did not involve any fraudulent activities and maintained honesty by reporting real data, methods, procedures and findings without bias in research design, data review, analysis, and interpretation (Babbie and Mouton 2001). The purpose of the study was fully explained to participants and I ensured that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time when they felt uncomfortable. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were dealt with accordingly as indicated in the previous sections.

2.9. Limitations of the study

The study was limited by time constraints. Given that this is a Masters Research report which combined course work and a research report, there was limited time to conduct a full research study. I spent only two months on fieldwork. Although considerable data was collected, I had to carefully select the data to be accommodated in a Masters Research report. Furthermore, with delayed access to BCMM officials, I had to schedule interviews in such a way that they could fit in the time frame that I had. This had implications on the quality of the data collected because some of the interviews were long and there was not enough resting and processing time in between interviews. This posed some challenges due to fatigue, lack of reflection time and lack of concentration. Nonetheless, all interviews were recorded and I returned to them at a later stage.

Furthermore, six weeks of participant observation cannot really claim a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Duncan Village. While I had an opportunity to taste how it feels to live in an informal settlement, all experiences were not captured because I only experienced one season and one part of Duncan Village (i.e. Ford Street). I believe that an extended stay in Duncan Village coupled with a rotation of settlements was going to yield different data therefore different findings. While the methodology chosen seems appropriate for the study, I am aware of the limitations of using a qualitative approach since results cannot be generalised. I am also aware of the subjectivity of a qualitative study in the design of the study, the process of data collection and interpretation and analysis of the findings due to some existing cultural deposits (Corbetta 2003; Babbie and Mouton 2001; Mouton 1996). Furthermore, the findings of the study cannot be representative or generalised to other townships beyond Duncan Village.

CHAPTER 3

Differentiated citizenship and contested claims of belonging

1.1. Introduction

In *Chapter 1* I presented a background to the study of protests in Duncan Village. I have tried to show how some of the grievances of the protesters have continued from the apartheid state, have gone through different waves of protests and how they are relevant in contemporary South Africa. In *Chapter 2* I presented research methods that have been used for gathering data for this project. In this chapter, I develop the argument raised in *Chapter 1* that community protests can be understood as a struggle for a decent life. Duncan Village as a black township falls within the category of the marginalised groups across South Africa because of its history and present realities. However, the relationship between residents of the formal and those of the informal settlements reflect that contestation over scarce state resources may lead to fragmentations in a society. As has been noted in *Chapter 1*, in Duncan Village most of the informal settlements were established through forceful occupations of open spaces. As a result, there is no clear separation between formal and informal parts of Duncan Village.

In understanding the establishment of informal settlements and the demand for basic services, I draw from the concept 'insurgent citizenship' developed by James Holston (2008) in his book *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil.* Holston (2008) argues that in Brazil there has emerged a generation of insurgent citizens that has democratised access to urban space and "created an unprecedented access to resources…" (Holston 2008:271). According to Holston (2008), insurgence "describes a process that is an acting counter, counterpolitics, that destabilizes the present and renders it fragile…" (Holston 2008:34). It is a form of an insurgence that begins with the struggle for rights and dignified

life characterised by acts of reclaiming land and services (ibid.). Drawing from this concept and developing my own understanding of the forceful occupations of land and demand for state services in Duncan Village, in this chapter I argue that the establishment of the informal settlement itself is a struggle for a place in the urban city. Mobilization within informal settlements to demand that the government provide basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation is a struggle for basic rights, and therefore a struggle for citizenship in Buffalo City. Taking cognisance that this was not a smooth process since informal settlement dwellers have been facing evictions from the apartheid and the post-apartheid state, the fact that they have now been recognised for upgrading, makes me characterise the process as a form of insurgent citizenship that struggles for a decent life.

In the foreword of the volume of the *Informal Settlements: A Perpetual Challenge?* Marie Huchzermeyer and Aly Karam (2006) noted:

> Informal settlements are a shameful feature of poverty and inherited inequalities in South Africa. [They are defined] as 'settlements of the urban poor developed through the unauthorised occupation of land' [and] they are regarded by many as unhealthy and overcrowded blights on the urban landscape 'squatter camps' in common parlance (Huchzermeyer and Karam 2006:vii).

Also writing on the emergence of Orange Farm in Johannesburg, Prishani Naidoo noted that squatter camps emerged as a result of the black and homeless poor people moving closer to the city for economic reasons (Naidoo 2010: 239). Even though residents of Duncan Village have managed to establish their stronghold in urban areas, this has not taken away the "shameful feature" of informal settlements associated with forms of poverty (Huchzermeyer and Karam 2006: vii). Moreover, because of their association with being poor and homelessness, informal settlements remain a degraded space for many. In Duncan Village, people living in informal settlements have been accorded a low status by some of the

residents from the formal parts. It is through these lenses of poverty and destitution that they are viewed by fellow community members and some of the BCMM officials.

Drawing from my own observations of the physical and social conditions of Duncan Village, use of language, and interviews conducted, I argue in this chapter that the very status of being excluded/informal/illegal has led to the marginalisation of residents of the informal parts of Duncan Village by fellow community members and some of the state representatives. This has led to the fragmentation of the community, also posing challenges for organising and mobilising struggles for common goods. In response to the forms of informality, residents from the informal parts have challenged their forms of exclusion by fighting for a place in Duncan Village. Taking on to the streets to demand basic services is one way in which they have demanded to be included as full citizens in Duncan Village.

The remaining part of this chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I present what I have called The *Making of Isiqiki*, deploying the concept of *insurgent citizenship* to demonstrate how residents of informal Duncan Village have fought for inclusion in the city of East London. The second part presents what has been developed from an understanding of Holston's (2008) concept of *differentiated citizenship.* In this section I try to show divisions among community members of Duncan Village, particularly between the formal and informal parts, but also among the residents of the informal parts themselves. I conclude this chapter by arguing that divisions and contestations of citizenship among residents of Duncan Village reveal a certain understanding of the state and service delivery at a local level.

3.2. The Making of *Isiqiki* – Insurgent Citizenship

Forceful occupations of land and making demands for basic services through protest actions are some of the ways in which residents from the informal parts of Duncan Village have

fought to be recognised as full citizens in East London. Where the apartheid government had said there is no place for blacks in the urban areas of East London and attempted to move them to Mdantsane, residents of Duncan Village have resisted to be excluded from the economic opportunities, and forcefully occupied some open spaces. Furthermore, in the post-apartheid era where the BCMM has claimed that there is no land for settling people, residents of Duncan Village (some of them returning from Mdantsane and some frustrated of renting in the backyards) have forcefully occupied some open pieces of land in the area to create their own settlements/*isiqiki*. As has been noted by Bank (1999), with the escalation of resistance, the homeless people reclaimed open spaces where there were structures demolished by the apartheid government and established some informal settlements (Bank 1999:404). This is a form of insurgency in that both the apartheid and post-apartheid governments have tried to control squatting but it seems informal settlements are becoming permanent structures for housing the poor in Duncan Village.

In an interview, one of the councillors explained how some of the people of Duncan Village resisted forced removals by the apartheid state and established their permanency in Duncan Village:

> But at the same time, shacks mushroomed during the height of the struggle. It was sort of defiance…Everything changed during the height of the struggle in the 1980s where people were introducing people's power so we were doing everything for ourselves… It was our struggle like any other place. For us it was an "anti-removal struggle", we were supposed to be removed from this place in 1985; they made it worse in 1985. There was a call from the ANC abroad that we were following to render the country "ungovernable" and apartheid "unworkable" and we started with anti-removals because we were supposed to be moved to Mdantsane. We resisted but at a cost, we lost over 30 people and had massive funerals in 1985 (Interview with Councillor #1, 04/08/2014).

According to this interview, the focus was to render the whole system of apartheid "ungovernable". However, in Duncan Village, they had to start with an immediate problem

confronting them: an attempt by the apartheid state to drive them away from the economic opportunities in the city centre. In most of the interviews conducted in Duncan Village and BCMM, the main reason that was cited for resistance was that Mdantsane is far from the city centre and it was going to be difficult for the people to survive once they had been moved. Central to the notion of resistance is the continued struggle for a right to the urban city, a struggle for being a citizen of Duncan Village and to maximise chances of accessing economic opportunities presented by the close proximity of the township to the city centre.

However, resistance to forced removals was not only unique in Duncan Village. It was a common trend across the country. In a volume edited by Gavin Maasdorp and A.S.B. Humphreys - *From Shantytown to Township* (1975), Maasdorp and Ellison give a detailed account of the attempts by the apartheid government to demolish the Cato Manor Emergency Camp. They argue that the apartheid officials were met with some considerable resistance during the early stages of the removal programme. While a large number of illegals saw the removal as a deprivation of economic opportunities in Durban, many of those who were in the informal sector saw it as a threat to their livelihoods and survival means through their established networks. Moreover, residents of Cato Manor were sceptical of the prospects of increased costs of living from high rents and transport costs posed by being far from the business centre (Maasdorp and Ellison 1975:62). Despite these forms of resistance in Cato Manor, Maasdorp and Ellison state that the camp was finally cleared in 1964 (ibid.). Unlike in the example of Cato Manor, some residents of Duncan Village managed to resist forced removals persistently. However, similarly, the residents of Duncan village also refused to be moved away from the city due to fears of being denied economic opportunities. One participant interviewed commenting on refusal to be moved to Reeston noted:

> …we refused to be moved by the apartheid government to Mdantsane. How can we be moved by own government to Reeston? We are not employed, we rely on piece jobs and there

> are no white people to give us washing jobs in Reeston. It is too far, we cannot even afford the transport (Interview with Aphindile, 23/11/2014).

Through forceful occupations of land and demanding services using protest actions and petitions, residents of Duncan Village informal settlement have managed to push for their recognition as BCMM was compelled to provide basic services in the informal settlement to meet basic rights of residents despite their illegal existence. As Holston notes, in Brazil the conditions of illegality forced the Brazilian poor to forge new relations which opened avenues for civic participation and the demand for their full citizenship rights. These conditions allowed marginalised citizens of Brazil to mobilise and demand to be legal citizens (through claims of land and provision of services) in the city that had expelled them in the very same language of illegality (Holston 2008:8-9). In Duncan Village residents of the informal parts have grabbed the land, established their settlements, and protested to be provided with basic services. One councillor interviewed explained how the municipality is compelled to provide services to the informal parts of Duncan Village:

> …with this thing of informal people can just build for themselves; they are using force to build in some areas. Then as a result the government has to provide services because people are already there - water, toilets, and currently we are giving them electricity so that at least they have basic services/needs. However, they did not wait for the government to do that [give them land], they do it by force and some of them overnight…the motive behind [electrification of shacks] is that the community must get services where they are as the government is delaying to build houses for them. That does not mean that we can take away their right to basic services in terms of electricity because we are the ones who are failing them in terms of providing them with proper houses and we cannot do that to all of them at once, but we are trying our best (Interview, Councillor #2, 04/08/2014).

According to the view of this councillor, the new South African constitution has made some provisions for a right to basic services. This entails that wherever there are people, the state has to provide basic services to them to honour that basic right. In this interview, the

Councillor revealed that BCMM had to give residents electricity because the state is delaying the process of housing delivery. One BCMM official commenting on the electrification of shacks also expressed the concern of the state for its citizens. He noted:

> Unemployment is there but electricity elevates the standards of living. If residents have electricity, it is a way of bettering their lives because even the shacks become warm (Interview with Ayanda, 13/11/2014).

A reading of these interviews would mean that BCMM takes the responsibility of giving residents of informal Duncan Village electricity because it is their right to have electricity and that the municipality is aiming at improving the lives of its people thereby moving the people towards the realisation of a decent life.

Critical to these two interviews is the realisation that there are people in informal settlements, therefore the state has to provide basic services to them. However, the interviews do not tell us anything about access to those services given that electricity is provided through pre-paid metres. Richard Pithouse writing on the service delivery myth (in South Africa) reminds us that "the number of electricity and water connections that have been installed tells us nothing about whether people can afford these services" (Pithouse 2011:6). Likewise, the electrification of shacks in Duncan Village does not mean that everyone has access to those basic services. This would mean that the struggle of informal settlement dwellers does not end with having the local state providing services. It is also a question of accessing the provisional services which are available but not accessible to everyone. Interestingly, this shifts us to a question of affordability rather than accessibility.

However, in the struggles to attain a decent life realised through unlimited access to basic services, residents of the informal Duncan Village have to find alternative strategies which are understood to be forms of insurgency in this context. Evidence from Duncan Village and Buffalo City reveals that the decision to electrify shacks did not come only from residents

demanding electricity and the state providing services to its people as a basic right. In fact, BCMM resorted to electrifying shacks as a result of the pressure coming from the people from the informal settlements. The BCMM resorted to electrifying shacks after realising that in addition to illegal connections, residents from the informal settlements had resorted to targeting rate payers. In an interview with one of the residents from the formal parts of Duncan Village, one resident captured general concerns about illegal connections of services:

> Our main challenge is the issue of electricity and water. We pay for water and electricity but we have people coming from *esiqikini* to fetch water from our yards… They go to the danger[6]; they dig and illegally connect their lines and keep their houses alight while ours are dark. Some people end up giving up on lighting and allow people from *esiqikini* to have lights…Sometimes they [people of the informal] may even confront you for not buying your electricity or not lighting your own place because they also want to use the electricity (Interview with Olwethu: 18/07/2014).

