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# Meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes as a means to improve municipal service delivery

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**2017**

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/23042

Ndima, Zenzo Michael (2017) Meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes as a means to improve municipal service delivery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/23042>

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The institutionalisation of democracy in South Africa saw the local government administration being geared towards an inclusive governance system (Andoh, 2011; Brynard, 2011; De Visser, 2009; Nyalunga, 2006; King, Feltey & Sisel, 1998:317). This had been particularly demonstrated by, and emphasised in the processes of formulating local development plans and budgets in this sector. Contrary to the previous dispensation, the South African local government sector is now statutory obliged to involve its citizens in the formulating, implementation and review of local plans and budgets (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No.108 of 1996 (herein the Constitution of 1996); White Paper on Local Government 1998 (herein the White Paper); Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, Act No. 32 of 2000; Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), Act No. 56 of 2003).

However, since the passage of the above-mentioned and other relevant legislation to promote citizen engagement and participatory governance in the local sphere of government, the local government has been struggling to successfully translate same into reality (Govender & Penceliah, 2011; Alexander, 2010:28; OECD, 2009; Public Service Commission (PSC), 2008; Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2007:4; Masiwa, 2007). Even though available data in the literature points to the improved participation trends by the local citizenry in the affairs of their respective local governments, questions have been raised with regard to the quality, depth and meaningfulness of such participation (World Bank, 2011; Marais, Everatt & Dube, 2007; Booysen, 2007). The above questions are further necessitated by the recent and on-going protests of the local citizenry as a show of dissatisfaction with the perceived poor or lack of performance of the local governments (Karamoko, 2011; Alexander, 2010:28; RSA, 2009; PSC, 2008; Buccus et al., 2007:4; Atkinson, 2007: 54; Gaventa, 2005:1). It is important to note here that the above scenario is not only unique to the South African context, but it has become a global challenge. Despite an international spread of democratic institutions in the recent past, research points to the crisis in the quality of democracy in both the mature and the developing democracies, which leads to the calls to open new spaces for participatory democracy (Fung & Wright,

2003:5; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007:2; Cornwall, 2007:1; Shankland, 2006; Buccus & Hicks, 2007: 151; Mendelberg, 2002:151).

In the South African context, the above-mentioned call may be translated to equate the calls that are being made upon the local government sector to implement meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms and policies (Brynard, 2011; Chenwi & Tissington, 2010:6; De Visser, 2009:19; Mac Kay, 2004:5; King et al., 1998: 317). However, it is not clear whether meaningful citizen engagement will make any difference with regard to how services are provided to the local citizenry (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). According to Hickey and Mohan (2004:40, "any claims that participation can challenge the problems of uneven development must be grounded in evidence and theoretically-informed argument …"

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study that was undertaken to investigate whether the meaningful practice of citizen engagement activities in the IDP and budgeting processes of the South African local government would provide solutions to the current service delivery backlogs that are experienced by this sector. The inquiry was conducted to analyse whether the participatory spaces created through the local government legislation for use during the formulation of the IDPs and the Budgets were being employed in a manner that promotes or hinders meaningful engagement of citizens. The study was undertaken with a belief that continued exploration of the processes and outcomes of citizen engagement activities will provide guidance and answers to the predicament faced by the local government sphere (De Visser, 2009:19; PSC, 2008).

Apart from including statements of the problem and the purpose of research, the thesis discusses, amongst others, an overview of the conceptual framework that informed the study, the research methodology, the design of the proposed study, the analysis of data as well as the findings of the study.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The inclusive and real efforts for human development in South Africa can be traced back to the principles that guided the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the Government of National Unity in 1994, and the final Constitution of the country (Mayimele, 2011; Marais et al., 2007: i). The above-mentioned pieces of legislation

represent the real efforts of human development in the sense that, for the first time in the history of South African government, the whole citizenry was included in the decisions-making processes. The mentioned documents acknowledged the important fact that, in order to address the imbalances of the past, people must take a centre-stage in development. In the RDP, the saying that development is about people is confirmed thus: "Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment." (African National Congress (ANC), 1994). The above is echoed by Guijit (1998:1) in that "the broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially and economically marginalized peoples in decision-making over their own lives."