In another interview, the councillor who had initially said that the municipality does not have a choice but has to provide services to the informal settlements (as quoted above) also expressed concerns regarding illegal connections:

> Now people are demanding this basic need of electricity by stealing from the rate payers of electricity. Now we have a challenge of many complaints from rate payers. Also as the municipality we are using the budget for things that we never budgeted for like fixing lines and substations that are being damaged because of the capacity that they carry yet they were not made for many people. The lines constantly get burnt (Interview, Councillor #2, 04/08/2014).

While the ward councillor had initially presented a view that it is the duty of the state to provide services in the informal settlement, in this interview he reveals that BCMM had no choice but to respond to the challenges faced by both the state and rate payers. What is important in these interviews is a realisation of alternative strategies used by residents of the

[6] The main electricity box that supplies electricity to the whole community. It is where people from the shacks connect their houses illegally. They continue to use electricity that they are not paying for.

informal settlements to access basic services that they are excluded from. By stealing from those who are realised by the state as citizens, i.e. rate payers to whom basic services have been provided, residents of the informal settlement are challenging their exclusion from proper citizenship based on illegality.

This can also be understood as mobilisation within a political society by the marginalised. Chatterjee (2004) noted the same challenges faced by electricity companies in India. He argues that persistent theft of electricity has led to a recognition of illegal squatters as legitimate consumers and they have negotiated collective rental arrangements with the entire squatter settlement in Bengal (Chatterjee 2004:57). While this can be seen as successful mobilisation within a political society in Duncan Village, the only difference is that in Duncan Village the struggle does not end with bringing legal electricity to the informal settlements. However, the continuous use of illegal connections despite having legal electricity connected to the informal settlements reflects their struggles for a decent life which is understood to be free access to basic services.

Importantly, while BCMM officials argued that they had to electrify shacks because they aimed at improving the standards of living, residents of informal parts of Duncan Village have differing views on the project of the electrification of shacks. Since the electricity is pre-paid, to them it is another strategy by the state to indirectly force them to pay for services.

> In a focus group discussion, some residents of an informal settlement rejected the idea that their shacks are electrified so that they their standards of life will be improved. They say they are improving our lives, how? How are they doing so because we are supposed to pay for this [electricity]? In fact to us there is no dignity in staying in an electrified shack while I have to stand the whole night getting rid of water in rainy seasons. We will only think about paying for this electricity when we have proper houses (Focus Group Discussion #3, 02/08/2014).



Image 2: C Section community stand-pipe and shacks that are illegally connected to electricity. Photo taken by Patricia Ndlovu -10/08/2014

Image 2 portrays some of the conditions that some residents of Duncan Village live under, and illegal connections to electricity. For some of the residents of Duncan Village, there is no dignity in having their shacks electrified, yet they live under precarious conditions. Residents noted that it is difficult to control people to keep community taps clean. Illegal connections also make them live in fear that they their shacks can burn down at any time. In a focus group discussion one participant noted that:

> We are not safe here. These shacks can burn at any time. They burn at least twice or three times a year…because of these illegal connections and people who leave their stoves unattended. Our children can be sick at any time as you can see that this environment is not clean and no one can control people *esiqikini*. We want proper houses, that is only then they [the government] will say our lives are being improved (Focus Group Discussion #4, 10/08/2014).

The dangers associated with living in shacks are also captured by Bank (2005). In his work on backyards in East London, Bank (2005:7) argues that freestanding shacks are dangerous particularly because of overcrowding and the flammable material used in their construction. This realisation therefore poses questions on the improvement of the life standards as imagined by some of the state representatives. If shacks are already dangerous as they stand, one would wonder how electrification vis-a-vis moving people to safer shelters would improve the standard of life. As will be shown in *Chapter 4*, residents of Duncan Village

have their own conceptions of a decent life characterised by proper housing and free access to basic water and electricity. The fact that state services are provided to those sections that are understood to be legal while those seen as illegal are being excluded has created contestations for full citizenship in Duncan Village characterised by equal distribution of, and access to state resources. The following section discusses contestations for citizenship in Duncan Village.

3.3. Contestations of Belonging and a Right to Services

As noted in *Chapter 1*, the use of the word 'citizen' in Brazil indicated distance, anonymity, and uncommon ground. For Holston, citizenship is "a measure of differences and a means of distancing people from one another. It reminds people of what they are not – even though paradoxically, they are themselves citizens…" (Holston 2008:5). For Holston this is a *Differentiated Citizenship* because "it is based on differentiating and not equating kinds of citizens" (ibid.). This kind of differentiating citizens considers that the 'other' deserves the negative side of the law through humiliation and not protection of rights. Holston notes that this notion is perfectly expressed in the Brazilian maxim "for friends, everything; for enemies the law" (Holston 2008:5). Holston therefore concludes that the conception of differentiated citizenship is meant to distribute inequality (ibid.), such that there is a notion of the excluded 'other'.

A related conception of citizenship is presented by Chatterjee (2004). He argues that there are difficulties associated with marking claims to the state for the marginalised population groups because their existence is grounded in violations of law. Their claim-making cannot be consistent with the pursuit of equal citizenship as they are already conceived as the 'illegal other' (Chatterjee 2004:65). For Chatterjee this would mean that those that have violated the law to establish their settlements cannot pursue their struggle for citizenship within a civil

society because they are already regarded as illegal populations. In order to expand their freedoms they have to successfully mobilise within a political society. In the case study of Duncan Village, the notion of differentiated citizenship is relevant where a certain group of residents sees themselves as a group that deserves to benefit from the state because they are the 'rightful citizens' while the 'other' group does not deserve to benefit because they are not 'rightful citizens' of Duncan Village. This is the division between residents of the formal parts seen as the legal citizens and those who are in the informal parts who have violated the law by establishing informal settlements, therefore understood to be illegal citizens.

The story of Duncan Village is characterised by strong claims of belonging. This relates to the struggle of resistance against forced removals in the 1980s; places where people were born and raised; and the number of years they have lived in Duncan Village. When interviewing the people of Duncan Village, before telling their story, they start by taking you back to their history explaining how their present and their future are connected to their history. Narratives such as "*I was born and bred in Duncan Village and now I'm 58 years old…*"; "*I arrived here in 1976…"; "My parents have lived in this place as early as the 1950s and I was also born and grew up here*"; "*We arrived in this settlement in 1984 and since then we have been waiting…"* are common with the residents of Duncan Village. They describe their situation in Duncan Village in relation to how life has changed over the years, how much they have waited for the state to provide houses for them, and in terms of which groups of people are more eligible for certain services and must be prioritised by the state.

These ideas of belonging and the related forged identities have divided the Duncan Village community and made residents believe that some groups of people have a right to claim services more than others. They have reinforced the ideas of different forms of exclusion and criminalisation of the 'other' and generalisation of all negative aspects about the 'other'. As a result, some residents from the formal parts of Duncan Village see those from the informal

parts (and also divisions within the informal) as secondary citizens who do not belong to Duncan Village and undeserving of any services from Buffalo City. As one participant from the formal parts noted in an interview:

> You see, we have been here for a very long time. My parents lived here in the 1950s, I was also born here and now my children are old. Do you see this place [pointing to an informal settlement in front of her house] There were no people here; we used to use this place for our gardens. Now it's full, dirty and overcrowded. What I hate with these people is that they steal: our electricity, our water, and our toilets! In fact, they do not belong here. They were not here when we fought against evictions from this place. They were enjoying life in their rural areas hearing about the shootings from the news. Now they come here, municipality – water, municipality – toilets, municipality – this and that…now they want electricity and they steal from us. They must go! I don't know why the municipality is keeping them here (Interview with Olwethu, 18/07/2014).

Another participant from the formal houses commenting on the illegal occupations of Mekeni houses also expressed her concerns about certain groups of people not deserving services.

> I am surprised because the people who occupied these houses are not even supposed to be getting houses from this place. It is so sad because people died fighting for Duncan Village. That is why you see this place is even called Duncan Village Proper. These people from *esiqikini* have just arrived here in Duncan Village and now they claim that they have been waiting for houses for long. All these spaces were empty, they have just arrived (Interview with Phakamile, 26/07/2014).

From these interviews, one gets the ideas of differentiated citizenship and hierarchies of citizenship reinforced through labelling the 'other' for the purpose of inclusion and exclusion. There is also a generalisation of the 'other' with negativity for the purpose of justifying exclusion. For some residents from the formal parts of Duncan Village, people from the informal parts are the 'other', they did not participate in the struggle for forced removals, they are 'new' in Duncan Village, therefore they do not deserve services from the municipality.

The idea of claiming belonging to, and ownership of a place in relation to the numbers of years and associated struggles is not only unique in Duncan Village. In the study of reclaimers at Marie Louise dump, Melanie Samson (2012) observed similar identities that were forged in relation to claims of belonging, nationality and the discovery of, and the struggle to secure the dump as a means of controlling and justifying the shift system. According to Samson, South African reclaimers claimed the ownership of the dump because they discovered it and fought against evictions by the municipality to secure it (Samson 2012:152). These claims at Marie Louise have been used to determine the shift system such that the newcomers or *mafikizolos* are allocated the least beneficial shift, i.e. the afternoon shift. (Samson 2012:152). In Duncan Village most of the people who live in formal houses make strong claims about ownership of, and belonging to Duncan Village. Most importantly, these struggles emerge over contestations of access to scarce resources. At Marie Louise, contestations are over the shift system of which the morning one was understood to be more beneficial than the afternoon shift that was usually allocated to Zimbabweans and other South Africans who arrived after the struggle for securing the dump. In Duncan Village contestations are over scarce state resources such that those from informal settlements are seen as undeserving to benefit from development programmes since they are not regarded as citizens.

The differentiation of citizens, labelling them as the 'other' usually comes with stereotypes that reinforce different forms of exclusion. The different forms of labelling that reinforce forms of exclusion have also been documented by Segatti, Hoag and Vigneswaran (2012). Writing on reforms on the migration management within the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Segatti et al. (2012:138) argue, "by spatialising, dehumanising, criminalising, or pathogenising immigrants", the DHA officials reinforce ideas of migrants as dangerous figures. These ideas have led to the very creation of the Refugee Office in the bushes,

assumptions that immigrants are guilty until proven innocent and that officials have to take precaution in dealing with immigrants as they might be having contagious diseases (ibid.).

In Duncan Village some residents claim that the idea of excluding people of the informal settlements from services is also shared by some of the BCMM officials. In a focus group discussion, residents claimed that the then Housing Portfolio Head once spoke about development for the 'born and bred' using the word *inzalelwane* in public.

> Nomiki Mgezi does not know how to take back that word now [*inzalelwane*] because she said it in a public meeting at Gompo Hall that those houses are for *inzalelwane* so people from the shacks should not make noise about them" (Focus Group Discussion #2, 24/07/2014).

One former councillor also expressed his concern about development for the people of the informal settlements.

> The problem is more sensitive because there are people like me. In 1990 people came to build on the open spaces and the government is now prioritising those that arrived in 1990 neglecting those who were born and bred in this particular area. Of the people who were born here, no one got a single house not even in Heaven Hills. Also the government is going to build houses in the Competition Site[7], not forgetting that the shacks are still mushrooming. Those houses are being built for people from those areas who only arrived in 1990 forgetting the people who were born and bred here and do not have opportunities to become housing beneficiaries (Interview with Former Councillor #2, 04/08/2014).

From the two interviews it can be noted how the idea of prioritising certain groups for service delivery can be reinforced at different levels. It can be claimed that there is a general consensus among residents of formal parts and some of the state representatives that development should focus on legal citizens and not those who are considered to be illegal.

However, the frustrations of the people from the formal parts are also understood. As noted by Bank (2005:6), housing and planning policies tend to view backyard shacks as forms

[7] Area 8 Squatter Camp

'transitional housing' that are expected to disappear as housing development takes place. Furthermore, prioritisation of informal settlements upgrading programmes "ignores the fact that backyard shacks pre-date apartheid and their existence was one of the major reasons for the creation of apartheid townships in the first place" (Bank 2005:6). It is against this background that the current contestations of belonging and access to state services can be understood in Duncan Village. Residents from the formal parts feel left out in housing development programmes while priority is given to the people from the informal settlements.

The divisions and exclusions therefore lead to fragmentation of a community that is generally excluded from the civil society making it difficult to mobilise for a decent life even within a political society. Community fragmentation in Duncan Village is revealed through observations of how residents from the formal and informal parts of Duncan Village interact. It is also embedded in the use of language by community members and some of the state representatives. This fragmentation is spelt out through labels such as *inzalelwane* (born and bred), *isiqiki* (informal settlement) or *abantu bokufika* (new comers). While words such as *inzalelwane* or the 'born and bred' are meant to include certain groups while excluding others, words such as *abantu bokufika* and *isiqiki* are derogatory because they carry negative meanings with them as will be explained below. The following section discusses identities that have been forged in Duncan Village in relation to the distribution of state resources.