From the premise of the RDP, a concept of developmental local government (DLG) was coined, in order to ensure that people take a central stage in all efforts to redress the imbalances that resulted from the apartheid system of governance (De Visser, 2009: 8). Section 152(1)(e) of the Constitution of 1996, (Act No. 108 of 1996), sets a tone for the establishment of DLG, which is anchored on the practice of participatory democracy in the form of citizen engagement at the local level (RSA, 1996:82). The White Paper (1998) adopted the principle of DLG as only means by which the decades-long patterns of inequality and underdevelopment would be reversed. In the White Paper, developmental local government is defined as

> Local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (White Paper, 1998).

It should be noted that before the advent of democracy different municipal structures existed in South Africa (De Visser, 2009:8). Each of the erstwhile four provinces and the Bantustan homelands had its own version of local government, with its racial and subservient characteristics. Notably, the different institutions were geared towards the enforcement of separate developments for the different racial groups. This resulted in the skewed provision of services within these municipalities. Accordingly, the differently configured municipalities necessitated a need to amalgamate all the various structures into a single one in order to address the above-mentioned anomaly. According to Steytler (2006:187 in De Visser 2009:8), the amalgamation of these disparate structures was

initiated with the promulgation of the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) and the interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1993. This was further ratified by the final Constitution, i.e. the Constitution of 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996).

The Constitution of 1996 positioned local government as a critical development agency by incorporating the constitutional objects and developmental duties of local government therein (RSA, 1996: 81-82; De Visser 2009). This was necessary to address the skewed development patterns that resulted from the apartheid legacy of segregated developments. Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution respectively set out the objects of local government and the developmental duties of municipalities (RSA, 1996: 81-82). In effect, the municipalities are constitutionally obliged to structure and manage their administration, planning and budgeting in a manner that prioritises the delivery of basic services to the communities (RSA (section 153(a)), 1996: 82; National Treasury (NT), 2011:32). These functional areas, referred to as the 'original legislative powers' by the Community Law Centre (2007:7) because they are sourced directly from the Constitution of 1996; are further presented in schedules 4B and 5B of the Constitution, as the absolute responsibilities of the municipalities. These functions were further divided by the Municipal Demarcation Board into three priority functions of the municipalities (NT, 2011:32). Accordingly, the following table (Table 1) depicts the priority functions of local government as categorised by the Municipal Demarcation Board (NT, 2011:33).

**Table 1: Priority functions of local government** ***(Source: Municipal Demarcation Board, 2005, National Report on Local Government Capacity: MDB Capacity Assessment Period 2004/05)***

| **Priority 1 functions** | **Priority 2 functions** | **Priority 3 functions** |
|---|---|---|
| Water (potable) | Air pollution | Municipal parks and recreation |
| Electricity reticulation | Beaches and amusement facilities | Local sport facilities |
| Sanitation | Cleansing | Public places |
| Refuse removal | Control of public nuisance | Local tourism |
| Cemeteries | Fencing and fences | Local amenities |
| Fire fighting | Sell food to the public | Municipal airports |
| Municipal health services | Noise pollution | Licensing of dogs |
| Municipal planning | Pontoons and ferries | Child care facilities |
| Municipal roads | Pounds | Sell liquor to the public |
| Storm water | Street lighting | Markets |
| Traffic and parking | Street trading | Burial of animals |
| Building regulations | Trading regulations | Municipal abattoirs |
| Municipal public transport | | |

Notably, all municipalities ought to plan and budget for service delivery to their communities according to these priorities. In terms of the ranking of functions, it is clear that municipalities are expected to at least provide all the functions listed as the first priority (NT, 2011:32). However, it is anticipated that the prioritisation of functions will also depend on specific circumstance and subsequent allocation and availability of resources in each municipality (NT, 2011:32). In legislative terms, the above-mentioned functions are referred to as basic needs or services (sections 153 & 277 of the 1996 Constitution, section

1 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and section 14 of the Municipal Finance Management Act of 3003). Section 1 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000) defines a basic level of service as "a municipal service that is necessary to ensure an acceptable and reasonable quality of life and if not provided, would endanger public health or safety or the environment." Generally, the most important basic municipal services are water supply, electricity (and other energy) supply, sanitation and sewage disposal, refuse removal and solid waste disposal, roads and storm-water drainage, municipal health services and street lighting (NT, 2011:34; DGPL, 2005:3).

This research focused on the provision of the above-mentioned services by the sampled municipalities because most citizens' complaints revolve around the provision of same. The service levels or standards, at which the services were provided, were employed as criteria to assess whether same were indeed rendered to the satisfaction of the residents (DPLG, 2001; ETU). The following criteria, developed by the Education and Training Unit (ETU), have been used during the research:

**Table 2: Service levels *(Source: Education and Training Unit)***

| **Service Type** | **Level 1: Basic** | **Level 2: Intermediary** | **Level 3: Full** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Water | Communal standpipes | Yard taps, yard tanks | In-house water |
| Sanitation | Sewage collection/disposal | VIP Latrine Septic tanks | Full water borne |
| Electricity | 5-8 Amp or non-grid electricity | 20 Amps | 60 Amps |
| Roads | Graded | Gravel | Paved/tarred & kerbs |
| Storm-water drainage | Earth lined open channels | Open channel lined | Piped system |
| Refuse removal/Solid waste disposal | Communal (Residents) | Communal (Contractors) | Kerbside |

The categorisation of municipal service delivery in the above fashion enabled the researcher to understand which services were being provided and which were posing a challenge to the sampled municipalities, thus provoking the communities to protest. This then made studying the possible relationship between the local planning and service delivery performance possible.

## 1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The context of this study comprises of the Province of Gauteng as a location for the five municipalities that were selected as units of analyses. Five municipalities, situated within the Province were identified for the study. Two municipalities on Categories A and B, respectively, and one municipality on Category C were selected in terms of their performance as reported by the Auditor - General of South Africa (AGSA) during the 2010-2011 financial year. Due to the fact that no municipality in Gauteng Province achieved a clean audit during the 2010-2011 financial year, only one municipality was examined in cases where all municipality achieved the same audit in that category. The AGSA's performance reporting on predetermined objectives (PDOs) was preferred during sampling for its usefulness in measuring the actual performance against the municipality's strategic objectives (service delivery targets) as set out in that municipality's five-year IDP (AGSA, 2012:31, 40).

Furthermore, sampling of the different municipalities for this study was important in order to determine whether there was a link between the success or the failure in selected municipalities' actual performance on PDOs (service delivery) and the planning for local development and service delivery (IDPs & Budgets). Accordingly, the following municipalities were included as the units of analysis: two Category A municipalities, that is, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) and Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CoJ). In addition, one district municipality, the West Rand District Municipality (WRDM) and two local municipalities, namely Midvaal and Emfuleni, were included in the study. More details on the sampling approach is provided in the next chapter.

Also regarded as the context of the study is the audit opinions of the Auditor - General of South Africa (event) on the predetermined objectives (PDO) of the sampled municipalities. As a baseline, the study was premised on the municipal performance covering the period of the 2010-2011 financial year. However, for inclusivity purposes, the examination of these municipalities' performance on PDO and the citizen engagement trends were broadened to include the period of five years, for 2008 to 2012. The reasons for this has been elaborated upon in the next chapter, where the whole context is unpacked. Due to the extent of the context, the detailed discussion will be presented in the next chapter.

## 1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### 1.3.1 Problem statement

The erstwhile apartheid regime never gave citizen engagement the priority it deserved (PSC, 2008). Only minimum spaces for public participation, which were mainly reserved for the white minority, existed (De Visser, 2009:8; Naude, (2001); Williams, (2000), in Nyalunga 2006; Smith, 2004:17). In order to address the above anomaly, the new government promulgated a number of progressive legislation to promote the participation of those who were previously excluded. This excluded group consisted of the black majority, who are also the most marginalised and poor members of the entire citizenry (De Visser, 2009:8). Amongst others, the following Acts of legislation were passed by the new government: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act No.106 of 1996 (the Constitution of 1996); White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*), 1997; the White Paper on Local Government, 1998; the Municipal Structures Act; Act No. 117 of 1998; the Municipal Systems Act, Act No.32 of 2000; the Municipal Finance Management Act, Act 56 of 2003, the Municipal Property Rates Act, Act No. 6 of 2004, the Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2005, the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, Act No 3 of 2000; National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2007; and the Promotion of Access to Information Act, Act No. 3 of 2003.