3.3.1. Inzalelwane – the born and bred

Inzalelwane is a Xhosa word that means someone who has been born and grew up at particular place. It generally carries a very strong meaning of belonging and attachment to a particular place as it means that someone 'really' belongs to that place and is well known because they have been born and bred there. In Duncan Village this word carries a very strong meaning particularly to the people of the formal parts and mostly those at the

backyards as they are regarded to be the children (but not all of them since there are also those who are renting) of the homeowners. Claims of being *inzalelwane* are based on that some residents were there when the township was first established by the apartheid government. They have also resisted forced removals and many lives were lost in the struggle, hence their generation has always been there. They belong to Duncan Village. Some residents from the informal settlements claim that the word *inzalelwane* has been used mainly by residents of the formal parts and some of the BCMM officials such as the ward councillors for the purpose of including and excluding certain groups from services. In a focus group interview conducted with residents of an informal settlement, participants accused the former councillors of using the word *inzalelwane* to exclude them from benefiting from community services.

> The former councillor divided this place so bitterly. He caused a lot of hatred among residents. There are words such as *inzalelwane* that are being used whenever there is a housing development project or when there are food parcels. As for us [residents of the informal], we are simply told that we must wait because these services are meant for *inzalelwane* of this place. So now we know that *inzalelwane* have to get first before we get anything (Focus Group Discussion #2, 24/07/2014).

Another resident from the formal parts of Duncan Village also noted how the word *inzalelwane* has been used to divide the community and to prioritise people from the formal parts in service delivery. He noted that:

> …the previous councillor divided this community so badly. There are words such as *inzalelwane*, what is that? How can you say to your community you are giving these people food parcels and not those ones simply because they are in a squatter camp? (Interview with Mzwandile, 02/08/2014).

In another interview, one former councillor also mentioned the word *inzalelwane* and when he was asked to reflect on the meaning of the word he also noted how the word has been used to divide the community, and to prioritise other groups for service delivery.

> It means that people were born and bred and we are rejecting that thing. The name was used to divide people such that as an outsider you are not supposed to benefit, the people who have to benefit are *inzalelwane*. And people are very angry about the use of that word. They have said that the police will not stop them, if they do not get the answer [on why the word *inzalelwane* is being used against them] they will call JZ [Jacob Zuma] to come and answer to this issue (Interview with Former Councillor #2, 10/11/2014).

From these interviews we get a sense that the word *inzalelwane* is used to include and also to exclude other people from benefiting in service delivery. Moreover, accusations of the use of the word *inzalelwane* by the former councillor cannot be taken as a concrete truth. However, they shed some light on the use of the word by some of the state officials, including the one mentioned in the previous interview. Although there was not much evidence on the use of the word by residents from the formal parts, most residents of the informal interviewed claimed that the word *inzalelwane* is commonly used by residents of the formal parts in meetings. One participant said:

> …they call themselves *inzalelwane*. Every time when a person from the informal raises a point at the meetings you will hear them saying that what is he/she talking about? They must keep quiet and let the owners of this place [*inzalelwane*] speak. They are the newcomers [*abantu bokufika*] they can't tell us anything (Interview with Aphindile, 23/11/2014).

Notably, from the interview with the former councillor, we also get a sense of rejection of the use of the word *inzalelwane* for the purpose of exclusion. In fact, while some of the residents of informal Duncan Village are aware of the fact that they are excluded based on claims that they are the newcomers, they reject the idea of being excluded. They contest their place in Duncan Village by arguing that living in informal settlements did not mean that they had just arrived in Duncan Village. The following section explores some of the contestations about being newcomers.

3.3.2. Abantu bokufika – new comers

The word *abantu bokufika* literally means people who have just arrived and not originally from a particular place. It carries a notion of being a stranger or that of newness. It is important to note the idea of a newcomer is not new in Duncan Village. Writing on migrant cultures and identities from the 1950s, Leslie Bank also noted the use of the word newcomer used as "*nyuwana*" or 'new one' in relation to hostel occupants in East London (Bank 1999: 397). In Duncan Village the word a*bantu bokufika* is mainly used in relation to *inzalelwane* as it is used to distinguish *abantu bokufika* from *inzalelwane*, those who have always been there from those who have just arrived. Most of the people in the informal parts of Duncan Village are referred to as *abantu bokufika* with an assumption that when the apartheid government allocated people houses and when the people fought against forced removals to Mdantsane they were not there, therefore they have just arrived. Although there is an element of truth in these assumptions because some of the shacks in the informal settlements are fairly new, a close reading of these assumptions reveals a sense of ignorance of the very history of forced removals on which claims of *inzalelwane* are based. In fact, the mushrooming of shacks in Duncan Village also contributed to forced removals, meaning that there were already people in the informal settlements when the removals happened. As one participant noted in an interview:

> They always say we are newcomers in this place. I don't know what they mean because as for me if you ask about my mother the whole of Duncan Village, everyone knows her. She was very popular during the struggle. I am living here [informal settlement] because when people were moved to Mdantsane she did not have a house, but she always fought and she never went [to Mdantsane]. She continued with the struggle. When I was born we were renting and my mother got tired of the landlords and that is how we moved to this informal settlement (Interview with Nwabisa, 16/11/2014).

Capturing the elements of heterogeneity of the informal settlement dwellers, one of the former councillors interviewed said, "The other thing you have to understand is that most of the people in shacks are from rural areas, but not all of them, some of them were already here during the struggle" (Interview with Former Councillor #2, 10/11/2014). Although residents of informal Duncan Village reject the idea of being called *abantu bokufika* for the purpose of excluding them from services and continue to fight for their place in Duncan Village, there are also negative perceptions attached to their place of residence, i.e. informal settlements/squatter camp/*isiqiki*. The following section explores meanings and perceptions attached to the informal settlements.

3.3.3. Isiqiki/esiqikini – an informal settlement or a place where there are shacks

The word *isiqiki* refers to a patch of land or a bush. It is usually used in relation to un- cleared bushes. *Esiqikini* means a place where there is a piece of un-cleared land. In Duncan Village the words *isiqiki* or *esiqikini* usually carry negative connotations and they are derogatory. The people of Duncan Village refer to informal settlements or a place where there are shacks as *isiqiki* or *esiqikini*. They accord a lower status to the people residing *esiqikini* because it is a place that has been known as an open land used by people for their gardens or as a dump site. As Huchzermeyer and Karam have noted, informal settlements are always regarded as dirty and overcrowded (2006: vii).

With the mushrooming of informal settlements, *isiqiki*/*esiqikini* has been associated with homeless and poor people, a place of destitution. They are also generally seen as a place of illegality from the perspective of the state. However, as much as the people from *esiqikini* are rejecting the claims that they are newcomers in Duncan Village, they also reject claims that they are staying at *esiqikini* because they are poor. One participant interviewed, commenting on the relationship between the people of the formal and those of the informal parts noted:

> …we used to tell them [people from formal houses] that they must not call us destitute, they must never insult us. We told them that we cannot be insulted by people who can keep a [used] teabag in the fridge. They started seeing development from us the people of *isiqiki*. We enjoy everything that they are lacking and we can afford to send our children to better schools. Instead, they must ask us why we are staying *esiqikini* rather than insulting us (Interview with Aphindile, 23/11/2014).

When asked to reflect on the statement, the participant explained that they are not living in informal settlements because they are poor but the municipality has not given them land to build houses. For this participant, keeping a used teabag in the fridge for future use is a reflection of poverty meaning that you cannot afford to use a teabag once and throw it away. When asked how they afford to use a teabag once, she explained that for them it is easy because they do not pay any rates, they can afford a decent life although they are living in shacks. The only reason why they are living *esiqikini* is because the apartheid government excluded them from urban development and the post-apartheid government is also delivering houses at a slow pace. According to this participant, residents from the formal settlement are in a more disadvantaged position compared to those from *esiqikini* although situations are different per individual.

Notably, the interview raises important questions in relation to democracy and freedom in post-apartheid Duncan Village. The promises of "a better life for life" instilled in many poor South African an idea of democracy imagined through claims to free services. In the case of Duncan Village informal settlements, some residents see themselves as better off because they have free access to basic services such as water and (illegal connections to) electricity. Those who pay for services are regarded as poor. As Pithouse notes "when delivery means the installation of a water or electricity meter to someone who previously, legally or illegally, had unregulated access to water or electricity it can also be more of a curse than a blessing" (Pithouse 2011:7). The fact that residents of informal Duncan Village had unregulated access to water as provided by the apartheid state, the installation of pre-paid metres in the post-

apartheid era makes them even poorer than those from informal settlements despite having formal houses. However, through the case study of Mekeni houses, it is clear that the struggle for a decent life is not complete for residents of the informal settlements without proper houses.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how the informal parts of Duncan Village were established through forms of *insurgent citizenship*. I have also argued that the appropriated forms of legality and illegality or formality and informality by the state have reinforced the idea of *differentiated citizenship* leading to community divisions. Based on these differentiated forms of citizenship and lack of service delivery, new identities such as *inzalelwane* and *abantu bokufika* have been forged in Duncan Village. These identities have been used by community members to justify their rights to services and also to exclude others. However, those who are ascribed identities that are meant to exclude them, i.e. residents of informal parts; contest their exclusion and demand to be full citizens. Furthermore, mobilisation for service delivery at a local level also produces further forms of marginalisation as residents continue to compete over scarce resources thereby posing challenges in understandings of a political society. However, these divisions are also important for understanding how state resources are allocated, distributed and also contested in Duncan Village. These contestations also reveal some different understandings of a decent life as imagined by different stakeholders. The following chapter explores the state's approach to service delivery and understandings of a decent life in democratic South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

The state and its experiences of governing: "our government was not ready to govern"

4.1. Introduction

"That is why I am saying we were not ready to govern but we are governing…The other thing is that we only won political power and not economic power" (Interview with Thembisa, 13/08/2014).

The above quote presents challenges faced generally by the South African post-apartheid state, and BCMM in particular, in relation to governing as perceived by Thembisa. During the time of the research, Thembisa was holding an administrative position in the office of Public Participation. Thembisa was born and grew up in Duncan Village and she has also held a council position in Buffalo City. The above quote is a reflection of experiences of being a community member of Duncan Village, a councillor responsible for championing the needs of community members, and currently, an administrator responsible for delivering services in Buffalo City.

Furthermore, Thembisa's statements speak to different understandings of citizenship as discussed in *Chapter 1*. According to the participant, the victory of democracy only consolidated political power and not economic power. Taking into consideration that democracy in post-apartheid South Africa was understood to be unregulated access to basic services and a creation of jobs, failure to consolidate economic power would mean failure of the expectations of democracy. In this context this would mean that the South African democracy defined citizenship in the form of political rights and not socio-economic rights. The struggles of the people of Duncan Village have been understood as a struggle for citizenship and a struggle for a decent life characterised by a fulfilment of the promises of democracy in relation to socio-economic rights. This chapter explores understandings of a decent life from the community members of Duncan Village and those that represent the interests of the state.

The chapter draws from the experiences of the project on the electrification of shacks in Duncan Village informal settlements and it argues that the project on the electrification of shacks through pre-paid metres has been understood by some of the state officials as improving the lives of the people of Duncan Village. However, the focus on improving lives from this perspective ignores the question of affordability since pre-paid metres entail paying for the services before using them. This idea of electrification has been rejected by the residents of Duncan Village. They argue that there is no dignity in living in a shack with a pre-paid metre whereas some occupants do not even afford to buy electricity coupons to access electricity. Furthermore, seeing shacks being electrified, residents argue that electrifying shacks undermines their rights to a dignified life through access to proper houses as they question their permanency in the informal settlements. The chapter argues that residents of Duncan Village have their own conceptions of a decent life linked to a notion of citizenship defined by socio-economic rights. The chapter also attempts to show how the state is re-configured at a local level to realise the dreams of a decent life.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I present ways in which the idea of paying for basic services was developed in post-apartheid South Africa through 'cost-recovery' methods and how this has impacted on the lives of South Africans at large and Duncan Village in particular. I begin by discussing ways in which decent life has been attacked through 'cost-recovery' methods. I then follow by presenting ways in which commodification of basic services distances residents from the state, also stating the importance of the accessibility of service providers. I then present my own understanding of Chatterjee's political society by showing how residents of Duncan Village use local networks to access state resources. The final part of this chapter presents limitations of the concept of political society demonstrating how some groups remain marginalised in the very political society.

4.2. Commodification of a decent life

Writing on cost recovery and electricity services in Diepkloof, Soweto, Grace Khunou (2002) argues:

> Under the reign of cost-recovery, residents are defined and treated first as customers before they are treated as citizens. Their ability to pay defines whether they will be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, for many, democracy and rights ended when they cast their vote (Khunou 2002:74).

This quote speaks to ways in which democracy has been linked to the right to vote and the extent to which dignity has been characterised by the ability to pay for services. Marshall (1963 as cited in Khunou 2002:72) has demonstrated how the conception of citizenship should be linked to the principle of de-commodification. The principle of de-commodification extends the conception of citizenship beyond the right to vote, to include the responsibility of the state to provide basic services to its citizens. De-commodification therefore seeks to "to posit social services as a matter of right and not one dependent on, or exposed to, the market (Khunou 2002:72). In this context, the concept of commodification is understood in relation to de-commodification. Drawing from Karl Marx, Polanyi (2005 [1957]) defined commodities "as objects produced for sale on the market" (Polanyi 2005:101). This entails attaching market value to objects that are not meant to be sold (ibid.). In this context commodification of services is understood in Marx's terms where basic goods and services are put into a market and are attached an exchange value. Basic services are considered to be critical for the survival of human beings. The idea of cost recovery attaches value to basic services such that they can be accessed by purchasing from the market. It is within this understanding that the provision of electricity through pre-paid metres has been understood as commodification of a decent life in Duncan Village.