These Acts legislation made it a legal requirement for the local government to engage the community when decisions pertaining to their wellbeing are made (Sections 152 (e) & 195 (e)-(g), RSA, Act 106 of 1996 & section 16 (1) (a) (c) of the Municipal System Act, No 32 of 2000). From the above-quoted legislation it is clear that the current government intended the practice of public engagement to be meaningful and effective in order to yield sustainable results and provide conditions that are conducive for sustainable development (DPLG, 2005:1).

However, judging from the dissatisfaction of the masses and the outputs of the current public engagement practices, it appears that the engagement mechanisms that are created for the formulation of IDPs and budgeting processes do not provide for the meaningful engagement of the relevant communities in these processes (Booysen, 2007; De Visser, 2009). In other words, the challenges faced by the local government in South Africa appear to emanate from the lack of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms and practice during the planning and budgeting processes. As a consequence, this often leads to the unintended and unsatisfactory results of the engagement mechanisms and activities introduced by the municipalities (Hicks, 2008:1). Currently, the practice of public engagement activities appears to be shallow, lacks depth and is restrictive in regard to opening meaningful opportunities to participants in order to influence the final IDPs and Budgets (Marais et al. 2007; Booysen, 2007; Smith, 2004:15).

As alluded above, the challenges faced by the local governments are evidenced through the actions of dissatisfied communities around the country, which is revealed in the recent and on-going service delivery protests (Municipal IQ, 2012; Yende, 2012; Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), 2009: PSC, 2008; Atkinson, 2007; Booysen, 2007). This shows that there is a discourse disconnection and a lack of meaningful engagement by and between the communities and their respective municipalities as far as service delivery plans and programmes are concerned (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006, Buccus, 2010). The above-mentioned incidents further led to calls being made upon the local government sector to implement meaningful public engagement mechanisms and policies (Brynard, 2011; Chenwi & Tissington, 2010:6; De Visser, 2009:19; Mac Kay, 2004:5; King et al., 1998: 317).

### 1.3.2 The Knowledge Gap

Even though a lot of research has been conducted on the field of public participation, participatory development and community engagement, few studies have focused specifically on the notion of 'meaningful' citizen engagement in the processes of formulating the IDPs and budget (Ally, 2012; Brynard, 2011; Panth, 2011; Chenwi & Tissington, 2010:6; Powell & Colin, 2008; Mac Kay, 2004:5; King et al., 1998: 317). Those that do address meaningful citizen engagement only provide a description of this new phenomenon in terms of the legal perspective and preservation of administration justice (see Ally, 2012; Brynard 2011, and Chenwi & Tissington, 2010). Other studies such as Gaventa (2005) and Mac Kay (2004) argued in favour of implementing public participation in more meaningful ways to avoid the 'crisis of democracy', whilst deepening democracy. Mac Kay (2004) particularly argued that meaningful citizen engagement in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) can make programs sustainable. Whereas, studies by De Visser (2009) and McKinney (2006), for example; are very critical of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. De Visser (2009: 20) *inter alia*, questions what he termed 'overzealous institutionalisation of community participation'.

However, it is crucial to note that neither of the above-mentioned studies provide empirical evidence of the successful intervention by the notion of meaningful citizen engagement on the alleviation of local development and service delivery backlogs in South Africa. Furthermore, it is worth noting that, up to the time of finalising this study, this researcher had not encountered a study that focused on the outcomes of engaging citizens meaningfully in the processes of IDPs and budgeting in South Africa.

In terms of closing the knowledge gap, it should be noted that this research has contributed new knowledge through the introduction and the definition of a new concept of meaningful citizen engagement to the public participation discourse. The definition below has been developed in order to understand the significance of the study and to situate it in the prevailing literature and the discourse on citizen engagement. Meaningful citizen engagement is defined as an interactive process wherein the empowered, rational and well-informed citizens deliberate amongst themselves, and between themselves and government representatives in order to reach consensus during the policy or decision making process. The research showed that the focus of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement is on

the application of deliberative democracy during the engagement process. Furthermore, the research developed the criteria to determine whether a citizen engagement activity is meaningful or not, which are referred to as conditions for deliberative democracy in this thesis. As a form of recommendation, the research also introduced the concept of public deliberation as a tool for the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement. Most notably, the above was made possible through, *inter alia*, the unpacking of the provisions of current legislation, which govern the citizen engagement in the local government affairs. The main Acts of legislation, including the 1996 Constitution, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and the Municipal Finance Management Act of 3003, were studied and analysed in order to ensure that conditions for meaningful citizen engagement in the local polity were conducive. The outcome of the study resulted in the better understanding of the dynamics of meaningful citizen engagement in terms of the provisions of the legislation. Further contribution to knowledge relates to how meaningful citizen engagement can enhance the current system of public participation within the broader legislative framework.

### 1.3.3 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to explore whether the meaningful practice of citizen engagement in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and Budgeting processes of the South African local government would provide solution to the current service delivery quandary and backlogs that are experienced by this sector. It was the assumption of this research that effective participatory planning in the local governance would lead to better service delivery.

Five South African municipalities in different categories were selected to conduct the study. The researcher ensured that the selected municipalities included both those that had experienced ‘service delivery’ protests due to perceived poor performance and those that have received clean, unqualified or qualified audit outcomes from the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) in the past.

### 1.3.4 Research questions

**Primary research question**

Will the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms lead to the amelioration of service delivery and developmental backlogs (better service delivery) in the local government?

**Sub-questions**

1. How is the notion of 'meaningful' citizen engagement understood by various local government stakeholders?
2. Can the citizen engagement mechanisms that are employed during the IDP and budgeting processes be regarded as meaningful?
3. In what way will meaningful citizen engagement help in the alleviation of service delivery and developmental backlogs in the local government?
4. What are the roles of local citizens in the process of IDP and Budget formulation, implementation and monitoring in terms of the legislation?

## 1.4 SCOPE

The scope of the study is hereby presented to highlight the practical outputs of the research in terms of its roadmap. The section will briefly present the significance of the study, the delimitation of the research, the summary of research and the flow of chapters of the thesis.

### 1.4.1 Significance of the study

Most of the elements that emphasise the significance of this study are fully discussed under section 2.7 of the next chapter. However, it is worth noting that the study will go a long way in revolutionising the current public participation practices in the local government of South Africa. In essence, this calls for the opening of new deliberative spaces within the processes, and a new way of doing things. In other words, introducing public deliberation into the current public participation system will require the adjustments of the structural and procedural design and principles of the current system. Additionally, the institutional rules, regulations and policies within the sector will need to be amended accordingly (Fischer, 2006:24).

Furthermore, the study addressed the perception of citizens as political activists "on standby", who always require nudging into action (Hajer, 2003:88). As can be seen from the findings of this research, there have been a big concern from the participants that citizens seem to regard local governance affairs with cynicism. There is evidence that citizens harbor a lot of mistrust towards the local government, due to the perceived isolation by same when service delivery decisions are made (NT, 2011; March & Olsen, 1986:3). Opening deliberative spaces for the citizens, as the study proposes, would address the incidents of violent protests, which often emerge after formal decisions have been made (Hajer, 2003:95). There can be no effective way to gain trust and citizen activism other than engaging them meaningfully during the formulation and implementation of public policies.

### 1.4.2 Limitations of the research

The researcher is employed by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, which is one of the municipalities studied. However, the researcher is not directly involved with any of the departments that were subjects of the study, namely, the Finance, the IDP or the Petitions and Public Participation (PPP) (Legislature) departments. This means that the researcher did not have any unfettered access to the internal information of the relevant departments, and thus could not manipulate same. The researcher still relied on the responses of the officials from the above-mentioned departments for more data. It is worth noting further that the researcher once worked at the Legislature department of the municipality during the course of the research. The Legislature is responsible for the administration of Councillors, the Council proceedings and the Section 79 Oversight Committees (including the PPP Committee), amongst others. Care was taken not to use any piece of confidential information without prior consent being had. All activities of the researcher were made known to the immediate supervisors in order to avoid conflict of interest. The researcher had since left the Legislature department for the service delivery department, namely the Real Estate Department.