In South Africa, with the dispensation of democracy, it was expected that citizenship rights would be advanced through increased provision of social security and access to basic services as articulated by the South African constitution and the RDP (Khunou 2002:72). However, the formal introduction of some aspects of neoliberal principles, cost recovery in particular, has made it difficult for many poor South Africans to realise this dream. As McDonald (2002:20) notes, cost recovery for basic services was never a national policy during the apartheid era. Although the apartheid government attempted to make people pay for services in the 1970s, the implementation was met with great resistance through rent boycotts in black townships in the 1980s and early 1990s. In fear for the political fallout, the apartheid government continued to provide basic services in spite of the rent boycotts. Although the provision of services remained skewed along racial lines, the delivery of essential services remained subsidised during the apartheid era (McDonald 2002: 20-21). It was not until the end of apartheid in the mid-1990s that full cost recovery became "an explicit widespread policy objective" (McDonald 2002:20).

McDonald (2002:19) argues that "pre-paid metres are the ultimate cost-recovery mechanism." They ensure that a user fee is collected before use, and that consumers do not default payments, while also earning profits for the service provider. Writing on debt, disconnections and privatisation in the Eastern Cape, Greg Ruiters (2002) also notes the self-disciplinary nature of pre-paid metres. He argues that with the pre-paid metres, there is no need for billing consumers. In fact, municipal disconnections and cut offs when customers are failing to pay become physical and visible actions by the state. However, with pre-paid metres, consumers invisibly disconnect themselves from services and they become responsible for their lack of services (Ruiters 2002:53). Although there has been some justification for the implementation of cost recovery in South Africa and related criticisms (see McDonald and Pape 2002), the introduction of cost recovery has generally been seen as

an attack of the poor (see Barchiesi 2007; Naidoo and Veriava 2005; 2007; 2010). In Duncan Village this means that for residents to access electricity they have to pay first. Failure to purchase electricity coupons means that it is their own responsibility and not that of the state. This idea contradicts the conception of the idea of citizenship that entails access to basic services for the purpose of maintaining a decent life.

It is important to note that electricity may not be seen as a basic commodity in other contexts given that there are other energy sources which individuals and industries can rely on. However, it the age of capitalism, electricity has become an integral part of production and most appliances for daily use are electrified, making electricity essential for survival (McDonald 2009:4). In South Africa, McDonald (2002:24) argues that the right to electricity is more difficult to ascertain. The Department of Minerals and Energy's Draft White Paper on the Energy Policy states, "…energy should be available to all citizens at an affordable cost" (RSA 1998b; McDonald 2002:24). Given the centrality of electricity to modern livelihoods, and that most South African black townships have been excluded from the formal provision of urban services for a very long time, it is no surprise that within the ANC slogan of "a better life for all", electricity came to be considered a basic service to be provided for free by the state. In Duncan Village, as it will be shown in the following sections, making residents pay for electricity has been understood to be an attack on decent life.

In Duncan Village, commodification of a decent life among many other approaches (including paying for water and refuse collection) has been introduced through the implementation of pre-paid electricity metres. While the residents of *esiqikini* celebrated the idea that BCMM was going to electrify their shacks, this dream was never realised because the project took on the logic of the market by installing pre-paid metres. As noted above, electricity has become a central feature of daily livelihoods. In a community with high levels of unemployment like Duncan Village, electricity becomes a major source of survival. People

use electricity to make a living through small businesses such as shebeens, spaza shops and sewing cooperatives. Commenting on the challenges of electric faults that are not fixed on time in Buffalo City, one participant noted the centrality of electricity to the residents of Duncan Village. "If you take away electricity you will have stepped on the toes of the people of this place. Electricity is more like their life because they use it for everything" (Interview with Mzwandile, 02/08/2014).

However, with the installation of pre-paid metres, the BCMM has shifted the role of providing electricity to all as a basic need to that of providing electricity to those who can afford. This idea has been championed through the language of improving the lives of shack dwellers by some of BCMM officials. One BCMM official commenting on the continuation of illegal connections of electricity noted:

> …it is surprising how you try to improve someone's life by giving them electricity and at the same time they destroy that service" (Interview Joseph, 18/11/2014).

Another official commenting on the project of the electrification of shacks and the related challenges also noted:

> …unemployment is there but electricity elevates the standard of living. If the shack is warm and people are able to cook, their life is improved" (Interview with Ayanda, 13/11/2014).

In both interviews there is a common understanding of the project on the electrification of shacks as improving the lives of shack dwellers. Although the second participant notes unemployment-related challenges, the issue of affordability is ignored in both narratives. I therefore argue that the silence on affordability presents a contradiction of the idea of the use of pre-paid metres and it undermines understandings of a decent life. Providing electricity through pre-paid metres would mean that even though residents of the informal settlements

have electricity boxes in their shacks, it will only improve the lives of those who can afford to buy electricity. Those who do not afford will remain excluded.

Writing on the introduction of cost-recovery in Johannesburg in the early 2000s, Naidoo (2007) argues that some of the neoliberal policies were introduced under the discourse of developing responsible citizenship championed by civic organisations such as SANCO (Naidoo 2007:3). This meant that by accepting the installation of pre-paid metres, residents of Phiri and Orange Farm were accepting the responsibility of citizenship by paying for their own consumption (ibid.). This understanding defines citizenship in relation to the ability of individuals to pay for services as noted by Khunou (2002) above. As noted in *Chapter 3* the project on the electrification of shacks in Duncan Village was also developed as a form of cost recovery for the electricity lost through illegal connections and also to make residents responsible for their own consumption. Most of the residents interviewed in Duncan Village, both from the formal and the informal settlements, noted that when they buy electricity they also pay for other services that they are not aware of:

> When you buy the electricity voucher for R50, you only get electricity for R20. If you go to ask, they will tell you that you owe the municipality water or refuse collection fee so you are contributing towards that payment (Interview with Mzwandile, 02/08/2014).

Many residents that were interviewed claimed that this was a common experience. This would mean that the project on the electrification of shacks in Duncan Village, while it responded to community challenges demanding electricity by stealing from rate payers, it also came as a means of expanding the electricity market in Buffalo City by drawing in more legal consumers. Electrification of informal settlements now means that the residents now participate in the market by taking responsibility for their own consumption.

However, the cost recovery approach to service delivery did not go unchallenged in Duncan Village. The BCMM justified the provision of electricity to residents of Duncan Village through pre-paid metres in the name of responding to service delivery needs and "improving lives". However, residents are aware that this is an attack on their basic rights. I argue that by continued use of illegal connections, despite the electrification of shacks, the residents of Duncan Village are challenging the idea of the commodification of their life.

The idea of bettering lives through commoditized access has been challenged in Duncan Village with residents arguing that the project on the electrification of their shacks does not dignify their lives in any sense. In a focus group discussion conducted with some of the residents who had not yet received pre-paid metres, participants noted that:

> We do not need those electricity boxes. We will rely on our *izinyoka*[8] although we know that they are dangerous. They are saying [the municipality] they are bettering our lives but there is no dignity in having electricity in a shack where you will have to be up the whole night in rainy seasons to make sure that your property is not destroyed by water. The worst part is that you have to buy that electricity yet some people cannot afford. Where is dignity there? (Focus Group Discussion #3, 02/08/2014).

For these residents, a decent life entails living in a dignified shelter that can sustain extreme weather conditions, and having access to free basic services. This understanding of a dignified life therefore contradicts an understanding from a state perspective. As noted above, from the perspective of the state a decent life is characterised by having a pre-paid electricity metre installed in your shack regardless of affordability and living conditions in that shack. Contrary to this perspective, for residents of Duncan Village a dignified life would mean having free access to electricity while you are also living in a proper house that is safer than a shack. This would ideally mean that the promises of democracy are being fulfilled by achieving a decent life.

[8] Illegally connected electricity or illegal connections

One BCMM official commenting on the culture of being used to free services in Duncan Village noted that:

> …because now in Ward One they were putting electricity but if you go there now you will see a shining wire, it was one first, then now there are three. Those are the people who do not want to pay for electricity because they are used to the fact that it is zero budget electricity and zero budget water" (Interview with Thembisa, 13/08/2014).

It can be argued that for the residents of Duncan Village "zero budget electricity and zero budget water" are part of reclaiming their constitutional right to free basic services and is a rejection of the commodification of life.

Struggles against privatised or commoditized basic services in post-apartheid South Africa have been documented elsewhere (see McKinley and Naidoo 2004; Naidoo 2005; Naidoo and Veriava 2005; Naidoo 2006). In some black townships of Johannesburg denial of access to basic services has been challenged by individuals, communities and organised movements such as the APF, SECC, the OWCC and many others. Under the organisation of the APF, members of the movement with the 'technical knowhow' on pre-paid water and electricity metres destroyed them and opened access to those who were disconnected for not affording to pay. In doing so, they were rejecting the commodification of basic services and allowing for the imagination of a decent life by many South Africans to be realised.

Writing on the provision of water in Johannesburg, Zainab Bawa noted challenges associated with privatization of the provision of basic services. She argues that "in such institutional set-ups, efficiency is achieved by reducing the scope of exercising discretion and curtailing avenues of claim making, while accountability is introduced by making personnel performing distribution functions answerable to the senior management rather than to the people they serve" (Bawa 2011:501). This would mean that the state distances itself from the delivery of basic services, making it even more difficult for residents to attempt to hold the state

responsible. In Duncan Village, although the project on the installation of pre-paid metres is being implemented by the municipality itself, the electricity department is out of reach for residents of Duncan Village. Unlike the housing department which is located in the city centre, the electricity department is located at a suburb called Beacon Bay where residents of Duncan Village face difficulties in accessing the office[9]. This would mean that if they have any problems related to the electricity billing system, they have to go to Beacon Bay which is difficult for most of them. In the process, BCMM has made it difficult for the residents of Duncan Village to hold the electricity department accountable for any injustices. As a result, residents have to mobilise for alternatives at the community level to access the state. The following section discusses the importance of accessing the local state in provision of services.

4.3. The "locality of the local"

Writing on the links between democratisation, decentralisation and clientelism, Clare Bénit-Gbaffou (2011) points to widely held perceptions about the local state being more democratic in nature compared to other scales of government. She posits that these perceptions are based on the assumptions that the local allows citizens a possibility of direct engagement with their elected representative and a chance to hold them accountable, particularly on the issues that affect them daily (Bénit-Gbaffou 2011:456). By the 'locality of the local' I refer to the meanings, responsibilities and related challenges that come with working for the local municipality while also being a member of those local communities. In Duncan Village and BCMM the 'locality of the local' plays a very critical role in the art of service delivery. Although the state is pushing an agenda of commodifying basic services, the locality of the municipal officials presents challenges to the administrators who reside in local communities.

[9] Residents of Duncan Village have to take two commuter taxis from Duncan Village to Bacon Bay. The first taxi will drop them in town and then they will have to take a second one to the suburb.

As a result, local administrators become the important link between communities and the local bureaucracy. As noted by Bawa (2011:492), service delivery also depends on the "intricate webs of social, political and economic networks underlying the distribution system".

Researching on the networks of accessing water in Mumbai and Johannesburg, Bawa (2011) noted the importance of the shared experiences among local communities and local administrators. She argues that in Mumbai, junior officials of the Hydraulic Department share the same experiences of water struggles as they reside in slums, unlike in the case of Johannesburg Water where the staff does not reside in townships (Bawa 2011:501). The separation of the institutions of service delivery and the communities to whom they are delivering services is problematic. For Bawa, privatisation of service delivery "increases the social and political distance between the staff and poor citizens because the staff is trained in ethics, values and the rule of law" (ibid.). This is important in understanding balancing the bureaucratic rules and realities of service delivery needs. As Chatterjee notes, in political society the state deals with populations through a range of "paralegal" arrangements that involve the "bending and stretching of rules" (2004: 73). In BCMM this would mean that local municipal officials are more likely to bend the rules in order to fulfil service delivery needs for their constituencies. In Duncan Village I argue that it is this distance between the local residents and senior staff members that deepens challenges of accessing the state. However, the 'locality of the local' opens some possibilities of access to the state.

In Duncan Village and BCMM, it is the experiences of 'the local' that allow for access to the highly bureaucratic state through informal networks that are used to negotiate access to basic services. These experiences of the local were captured in several experiences of the junior administrators of BCMM. One participant who indicated that he resides in one of the black townships of East London – Mdantsane noted:

> Again when you are at local you deal directly with people that you know such that even if you are not at work they will always tell you about their problems. It is never your time because wherever they see you they always have grievances to be addressed. This is a challenge but it means that you have to up your services and push the people who are on the ground, make them understand the urgency of a burst pipe which cannot be fixed after 24 hours (Interview with Ayanda, 13/11/2014).

In another interview, commenting on the challenges of working directly with communities one BCMM official noted:

> I sit and listen to more than five stories of homeless people a day. I do not have a house to give them, yet I am forced to do something about their situation. [Patricia: something like what?] Like looking for a very cheap flat so that they can be having a shelter in the meantime while waiting (Interview with Helen, 18/11/2014).

Another participant from the same department also noted the same challenges associated with working for the local state:

> I have my own job but sometimes I play a social worker, a marriage councillor or I resolve disputes among family members. I understand why they are fighting about these things [inheriting a house of a deceased family member]. It is because getting a house is a big challenge here in Buffalo City, people are desperate (Interview with Joyce, 18/11/2014).

These interviews present a set of challenges associated with working for a local state. What is important in all of them is the impact of the challenges presented on service delivery. For the fact that these participants work directly with people and the experiences of the communities are captured at first hand, it allows them to "bend" some of the rules like looking for a cheaper flat for someone who is not on the waiting list in the case of the second interview. In the first interview the participant notes that the pressure of his local people is forcing him to up service delivery by convincing the workmen on the ground. He has to make them understand that there is urgency in attending to a burst pipe as community members cannot bear living with a burst pipe while knowing that the participant works for the municipality

(Sanitation Department in the case of this participant). Here I argue that these very experiences of 'the locality of the local' present an opportunity for accessing the state itself at a local level. This allows for the possibility of re-configuring the state at a local level by both local authorities and community members as they hold their representatives responsible for issues affecting their daily lives. The following section presents formal and informal networks that have been used by residents of Duncan Village in accessing the local state.

4.4. Re-configuring the state at a local level

By re-configuring the state at a local level I am referring to a process whereby the role of the state is reconstructed at a local level such that actors bend the prescribed rules of governing to adapt to the realities of their communities. In explaining the functioning of a political society, Chatterjee argues that the poor marginalised communities of India cannot claim benefits from government programmes as part of the civil society because the notion of the civil society is limited to those who are strategically positioned to the state who have the knowledge and influence over the system (Chatterjee 2004:66). In Duncan Village and South Africa at large, this would mean that the notion of civil society is limited to those who can afford to purchase commoditized basic services. Chatterjee then argues that in order for the excluded to be able to benefit from the system "they must succeed in applying the right pressure at the right places in the government machinery" (Chatterjee 2004:66). This is where the relevance of the local networks comes into play, giving meaning to the 'locality of the local'. John (2009), (as cited in Bénit-Gbaffou 2011:456) notes that "the local scale is certainly specific in the potential it offers for interpersonal contacts between residents and their representatives, for a more 'humane', flexible and locally-grounded state". As indicated in one of the interviews in this section, one way in which residents of Buffalo City can address the problem of an undignified life characterised by living with a burst sewage pipe is by applying pressure on

the municipal official who is also a member of their community. By getting the pipe fixed in less than 24 hours, they would have achieved one aspect of a dignified life, which is being able to get the sewage pipe fixed in less time than what would have been taken if they did not know anyone who could facilitate the process.

However, these local networks are not only applied for benefiting on common goods such as burst pipes that can equally affect all community members. They are also used by individuals at a community level for their personal benefits. In the distribution of food parcels in a Johannesburg township, Bénit-Gbaffou notes the uneven distribution of food parcels by members of SANCO to their constituencies. She argues that even though SANCO members have been tasked with identifying the needy, accusations about nepotism, distributing resources to their families and members of their constituency, all reveal that the process lacks transparency (Benit-Gbaffou 2011:459).

In Duncan Village some councillors and ward councillors have been accused of nepotism in the distribution of resources. In the case of the Mekeni houses and iGoli Flats, one of the ward councillors who had a share in the development project was accused of giving houses to his 'girlfriends' and family members. Commenting on the occupancy of the Mekeni houses, one participant claimed that:

> …if you go to those houses [Mekeni] you will see that from those that were given to the people of our ward, all six of them [occupants] are related. They were all taken from the wife's family (Interview with Phakamile, 26/07/2014).

In a focus group discussion, residents of iGoli Flats who complained about living in dangerous flats also claimed that:

> …if you look at the beneficiary list you will see that our site numbers are on those ground houses[10]. But look at us now; we

[10] Haven Hills has two sections that are not separated. On the one side there are flats known as iGoli Flats and just opposite the flats there are formal non-detached four roomed houses. Residents in the flats have been

> have been pushed to the flats with no explanations. All those people on the ground houses are either relatives of the former councillor or his friends who were part of his ward committees (Focus Group Discussion #4, 10/08/2014).

While these claims could not be validated or dismissed, due to time constraints, it was impossible to interview everyone in the houses to find out if they were related. However, the claims shed some light on the use of local networks in accessing state resources and the related accusations of corruption and nepotism. As noted in the words of one of the ward councillors:

> I try to serve everyone equally in this community. But these people if they vote for you it is like you owe them. They will tell you that you have to give them jobs because they voted for you. Then what can you do because you know that they have been loyal to you (Interview with Ward Councillor #4, 11/08/2014).

This would mean that residents of Duncan Village are not the only ones benefiting from these networks. However, it is a reciprocal process where both state representatives and residents benefit. Ward councillors also have to return the favour by distributing state resources.

This relationship between local state representatives and community members has been described as a form of clientelism characterised by an exchange of favours between voters and the councillors, i.e. the councillor gives voters public goods and in return he/she enjoys continued political support (Benit-Gbaffou 2011). While the morality of this practice can be debatable as it excludes those constituencies who do not offer political support to certain individuals, what is important for the study of Duncan Village is this re-configuration of the state at a local level, the 'bending' of the rule for the purpose accessing state resources. In this practice, while local representatives may enjoy continued political support, community members also benefit. Those who are well-connected get a chance of accessing state

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complaining that according to the national housing beneficiary list they were allocated to the ground houses. For some reasons ward councilors together with the local housing department re-shuffled the site numbers and gave them flats instead of normal houses.

resources from which they were largely excluded. It can be argued that by having an opportunity to own a house, facilitated by the local networks, community members would have moved faster and earlier towards the realisation of a decent life which would not have been possible in the following ten or fifteen years.

Reflecting on mobilisation within a political society, the re-configuration of the state at a local level does not only reveal ways in which residents of Duncan Village access state resources. It also gives agency to the residents of the informal settlement who are usually perceived as a population for governmentality purposes. Writing on *Deep Democracy* in India, Arjun Appadurai argues that "all state-sponsored slum policies have an abstract population as their target and no knowledge of its concrete, humane components. Since these populations are socially, legally and spatially marginal – invisible citizens– they are by definition unaccounted and uncountable in most general terms" (Appadurai 2002:35). In Duncan Village this would mean that the project such as electrification of shacks is only imposed as a development project without accounting for the socio-economic conditions of the shack dwellers in the name of "improving lives". Appadurai argues that "by rendering them statistically visible to themselves", slum dwellers give meaning to a political society with a detailed knowledge of their real conditions and livelihoods (Appadurai 2002:37). In light of these arguments (although the idea is limited to an enabling environment that allows for the possibility of these negotiations to take place), I argue that the use of local networks, including ward committees in determining socio-economic conditions of the residents of the informal, by identifying the most needy to benefit from food parcels or housing development programmes, residents of the informal settlement give form to the "governmentality from below" as postulated by Appadurai (2002:37).

However, it is important to note that in Duncan Village the distribution of resources does not benefit everyone equally. In most cases service delivery by local councillors is skewed to the

"favoured groups" such as *inzalelwane* of Duncan Village. As much as this idea can be celebrated, some residents like those considered as *abantu bokufika* remain excluded from these networks. The next section presents the limitations of the local networks in providing services within a political society.

4.5. Limitations of the local networks in access to service delivery

Although the political society exists as a form of mobilisation of resources for those excluded in the civil society, Bawa notes that it is "not a homogeneous group because the nature and extent of illegalities are different and even in the same 'community' individuals and households have different resources, varying access to diverse networks, and also different social, cultural and political backgrounds" (Bawa 2011:499). For Bawa this would mean that mobilization within the political society would produce different outcomes for members of the same community (ibid.). As discussed in *Chapter 3*, Duncan Village is a fragmented community. Although there is almost successful mobilization of access to service delivery facilitated by the existence of local networks, the services are not equally distributed. As Benit-Gbaffou (2011:459) has noted, the distribution of state resources by members of SANCO is not a transparent process. There are those that benefit and those that are excluded since the selection process is itself subjected to, and entrenched in societal power relations.

In Duncan Village residents of informal settlements have raised their concerns about the distribution of state resources such as food parcels and job opportunities. There are other groups that remain excluded even within the same ward. In a focus group discussion, residents of the informal settlement complained about how the then councillor excluded them from job opportunities.

> Even if there are different projects you will see the same people taking turns to work. In some cases you have one person

> working in more than three different projects. I once confronted this other girl and she told me that I will never taste any job opportunity as long as I continue campaigning for that girl [the lady who lost on ward council elections]… Even now, the poorest of the poor they never get a job opportunity from this area (Focus Group Discussion #2, 24/07/2014).

In another focus group discussion, residents of an informal settlement also complained about the unequal distribution of food parcels and job opportunities in the ward.

> The councillor has got her own people that vote for her. You will never see any food parcels in this area. You will only hear people talking about them and we don't even know how they look like. But we are voting every time (Focus Group Discussion #1, 19/07/2014).

These two assertions point to the questions of nepotism and political patronage where the councillor distributes state resources in exchange for continued political support.

Although the number of the people interviewed cannot be representative, what is important to note is that in most cases the people of the informal settlements are excluded, thereby enforcing the idea of *inzalelwane* and *abantu bokufika*. It can therefore be argued that while there is a general struggle for the realisation of a decent life in Duncan Village, some groups still remain excluded because of a lack of connection. This would mean mobilisation within political society creates further hierarchies of citizenship. In this case the problem shifts from that of civil society where service delivery is skewed along class divisions. The role of networks becomes more important, but this further creates another form of exclusion.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed ways in which Buffalo City municipality distributes services to the Duncan Village community. I have argued that post-apartheid, the South African state has adopted a cost recovery approach to service delivery. In Duncan Village the project on the electrification of shacks is one major example that represents commodification of basic

services through installation of pre-paid metres. Given the historical forms of exclusion of the black populations from urban services and the continued cost recovery approach by the post-apartheid state, residents of Duncan Village are excluded from the civil society as the civil society only caters for the privileged groups who can afford to purchase basic resources. The commodification of decent life by the state has forced residents of Duncan Village to mobilize within a political society. The mobilization is facilitated by the relationship between community members, BCMM local administrators and local state representatives. This has allowed for a re-configuration of the state at a local level. However, I have also argued that the local process of distributing state resources is in itself not sufficient as local representatives only favour their supporters. As a result not everyone benefits in mobilization within a political society and those who remain excluded are conscious of their exclusions. It would therefore be expected that those who remain excluded would find alternative means for challenging their exclusion. In Duncan Village this system has therefore culminated in a series of protests particularly by residents from the informal parts as they try to find alternative means to access state resources. The following chapter explores protests as an alternative means for seeking recognition from the state through their struggle for a decent life.

CHAPTER 5

The freeway is the life blood of the economy – Dynamics of contention in post-apartheid Duncan Village and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I have discussed ways in which marginalised communities mobilise to access state resources. I have argued that the use of local networks perpetrates further inequalities among marginalised communities. As a result, those who remain lacking access to state resources will mobilise and take to the street to demand recognition from the state officials as they struggle for a decent life. This chapter presents ways in which poor communities mobilise and take to the streets as they struggle for a decent life. It also presents different understandings of protest actions from protesting communities and those that represent the interests of the state. The chapter argues that in Duncan Village the continuity of the old repertoires of protests such as targeting the freeway is tied to new meanings derived from the experience with the state and how it deals with different classes. In addition, these repertoires expose variations in the interpretation of the meaning of the protests post-apartheid.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I start by presenting a typical protest, drawing from a case study of one of the protests that I observed during fieldwork. I then present different views of protests, beginning with a view from BCMM administrators and a view from councillors. I then present an understanding of protests from the protesting communities and their grievances. The final section presents repertoires of protests and implications for service delivery and understandings of the post-apartheid local state.

It is important to note that studies of protests and related explanations have been documented elsewhere. Some of the protests have been explained in terms of political factionalism as

authors argue that poor communities are sometimes mobilised by political figures for political support and personal benefits (see Von Holdt et al 2011; Harber 2010; Alexander 2010). Protests have also been explained in relation to nepotism and corruption by corrupt councillors and state officials who use the state money for their own benefits (see Booysen 2007; Atkinson 2007; Von Holdt 2011). The current study does not aim to dismiss any of these claims because they were also found in Duncan Village and some of the related issues have been addressed in previous chapters. However, this chapter is only limited to those protests that are related to the issues of service delivery and explanations that did not include the above mentioned issues (although some of the above mentioned explanations do appear in some of the explanations). This is a decision taken considering the scope of the MA report and particularly to address the main aim of the study, i.e. to bring in an understanding of the state on service delivery- related protests.

5.2. A Typical Protest

During my fieldwork, I had an opportunity to sit through the planning process of a protest as part of participant observation. The protest took place between the 23rd and 24th of November 2014 which was also my last day of fieldwork. The protest was one of the on-going protests by the members of Reeston 87 in Florence Street informal settlement. It was structured and premised around claims that there had been a series of peaceful actions including peaceful marches before, to remind the mayor of an on-going service delivery issue that the BCMM had not been able to resolve for years.