Furthermore, some of the participants in the study are also employed by the relevant municipalities, which could have resulted in the manipulation of the information given out with a view to project positive images for the sampled municipalities. To mitigate this, the

researcher ensured that any piece of information obtained from the officials was checked thoroughly and verified in order to ensure its accuracy and worthiness to the study. This was achieved through the analysis of internal documents that are relevant to the study such as the IDP documents, policies and procedural manuals followed by the officials in the selected municipalities. An anticipation of withholding certain information was mitigated through the provision of detailed information on the research during the request for consent. Such information included assuring the officials that their participation will be anonymous, and that the information provided will be treated as confidential. Furthermore, some challenges were experienced with regard to the access to certain documentation and minutes of the relevant municipal councils. This was addressed through the early submission of formal application to access the required documents and other information in terms of the relevant legislation.

The research was also limited by the access to some of the selected sample, with some of them withdrawing prior to the interviews; and others not responding at all. This was mostly experienced with the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors. However, in the case of officials, this was addressed by referring the researcher to other officials in the similar department and with similar qualifications to provide responses to the questions. In some cases, the researcher also identified other officials who were in similar positions and levels as the ones that withdrew. To address the withdrawal or non-response of Ward Councillors, other Ward Councillors whose wards are adjacent to the original sampled wards, were identified and interviewed. In some cases, Proportional Representative Councillors in the same were approached to fill the gap. At the end, the correct number of participants was reached, and relevant data was obtained in time.

Further to the above, the researcher experienced challenges with two of the sampled municipalities with regard to the issuing of a permission to conduct research within them, and to their Senior Officials and Ward Councillors to participate in the research. One such local municipal that forms part of the West Rand District Municipality, had to be dropped from the sampled list, and another willing local municipality was included. In the City of Johannesburg, the researcher was advised telephonically of the permission to conduct research in the municipality, and the names of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors to be interviewed were also provide in the same manner. To verify the accuracy of such

communication, the researcher contacted the identified officials directly. The Senior Officials and Ward Councillors confirmed that they have been informed and authorized to engage in the research.

Furthermore, the timeframe for the completion of the study, particularly considering the voluminous data that was gathered, also posed as a limiting problem. This meant that not all the collected data was utilised and there remained much scope to engage with the phenomenon in future through the available data. However, this did not impede on the usefulness of the different aspects of this research in anyway. A decision was taken earlier in the study to focus more on the primary data from the interviews and observations as there would be no sufficient time to utilise all the documents accessed. Given the above limitations, the findings are mostly based on the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews and observations, and some secondary sources, based on the methodological decision to focus on some sources more than others. However, non-inclusion of all the secondary data in the data collection and analysis chapters was mitigated by the inclusion of same to the literature review chapter of the thesis.

### 1.4.3 Delimitation of the research

The study proceeded from the fact that representative democracy, as introduced in the country, lacks the legitimacy it requires for the citizens to accept its outputs. As such, the study acknowledges various reasons behind the introduction of participatory democracy in the local political system. One such reason is to "promote a strong democracy grounded on the interactions between all actors (elected & non-elected) who were affected by a public decision" (Barber, 1984). However, the literature has proved that implementing participatory governance has not yielded the anticipated success as often, the weakened version of this notion of democracy always manifest itself (Bartels, 2014:656). This had been evidenced in the post-colonial critiques levelled against participatory development, in particular the alleged tyrannization of development debates (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:1). In response to the above-mentioned shortcoming, a plural notion of democracy in which non-elected and elected individuals collaborate in influencing decisions on the felt issues has emerged.

Accordingly, the study is concerned with the introduction of this plural democratic conception, (deliberative democracy) in the form of meaningful citizen engagement. As stated, the research was limited to the study of the citizen engagement during the formulation of the IDP and budget, and excluded engagement on the decision-making or policy-making of other issues. The study only focused on the citizen deliberation about the social priorities that are often addressed in the IDPs. This eliminated technical decisions and other expert decisions of great complex, which are best delegated to the officials and the elected representatives. In other words, the study acknowledged that certain decisions involving local government institutions are best left in the hands of smaller groups such as the legislative oversight committees or even the individuals. However, such matters should be "subjected to deliberation as well, and the decisions and the means of arriving at them shall be placed on public records to enable citizens' review", if needs be (Young in Elstub, 2010).