The protest was organised by a special committee that was elected by members of the Reeston 87 to represent them in the struggle for their houses that were illegally occupied in Reeston. The committee members informed me that they were all members of the ANC but there were also members of the Democratic Alliance party (DA) within the affected group of

Reeston 87. They indicated that their struggle for their 87 houses was not organised within the structures of any political party, however, they only came together for a common struggle for their houses regardless of any political affiliations. The committee members also claimed that they had tried several times to ask the ANC local branch to help them but there was never a protest organised by the ANC in relation to their case. In fact, ANC local representatives encouraged them to use legal structures, which in this instance, they had already exhausted.

Looking at the gathering crowd, I noticed that there were people of all age groups, from school children to old men around their sixties. Around one o'clock in the early morning, protest participants carried the tyres and the rest of the material to the Mdantsane access road intent on starting a fire. Unfortunately, when they were about to light up the fire, police came in hippos and we ran away. Nonetheless, I had to leave East London on that particular day. Interestingly, the following day one of the participants called me around four o'clock in the morning informing me that they had successfully carried out their protest.

It is important to note that the protest described above is not representative of all protests that take place in Duncan Village and Buffalo City. However, it is a typical protest that characterises most of the transgressive contentions that were observed or documented in Duncan Village during the field work research for this project. There seems to be a continuation of some of the grievances that people sought to address during apartheid. Issues of housing, poor service delivery and payment for services seem to have remained as the main problems confronting the people of Duncan Village post-apartheid.

However, what is new with the struggles of Duncan Village, particularly with reference to the typical protest is the shift in the structures of organisation. During the apartheid era, community struggles were organised and fought within organised structures such as the

ANC, United Democratic Front (UDF), and SANCO. In post-apartheid, there seems to be a shift in the structures of organisation as traditional political organisations seem to side with the government, as noted by McKinley and Naidoo (2004) in relation to most of the community struggles of post-1994. New social movements have emerged to occupy "the very spaces opened up as a result of the failure of the tactical approaches and strategic visions of the traditional political formations to offer any meaningful responses to the changing conditions affecting their equally traditional constituencies" (McKinley and Naidoo 2004:14-15). For example, drawing from the township struggles in Johannesburg, McKinley and Naidoo argue that the SECC and the Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC) have emerged in response to the failures of SANCO to represent the struggles of the urban poor (ibid.). In Duncan Village, as noted in the above narration, community members organise themselves outside of any political affiliations to fight for a common cause.

Furthermore, like many community struggles in the post-apartheid era, in Duncan Village people of diverse social standing (young and old, employed and unemployed) have come together to fight issues that confront them daily. In Johannesburg, students, activists, community members and labour movements have come together to challenge different forms of privatisation initiated through iGoli 2000 (see Naidoo and Veriava 2005). In township struggles Von Hold et al (2011) also noted differences within protesting crowds. As noted in Chapter 1, some of these protests have been understood as "*A Rebellion of the Poor*" (see Alexander 2010) or "*The Smoke that Calls*" (see Von Holdt et al. 2011). The state has responded to these different protests by sending police armed with rubber or live bullets to displace protesters (see Duncan 2014; Von Holdt et al. 2011; Alexander 2010).

Drawing from the evidence provided thus far, it can be argued that community protests have in most cases been directed to the state or state representatives. It is therefore important at this point to bring in the role of the state in understanding protests in post-apartheid Buffalo

City. The following section explores different understandings of protest actions from those who represent the state and from the protesting communities.

5.3. Understanding protests from a state perspective

While protesters may attach certain meanings to their actions, they may not be understood in the same way by bystanders and officials at whom the protest actions are directed. For instance, Von Holdt et al (2011) note that there were differing views about burning down of libraries and clinics in the case studies documented in *The Smoke that Calls*. While participants in protests justified their actions for burning the clinic as they argued that it resembled the apartheid state, old people complained that the clinic was helpful especially for those who needed to check their blood pressure and sugar levels constantly (Von Holdt et al. 2011:26-27). The same case was observed with some of the learners who complained that the library was helping them with their homework yet protesters claimed that it was just a structure with no relevant material inside (ibid.).

The logic of burning infrastructure was also questioned by one of the ward councillors in an Orange Farm interview conducted by Naidoo in 2010. The councillor argued that burning down of the infrastructure hinders the process of service delivery because the government has to go back to fix those destroyed structures before initiating new development projects (Naidoo 2010: 316). The different meanings attached to actions of protest speak to the different understandings of the same phenomenon. In the case of Duncan Village, the different understandings of protests can be explained in relation to different understandings and conceptions of a decent life as understood by the state and by residents (see *Chapter 4*).

Evidence from the study of protests in Duncan Village reveals that protests can be understood by some of the senior municipal officials as irrational actions by people who do not

understand the art of service delivery. Some of the officials have argued that people are protesting because they do not understand that service delivery is a process. One of the senior managers of BCMM interviewed for this research stated:

> I think these protests about service delivery they are just irrational. I think people need to be educated that service delivery is not something that can happen over the night, it is a process. You cannot ask for a house today and few months down the line you are protesting about houses. Service delivery is a process that includes planning…This means availability of land, the planning process for a settlement, selection of constructors through tender processes, etc. You will find people complaining that we have been waiting for houses for long, service delivery is a process (Interview with Senior Administrator #1, Housing, 20/11/2014).

In this interview, the participant argues that people are protesting because they do not understand that service delivery is a process. However, the participant does not tell us about the waiting time frame since many people have been waiting for houses for a very long time in Duncan Village as discussed in many sections of this report. Another participant who is also a senior administrator also shared the sentiment about protests as being irrational actions.

> For me protests do not make any sense. Imagine if you go to burn a library yet people are complaining about levels of illiteracy. Your children need that library but you are burning it. The other thing that I do not understand is the burning of the freeway. People want electricity but they are burning the freeway. At the end of the day, the truck that is supposed to go and fix electricity is stuck on the other side of the road because the freeway is blocked. I do not know what those people think where electricity will come from (Interview with Senior Administrator #2, Youth Centre, 18/08/2014).

In this interview the participant questions the logic behind barricading of the freeway and burning down of the buildings. The ideas presented in the two interviews seem to be shared by some of the ANC senior officials. For instance, early in 2014 in his state of the nation address speech, President Jacob Zuma said "service delivery protests are not simply the result of failures of government but also of its success in delivering basic services". He argued that

when 95% of households have access to water, the 5% who still need to be provided for feel they cannot wait a moment longer (State of the Nation Address, 13 February 2014). This can be understood as implying that South Africans are impatient. This has some implications on how the state responds to service delivery related protests. As such, protests have to be disbanded by force and protesters must be forced to comply with an understanding that service delivery is a process, therefore they must wait.

Pithouse (2011) noted that "the myth [of service delivery] assumes that people who aren't yet plugged in are still wallowing in the legacy of apartheid and that, as backlogs are steadily overcome, they'll join the rest of us and enjoy a better life" (Pithouse 2011:6). This would mean that residents of Duncan Village must wait while BCMM is trying to address housing backlogs created by apartheid legacies. However, the two interviews are lacking a consideration of the waiting time-frame. For instance, the first participant stated that housing delivery is a process. But what he is not telling us is the waiting period that people are supposed to wait before they protest for houses. For example, most community members who were interviewed from the informal settlements have been waiting for houses for more than ten years (see *Chapter 3*). The people of Florence Street have been waiting for their housing issue to be resolved for the past six years. The second participant also questions the logic behind blocking the freeway while waiting for service delivery. The participant does not take into consideration the waiting time from the occurrence of the electric fault to the time when residents start burning down the freeway which according to the ward councillor has been more than three weeks. Perhaps the main question to be asked about understandings of protests as [ir]rational actions is for how long should people wait before they take to the streets?

Evidence from other case studies of protests (Von Holdt et al 2011, Gibson 2006 (eds.), and Alexander 2010) shows that many communities have been engaging the state through legal

processes, including writing of petitions and peaceful marches but the state has been unable to address issues on demand. The problem of waiting is also addressed in the work of Javier Auyero (2012), *Patients of the State,* where he documents the experiences of the poor people of Argentina in accessing administrative services of the state. Auyero (2012:9) argues that through frequent engagement with state officials as they wait for state services, the urban poor of Argentina learn to become "patients of the state", which is the opposite of citizenship.

While the idea of waiting in Argentina is similar to that of Duncan Village as people have waited for more than twenty years for their anticipated democracy to translate into a decent life, the difference is the idea of turning into the opposite of citizenship, i.e. "patients of the state". The study of protests in Duncan Village has highlighted that through protest actions, residents refuse to become patients of the state. They constantly remind BCMM that they are still waiting for the services. Instead of becoming 'patients', residents of Duncan Village become active citizens who refuse to be excluded and demand to be recognised by the state through protest actions.

In post-apartheid Duncan Village and BCMM, protests, according to some of the BCMM officials, can also be understood as an expression of the failures of the democratic state. Junior administrators interact with community members almost on a daily basis. These are the officials who are responsible for project implementation, drafting of housing waiting lists, public participation or educating community members about consumer behaviour for new RDP houses. Some of these officials are also members of the protesting communities (see *Chapter 4*). Their shared experiences and daily interactions with local communities allow them to understand the real situations of the people of Duncan Village. Commenting on the mushrooming of shacks and protests, one of the administrators had the following to say:

> I do not blame the people who are squatting. But also you can understand why they are doing that because the government is

> supposed to look after their housing needs but the demand is so huge that the government is not coping so they sort themselves out by building shacks…People are protesting because they are tired of waiting, they have been waiting for too long…But I do not think the burning of tyres is helping at all. I do not understand where this background of burning comes from. I got frustrated the other day because at the end of the day it is the motorists that have to suffer (Interview with Helen, 18/11/2014).

From this interview there are two sides of the story to be told. On one hand, the participant understands that people are engaging in protest action because the government has failed them. On the other hand, the participant reinforces the idea of waiting by noting that there is a problem of backlogs and that the government is not coping. Nonetheless, the participant acknowledges that the people have waited for too long; therefore they have to find alternative means of shelter, an observation that was missed in explanations of senior officials. Although the participant is aware of the underlying problems, she does not understand why people are burning the freeway as she feels that it is distracting other road users who are not part of the service delivery conflict. What the interview is not explaining is how participants should carry out the protest action if they do not target the freeway. It is this very contradiction that the study is interested in, i.e. to understand why protesters choose to target freeways after exhausting all legal means. What does it mean for protesters to target the people who are not responsible for service delivery and what are they hoping to achieve by doing so? The following section seeks to address these questions by exploring understandings of protests from protesting communities.

5.4. Understanding protests from the perspective of protesting communities

In post-apartheid South Africa many protests have been associated with expectations and failures of democracy. Many scholars have described post-apartheid protests as an indication of the failures of the post-apartheid state to fulfil expectations of democracy as imagined by

the previously disadvantaged (see McKinley and Naidoo 2004; Ballard, Habib, Valodia and Zuern 2005; McKinley 2005; Gibson 2006 (eds.); Marais 2011; McKinley 2011). After the dispensation of democracy many citizens had expected that the ANC-led government would be able to address the inequalities of the past as promised in the RDP document. However, twenty years after the attainment of democracy, the ANC-led government has been unable to keep up with most of the promises made in their campaign slogans and policies (Ballard et al. 2005). Tired of waiting for service delivery and deprivation of services that they had unlimited access to, South Africans have been "pushed to the limit" and they have taken to the streets to fight for access to basic services (Marais 2011).

In post-apartheid Duncan Village, protests are understood by some of the protesters as an outcry against betrayal by the democratic state. After the attainment of democracy, residents of Duncan Village, and South Africans at large had certain expectations of the state. It was expected by many that the ANC-led government was going to address questions of housing and access to free basic services. Twenty years after democracy, many residents of Duncan Village are still living in informal settlements and the BCMM municipality has not done much in eradicating informal settlements. Moreover, basic services such as water and electricity to which they had unregulated access before, are now regulated such that if you do not have money to purchase them you will not have access to them (see *Chapter 4*). As a result, many residents feel that they have been betrayed by the democratic state.

For some residents of Duncan Village who were involved in, or witnessed the apartheid liberation struggle, the ANC-led government has diverged from initial plans of development, thereby betraying the struggle of the poor. As a result, people engage in protests to challenge the notions of development assumed to be necessary by the state and also to demand the fulfilment of the promises of the liberation struggle. In a protest march observed during fieldwork, commenting on the difficulties of participating in a protest, one protestor said:

> This thing [protesting] is not easy. It comes with all difficult emotions. You feel very sad especially if you think that people have fought the apartheid government to live in a better South Africa and now we are still expected to do this…[she burst into tears and went to the other side] (SAMWU Protests March Observation, 25/07/2014).

In a focus group interview conducted with the some of the Task Team from POPs, participants constantly referred to notions of democracy in relation to the prevalence of protests in Duncan Village. One participant echoing the views of many noted that:

> We are now living in a democracy and in a democracy people can do anything. What can they do [residents of Duncan Village] if the government is not giving them what they want. They know that they fought for this democracy, they need services, they need houses, they want a better life that they were promised, so democracy allows them to protest if they are not getting them (Focus Group Discussion #1, POPs, 20/11/2014).

One of the former ward councillors for Duncan Village, commenting on the protest march that was to take place on the 12th of November 2014, expressed his concerns about the expectations of democracy and betrayal by the democratic state:

> The people who are leading did not go according to the way that we expected as the masses. They have moved because we thought that since we are free no one will go hungry, we thought that people were at the centre of the struggle. Twenty years after democracy things have not changed that much although there are slight changes… During the apartheid we wanted to overthrow the apartheid government, we wanted to build a democracy…People are promised things that are never delivered and thus why we are seeing these protests (Interview with Former Councillor #2, 10/11/2014).

Reflecting on these interviews, the people who are leading the country did not lead according to the expectations of the masses. The new government was expected help masses to realise their freedom. For the last participant, freedom entails being free from poverty and hunger. Twenty years after democracy, not much has changed and the promises of freedom have not been delivered yet. Instead, the new policies such as cost-recovery have undermined

prospects of achieving the freedom imagined by the people of Duncan Village. As a result, there are still protests to express anger at betrayals by the democratic state. It is upon these promises and betrayals on which the people of Duncan Village build their claims for a decent life and contest them through protest action.

Furthermore, promises of democracy have been associated with Nelson Mandela's aspirations for freedom in Duncan Village. Responding to the issues related to the quality of the RDP houses and relocation processes, one participant echoed the views on how the people of Duncan Village understood Mandela's aspired democracy.

> They wanted to move us with our shacks to a place that was not even cleared…I refused to go there because Mandela never said people will move from a shack to a shack. He said people will be moved from shacks to their houses. I also refused to move to iGoli Flats. That is not a home, it's a grave. I will never have Buffalo City renovating a shack for me…People will never stop protesting, we do it every now and then because this is not what Mandela fought for. This is not what our parents fought for (Interview with Nwabisa, 18/08/2014).

This interview is raising several issues about expectations of democracy. For this participant democracy entails moving from a shack to a proper house as Mandela had promised. It also entails good quality houses of which houses of poor quality are seen as renovated shacks. In this interview, the participant is equating iGoli Flats to a renovated shack, and are perceived to be even more dangerous than the shacks that people build for themselves[11]. It is these failures of democracy that force people to the streets. This interview has special implications about the quality of the South African democracy. This would mean that the kind of democracy that has been achieved has presented some contradictions from what was expected by many. According to the residents of Duncan Village, democracy has failed to deliver a

[11] IGoli Flats were visited during the fieldwork research for this project and there were pictures that were taken (see appendix). The houses have cracks and they have some wooden stairs that do not seem to be sustainable

decent life to them. Protests are therefore meant to push the state to comply with its promises of a decent life.

Results of democratisation in developing countries including South Africa have been studied elsewhere. Von Holdt (2013) argued that in an unequal society like South Africa, institutions tend to distribute power in highly unequal ways (Von Holdt 2013:591). Beall, Gelb and Hassim (2005) have characterised the contradictory nature of the South African democracy ten years after the transition as a "fragile stability". It has been characterised so, because on one hand, the post-apartheid government has managed to establish a non-racial democracy and it was accepted as a legitimate authority within the country. However, on the other hand, inequalities have continued – or worsened as people are still living in poverty, unemployment and high levels of HIV/AIDS (Beall et al. 2005:682). For residents of Duncan Village the democratic transition has presented some contradictions in that it did not fulfil the expectations of the majority of its citizens. It has been characterised by persistent inequality, lack of housing and unemployment. Where the state has delivered some services, commodification of basic services which require citizens to be modern consumers have undermined the realisation of the dream of democracy. Von Holdt therefore argues that violence has been deployed in post-apartheid South African to challenge and defend the unequal distribution of resources (Von Holdt 2013:591).

In the case of BCMM and Duncan Village, this violence has been characterised by clashes between stone-throwing, protesting crowds as they challenge their exclusion, and also by armed police as the state tries to defend its own conceptions a decent life (see *Chapter 4*). Hence, protests in Duncan Village have emerged to demand the promises of democracy and to challenge the commodification of decent life. The following section explores instruments that have been used by residents of Duncan Village to challenge their exclusion.

5.5. Repertoires of protests

The culture of chanting, toyi-toyiing and singing songs of the liberation struggle in South Africa dates back to the apartheid era. Protesting residents of Duncan Village have also incorporated these repertoires in their protest actions. Among many others, targeting the freeway is one of their common repertoires, particularly residents of Florence Street informal settlement. This is after the realisation that the BCMM municipality deals differently with different stakeholders. Florence Street informal settlement is located at the edge of the Mdantsane access road which is one of the main national roads entering the city of East London. It is located less than ten metres away from the edge of the informal settlement. The close proximity of the informal settlement to the main road makes it easier and manageable for the residents of Florence Street to gather their protest tools and prepare to barricade the freeway in the early hours of the morning.

5.5.1. "The freeway is the life blood of the economy"

Barricading of roads by protesting communities has been a common practice in post-apartheid protests in South Africa (see Ballard, Habib, Valodia and Zuern 2005; Gibson 2006 (eds.); Booysen 2007; Alexander 2010; Naidoo 2010; Marais 2011; Von Holdt 2011). In Orange Farm for example, the OWCC has led residents in blockading the Golden Highway several times in demand for better services (Naidoo 2010:312). This is a not new phenomenon that is unique to the South African context. Sidney Tarrow argues that barricading roads dates back to the 19th Century. Writing on *transgressive contentions* that have included barricading the roads, Tarrow has argued:

> But disruption has a more indirect logic in its contemporary forms. First, it is the concrete expression of a movement's determination. By sitting, standing or moving together

> aggressively in public space, demonstrators signal their existence and reinforce their solidarity. Secondly, disruption obstructs the routine activities of opponents, bystanders or authorities. Third, disruption broadens the circle of conflict. By blocking traffic or interrupting public business, protestors inconvenience citizens, pose a risk to law and order and draw the state into a conflict (Tarrow 1994: 108).

This passage captures the aims of a transgressive contention, the meanings attached to the actions, its consequences and the end results. As noted above, protesting residents attach certain meanings to their actions even though they might not be understood as such by others. For example in the OWCC communiqué (as cited in Naidoo 2010:311) it was indicated that "highways are the arteries and veins of the capitalist body".

Protesting residents of Florence Street have resorted to targeting the Mdantsane access road as their main repertoire for protests as they have come to believe that the "freeway is the life blood of the economy" (Interview with Mzwandile, 02/08/2014). Residents claim that their grievances have been ignored for quite a long time. They have engaged in many different forms of contained contentions with the state: peaceful marches and signing of petitions, including forceful occupations of Mekeni houses. However, BCMM has not done much to resolve their problems. These residents have come to believe that the state does not care about them. As a result, they have resorted to targeting the freeway during their protests. They wake up in the early hours of the morning to barricade the road. They burn tyres and put big stones and anything that will make it impossible for traffic to pass.

Residents of Duncan Village and BCMM officials have different interpretations of the burning down of the freeway. Although some officials have condemned the targeting of the freeway, all interpretations point to the evidence that targeting the freeway can be understood as a means of distracting business thereby calling for the state's attention. Protesters have realised that officials are not listening to them and they have resorted to targeting the road users so that they can help them make their voices heard. One participant from Florence

Street who claimed to be a regular protester explained the motive behind targeting the freeway and what they are hoping to achieve:

> If we are not being listened to, we just burn the freeway. There is nothing that we can do…They come and respond; tell us that they will address our grievances, but nothing is done. If they do not respond we go to the freeway again (Interview with Andile, 01/08/2014).

In this interview the participant notes that the reason why they burn the freeway is that state officials do not listen to them. Even if they come to address them, they make promises that they never fulfil. Protesters are therefore left with no choice but to go back to the freeway. Residents of Florence Street who occupied the Mekeni houses and have burned the freeway regularly also supported the idea that they will be seeking help from other stake holders. In a focus group discussion, echoing the views of many, one participant noted that:

> Burning the freeway does not only disturb them, but it also disturbs other people like you [the researcher] who will want to know what is happening. So we are looking for help such that there are other people who can come and listen to us or perhaps give a solution unlike them. Sometimes there are journalists who can take pictures and make this thing known. We do this because we want help. But it is clear that they do not read the newspapers or watch the news hence we are looking for help from other people (Focus Group Discussion #3 02/08/2014).

One of the municipal officials interviewed for this project also supported the view that by targeting the freeway, people have a chance to make their voices heard:

> I have looked at it and I have said roads are the best ways of transportation so if you disrupt them thus how everyone starts noticing because everyone will start being affected and will ask why they are being affected. That is why they start burning the road such that if the targets cannot see the problem then road users will see it, and I think it is a clever trick (Interview with Ayanda, 18/11/2014).

From these interviews it is clear that by targeting the freeway, protesting residents of Florence Street are hoping to get public attention which can also be understood as "*a smoke that calls*". As noted in the interviews, they have realised that the state is not listening

therefore burning of the freeway will call the attentions of other road users. In the last two interviews there emerges another aspect related to burning of the freeway. The repertoire is not only meant for calling attention, however, it is also strategic in that failure to target the state officials, residents have resorted to targeting the road users. As one of the ANC members noted:

> You know that the road is the life blood of the economy, so if they [protesters] go and close there [freeway], those people who are driving in the morning, say truck drivers, they will call their bosses and their bosses also call their companies who pay municipal services. They will then call relevant people say from the Provincial legislature who will then call the municipality and then they will send the police and then they will come to fix the fault (Interview with Mzwandile, 02/08/2014).

One of the members of the Public Order Policing services (POPs) also confirmed the idea that the freeway is "the life blood of the economy". Commenting on their approach to protests that tend to block the national roads, he noted:

> …on this one we do not negotiate [blocking the freeway]. The road has to be cleared before we start negotiating with them [protesters], they have to clear the road because barricading the national road disturbs business (Interview with Captain Ngxovu, 20/11/2014).

Although most of the senior municipal officials interviewed for this project did not admit the effects of burning of the freeway, some of the officials admitted that burning of the freeway has an impact on road users. One of the municipal officials explained the effects of burning of the freeway to her as a road user.

> I do not think the burning of tyres is helping at all. I do not understand where this background of burning coming from. I got frustrated the other day because at the end of the day it is the motorists that have to suffer. But if that is the way that they think they must take out their frustrations, if they think it is working for them then there is nothing that I can do (Interview with Helen, 18/11/2014).

Although the participant does not see the logic behind targeting of the freeway by protesters, she admits that as a road user she is being inconvenienced by the barricading of the freeway. This would then confirm the argument posed above that the actions of protesters always have a meaning to the actors.

Writing on the experiences of peasants in Colonial India, Ranajit Guha argues that there is a tendency to think of protests as spontaneous activities by elites (Guha (1999:4). Guha draws a distinction between insurgency and spontaneous actions and he argues that the use of the word insurgency acknowledges "the peasant as the maker of his own rebellion" attributing a sense of consciousness on the actions being taken. Viewing the actions of the protestors as "spontaneous" takes away the sense of agency and consciousness from the actor as perceived by the elites (Guha 1999:4). In Duncan Village, this would mean that burning of the freeway by residents of Florence Street is not a spontaneous activity; it is a form of insurgency that is given meaning by the actors. It is a means of accessing the state and calling it to deliver its promises of a decent life.

Bawa argues that "ordinary citizens as well as the state's own employees experience the state through their everyday encounters with it" (Bawa 2011:492). In light of this argument, I argue that residents of Duncan Village have also experienced the state through their daily encounters with it. This would mean that they have learnt that the state does not respond to them when they raise their grievances through peaceful means. As a result, they have devised alternative strategies to access the state by distracting road users, disturbing business in particular. It can be argued that this is not a simple observation by the residents that the state does not respond. However, residents of Duncan Village have also noticed that the state places much importance on businesses than ordinary citizens. As Tarrow has noted: "by sitting, standing or moving together aggressively in public space, demonstrators signal their existence and reinforce their solidarity" (Tarrow 1994: 108). For residents of Duncan Village

standing on the freeway would mean that they refuse to be invisible in the eyes of the state. They demand to be noticed by distracting those who are accorded more attention, i.e. business people.

David Harvey argues that neoliberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2005:2). To achieve this goal, the role of the state is therefore "to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (ibid.) It must also set up the appropriate structures and functions required to secure private property rights to "guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets" (Harvey 2005:2). For BCMM this would mean that the role of the state is to protect and guarantee the success of the businesses. In an interview one of the BCMM officials indicated how the BCMM responds differently to electricity problems in Buffalo City.

> It depends with the magnitude of the problem. If the problem is bigger, it will take time to resolve but if it is smaller, then it will be resolved immediately. [Patricia: are you saying the electric fault that occurred in Duncan Village C-Section in the past few weeks was greater than the one that you are dealing with now in the city?]. No, you must understand that the current problem is in the city and it is very big. We are working day and night to make sure that business will return to normal as soon as possible (Interview with Joseph, 18/11/2014).

According to the participant, the state responds differently to problems that affect business and those that affect the masses. Although the magnitude of the electric fault in Duncan Village was smaller than that of the city centre, BCMM electricians had to work day and night to ensure that business resumes as soon as possible. It is through such experiences with the responses of the state that residents of Duncan Village have internalised different responses accorded to them, and to business. Targeting the freeway is therefore a conscious

action that aims at distracting business so that the state will respond to make sure that business resumes, while the grievances of the protesters are being addressed.

Drawing from the evidence that has been provided thus far regarding targeting business, it can be argued that although the strategy does not always lead to addressing of all the grievances, some issues tend to be successfully resolved after bringing businesses to a standstill for some hours. In one of the protests that were observed during fieldwork, there is some evidence to support the claim that in Duncan Village targeting the main road may sometimes yield positive effects. In relation to the electric fault at C-section cited above, the ward councillors noted that the protest was about people who had no electricity for about three days. According to the ward councillor, he had reported the fault and was told that the transformer was out of stock and it had been ordered (Interview with Councillor Mateke, 25/08/2014). The community members of C-Section clashed with police for two days until the fault was rectified and they were provided with electricity (Participant observation, 14-15 August, 2014; Interview with Councillor Mateke, 25/08/2014; Daily Dispatch, August 15 2014). Even though the protest was condemned by the BCM officials and the ward councillor who referred to the protests as "like scenes from Marikana" (Daily Dispatch, August 15 2014), the protest was instrumental in that the transformer that was said to have been ordered was found and replaced during the protest period. As a result, communities that did not have electricity for days or weeks managed to have their electric fault fixed after obstructing business. By so doing, they managed to bring back safety and dignity that comes with access to electricity.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined a narration of one of the protests that was observed during fieldwork. I have argued that the protest represents a continuation of grievances and

repertoires of the apartheid struggles. The protest is also similar to most of the waves of protests that have occurred post 1994 although they differ in some sorts. This would mean that twenty years after democracy, the BCMM has not been able to address the inequalities of the past. I have also presented different understandings of protests from a perspective of those who represent the interests of the state and that of protesting communities. Here, I have argued that while actions of protesters can be interpreted as irrational actions, residents of Duncan Village are conscious of their actions. Drawing from their experiences of engaging the state, they have internalised ways in which the state deals with different groups. Targeting the freeway during protests has been used as a means to access the state through targeting what the state cares about the most, i.e. business. In this instance, I have argued that targeting of the freeway has been used strategically by residents of Florence Street. As much as they continue to seek attention from road users, they have also recognised the strategic importance of roads to the economy. I conclude that in Duncan Village the continuity of the old repertoires of protests such as targeting the freeway is tied to new meanings derived from the experience with the state and how it deals with different classes. In addition, these repertoires expose variations in the interpretation of the meaning of the protests post-apartheid.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents some conclusions on this research project based on reflections on the research questions, objectives of the study and an interpretation of findings. The purpose of this study was to bring in the role of the state at the centre of the analysis of protests in post-apartheid Duncan Village. It aimed at exploring the interpretations and meanings that the local state attaches to protest actions. My personal experiences of living in Duncan Village were fundamental in understanding and shaping interpretations of the findings. Since the research is based on a particular case study of Duncan Village, it is important to note that the results cannot be representative of or generalizable to other townships in East London and across South Africa. The findings are context specific and they are only applicable to Duncan Village. However, some of the findings may be helpful in illuminating broader questions on the relationship between the state and society and the understanding of protests in post-apartheid South Africa.

6.2. Research conclusions

I conclude that community protests in Duncan Village are a reflection of different understandings of a decent life by protesting communities and those who represent state interests. Twenty years after democracy, the South African government has not been able to address the inequalities of the past. In fact, the commodification of basic services has deepened levels of poverty and led to community fragmentations in Duncan Village. Protests have therefore continued to challenge forms of exclusion and to fight for realisation of the promises of democracy understood to be a decent life.

Through forms of insurgency, residents of informal Duncan Village have occupied open spaces and distributed land for themselves. They have used protest actions to force the state to provide basic services such as water, toilets and electricity to their places of residence, i.e. informal settlements. The appropriated forms of legality and illegality or formality and informality by the state have reinforced the idea of *differentiated citizenship* leading to divisions, contestations and hierarchies of citizenship in Duncan Village. Based on these differentiated forms of citizenship and lack of service delivery, new identities have been forged in Duncan Village. The new identities such as *inzalelwane* and *abantu bokufika* have been very influential in the distribution and allocation of state resources. Those who are identified as *inzalelwane* normally stand a better chance of benefiting from community resources over those identified as *abantu bokufika*. In return, local state representatives continue to enjoy political support. The excluded residents of the informal settlements of Duncan Village are challenging a constitution of citizenship that ends with a right to vote. In their struggle to access state resources they constitute a form of citizenship that demands an equal distribution of resources to achieve a decent life.

In post-apartheid Duncan Village, BCMM has introduced pre-paid electricity metres as a cost-recovery strategy, to make residents pay for their services. The project on the electrification of shacks is one major example that represents this commodification of basic services through installation of pre-paid metres. Given the historical forms of exclusion of the black populations from urban services and the continued use of pre-paid metres as a form of accessing basic services, an understanding of the state as a civil society does not apply in Duncan Village. As Chatterjee (2004) has argued, civil society only caters for those who are strategically positioned to the state, i.e. those who are able to influence the state. Residents of Duncan Village therefore mobilise to access state resources in a political society where they rely on local networks. However, community divisions and personal and political interests

lead to further hierarchies of citizenship as the local representatives tend to favour their supporters. Those who remain excluded within a political society take to the streets to make themselves visible in the eyes of the state.

In Duncan Village the continuity of the old repertoires of protests such as targeting the freeway is tied to new meanings derived from the experience with the state and how it deals with different classes. In addition, these repertoires expose variations in the interpretation of the meaning of the protests post-apartheid. Drawing from their experiences of engaging the state, residents of Duncan Village have internalised ways in which the state deals with different groups. Targeting the freeway has emerged as a common repertoire that has been mainly used to target road users and to distract business. This has come after a realisation that the state places more importance on the interests of business than those of poor communities.

In a community where the state does not efficiently deliver basic services, some residents remain marginalised. Drawing from fieldwork observations and the experiences of Duncan Village with electricity outrages, I conclude that the fact that children as young as five years old actively take part in protests, BCMM will continue to be characterised by protests in the unforeseeable future. Promises of democracy have not been realised for the people of Duncan Village, until then, state- society engagement between BCMM and Duncan Village will be characterised by protest actions as residents struggle to attain their imagined decent life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix: 1: Interviews

Interviews conducted with non-governmental organisations

Mr Ronald Eglin from the Afesis Corplan NGO, 18/08/2014

Interviews with BCMM officials

Mr Duma Maqubela, Branch Manager, National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), 18/08/2014

Ms Joyce, Housing Practitioner, Beneficiary Allocation and Registration, Housing Department, 18/11/2014

Ms Helen Scheffer, Senior Housing Practitioner- Rental, Housing Department, 18/11/2014

Captain Ngxovu, South African Police Services (Public Order Policing Services), 20/11/2014

Mrs Thembisa Nondala, Community Facilitator, Public Participation Department, 13/08/2014

Mr Luyanda Mbula, General Manager, Roads, Construction and Projects, 13/11/2014

Ms Siyasanga Mkonwana, Small Business Development Centre, 13/08/2014

Mrs Luleka Simon-Ndzele, the Council Speaker, 18/08/2014

Ms. Thomakazi Magqaza, Housing Department, 25/08/2014

Mr Ayanda Skhwebu, Sanitation Department, 13/11/2014

Ms Tracy, Housing Department17/11/2014

Mr T. Mjanqeka, Housing Department, 21/11/2014

Ms Zimbini, Youth Development Business Support Centre, 12/08/2014

Mr Joseph Bentil, District Engineer, Electricity Department, 18/11/2014

Interviews with ward councillors

Councillor Mongezi Tennyson Ngcaba, 04/08/2014

Councillor Vimbile David Mbinqo, 05/08/2014

Councillor Ntombizandile Maureen Mhlola, 13/08/2014

Councillor Mlandeli Julius Mateke, 04/08/2014; 25/08/2014

Councillor Ayanda Mapisa, 11/08/2014

Interviews with former councillors

Former Councillor Koko Qebeyi, 04/08/2014

Former Councillor Dina Mzama, 10/11/2014

Interviews with community members: pseudonyms

Andile, Male, Florence Street, 01/08/2014

Mzwandile, Male, Duncan Village, 02/08/2014

Olwethu, Female, Duze, 18/07/2014

Unathi, Female, Duze, 24/07/2014

Nqabakazi, Female, Duze, 24/07/2014

Phakamile, Female, Mekeni, 26/07/2014

Xolelwa, Female, Chicken Farm, 09/08/2014

Bongiwe, Female, Chicken Farm, 09/08/2014

Nwabisa, Female, Area 8 Squatter Camp, 22/08/2014; 16/11/2014

Aphindile, Female, Florence Street Squatter Camp, 23/11/2014

Focus Group Discussions

Florence Street Informal Settlement, 02/08/2014

Area 8 Squatter Camp, 24/07/2014

IGoli Flats, 10/08/2014

C-Section, 10/08/2014

Public Order Policing Services #1, 20/11/2014

Public Order Policing Services #2, 20/11/2014

Major observations

SAMWU March, 25/07/2014

Protest Meeting Florence Street, 23/08/2014

ANC Branch Meeting, 24/08/2014

Florence Street Protest March, 12/11/2014

Appendix 2: Images

New houses at iGoli Flats





Appendix 3: Information Sheet

Title of Study:	**Understanding the local state, service delivery and protests in post-apartheid South Africa: The case of Duncan Village and Buffalo City Municipality-East London**
Researcher:	Patricia Ndhlovu, Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand
Phone number:	**082 392 6508**
Email Address:	**Patricia.Ndhlovu@students.wits.ac.za**
Project:	**Masters of Arts in Industrial Sociology**

My name is Patricia Ndhlovu and I am a Masters student in Industrial and economic Sociology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I am conducting a research project that is exploring the understanding of the state, service delivery and protests in post-apartheid South Africa. Part of this research is about finding out how the state views and understands protests and the actions of protesters. The research also seeks to understand why some of the residents of Duncan Village destroyed the RDP houses in 2012 protest. I would like to invite you to take part in this study as it will help us to learn more about the protests and service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa.

What will the study entail?

What is involved?
Your participation in this study will include participation in an interview about service delivery and general protests in Duncan Village and the 2012 protest in particular, where protesters destroyed the RDP houses.

Risks:
There are very few risks in participating in this study

Benefits:
You may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study. But, this research will help us to understand challenges of service delivery and protests, and also perhaps shade light on how service delivery can be addressed and improved.

Costs:
There are no direct costs associated with this research project. It will, however take up to one hour of your time.

Confidentiality and anonymity:
Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed unless if you give your consent for identification.

You may withdraw from this project at any stage if you feel you are no longer comfortable with the interview; this will not affect you in any way.

- **Do you have any questions?**
- **Would you like to go ahead with being part of this research project?**

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

I hereby confirm that:

I have been briefed on the research that Patricia Ndhlovu is conducting on Understanding the local state, service delivery and protests in post-apartheid South Africa.

- I understand what participation in this research project means,
- I understand that my participation is voluntary,
- I understand the I have the right not to answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable with,
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation in the research, at any time, I so choose, and
- I understand that any information I share will be held in the strictest confidence by the researchers.

Optional clauses:

- ○ I hereby request that I be guaranteed anonymity
- ○ I hereby request a copy of the research report

Signed by _____ on _____ at_____

Signature_____

BUFFALO CITY METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: **04 JULY 2014**

From: **MANAGER: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, RESEARCH AND POLICY**

To: **MS PATRICIA NDHLOVU**

Our ref:	Please ask for	Your ref:
	MR J. FINE **(043) 705 9742**	

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN BCMM: MS PATRICIA NDHLOVU

It is hereby acknowledged that **Ms. Patricia Ndhlovu,** a student at **University of Witwatersrand (Wits),** completing a **Masters of Arts Degree in Industrial and Economic Sociology** has met the prerequisites for conducting research at Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) for partial fulfillment of her degree. She has provided us with all the necessary documentation as per the BCMM Policy on External Students conducting research at the institution. With reference to the letter to the City Manager dated 25/06/2014, permission was requested to conduct research at BCMM for her Research Report, entitled **"Understanding the Local State, Service Delivery, and Protests in Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Case of Duncan Village and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, East London."** This request was acknowledged by the Office of the City Manager, on 25 June 2014, and forwarded to the Knowledge Management and Research Unit for further assistance. Ms Ndhlovu was asked to provide the Unit with the necessary documentation, which she subsequently did.

The relevant Officials to assist in the research were identified and duly informed about the research, and the fact that Ms. Ndhlovu has met all the prerequisites. Their contact details have also been provided to Ms. Ndhlovu and she was informed to contact them directly for assistance.

Wishing you good luck in your studies.

DR T F NORUSHE
MANAGER: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, RESEARCH AND POLICY

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Ndlovu

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER H14/08/25**
PROJECT TITLE	Understanding the state, service delivery and protest in post-apartheid South Africa: the case of Duncan Village, Buffalo City Municipality, East London
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms P Ndlovu
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Social Sciences/Sociology
DATE CONSIDERED	22 August 2014
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	21/09/2016

DATE 22/09/2014 **CHAIRPERSON** E.M. Take
PP (Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Drs P Naidoo & M Samson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10000, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ ____/____/____

Signature **Date**