It is important to note here that the study only focused on how meaningful engagement of citizens in the local planning and budget processes would enhance the outcomes. In other words, the research never intended to study the actual budgeting and planning, but how citizens are engaged during the processes. Furthermore, the research recognized the role of public protest as a form of participation, and as such, has not focused on the same. However, the consideration of incidents of violent protests during the research only served as a way of revealing the inadequacy of the current participatory system. Discussion of violent protests in the research also served to indicate the degree of citizens' dissatisfaction with deficiencies in the current public participation system. Various studies have been conducted in order to explore the nature, causes and extent of service delivery protest in South Africa (see Benit-Gbaffou, 2007; Masiwa, 2007, Kgalefa, 2010; CoGTA, 2009; Atkinson, 2007Bond, Gumede, Hicks & Buccus 2007, 2010; Friedman 2006, 2010; Mathekga, 2006; Municipal IQ; and others). As such, the study only focus on a particular kind of citizen engagement, that is, expansive democracy in the form of deliberative democracy.

Further to the above, the study only focused on the normative conception of democracy that is developed along the lines of either procedural or substantive views. As a first virtue of collective decision making, democratic legitimacy, which results from the latter view, is

subjected to certain conditions that needs to be satisfied. According to Cohen (1986) in Peter (2007:331), there are two important taxonomies to interpret the requirements of democratic legitimacy. The first category is to interpret the requirements of legitimacy in purely procedural terms. In terms of this taxonomy, a democratic outcome is only legitimate if it satisfies conditions of fairness or political equality (Peter, 2007:332). The second taxonomy pertains to the conditions that refer to the rationality of outcomes of the democratic process. Whereas the emphasis of the second category is on the quality of outcomes, the first is concerned with the satisfaction of the procedural fairness of the process, such as substantive equality of all the participants. This study was only concerned with the procedural fairness of the engagement process, rather than the outcome thereof, that is, the substantive democracy. Other studies may be required to investigate the outcomes of the public encounter or the face-to-face contact between public officials and citizen (Bartels, 2013; Roberts, 2004) in South Africa.

The democratic discourse is characterized by various related concepts such as public participation, public engagement, citizen engagement, citizen participation, community involvement, public deliberation, amongst others. Without providing detailed descriptions of these terms, the study focused on the concept of meaningful citizen engagement for the following reasons. In the context of this research 'citizens' refer to the eligible voters that inhabit a particular ward or locale. In this sense, the study was limited to the citizens rather than the general public, which may also comprise of non-citizens of the country. The main reason for limiting the study to the citizens is the fact that citizens are not only rate-payers, they also have rights. As an example, citizens are the ones that elect the municipal Councils and ward councillors based on their promises to them (manifestos), effectively setting up the local government. Accordingly, citizens are owed accountability by those they help put in power, which cannot be said of non-citizens. Even though non-citizens may be legal rate-payers within a specific municipality, they don't possess the same rights as the citizens of the country. For example, the non-citizens may not be as committed as citizens to ensure that public deliberation flourish because deliberation strongly relied on selfless and active citizenry. Nevertheless, the study does not in any way suggest that non-citizens have to be barred from public meetings, especially if same are legal rate-payers within the same locale.

Due to the limited space and focus, the following elements of public deliberation were not fully explored in this research: political and civic culture, the deliberative effects of communicative action, the effects of the public encounter between the officials and the citizens, and their asymmetric power relations; the linkage between the audit findings on PDOs and the actual performance on service delivery, particularly on the top achieving municipalities; and the effects of expansive democracy and the intrinsic value thereof. Furthermore, the study was only based on the AGSA's audit outcomes for the 2010 – 2011 financial year. The use of other financial years' findings, where applicable, was only for reference or comparison purposes.

The study was also limited to a small group of individuals within each of the sampled municipalities. As such, only forty-three (43) individuals were interviewed during the research, which translates into fifteen (15) Senior Officials, ten (10) Ward Councillors, ten (10) Community Members and eight (8) Ward Committee members. Due to the use of qualitative research design and methods, the number of participants had not critical impact for the outcome of the study. According to Merriam (2002:2), qualitative research is characterised, *inter alia*, by the search for meaning and understanding. Furthermore, in qualitative research, understanding the process is more important than looking for an outcome (Merriam, Courtenay & Baumgartner, 2003: 174). As such, rich, thick data was collected from the interviews of the supposedly small number of participants, and enabled the analysis and interpretation of findings.

Even though the participants were sampled purposively, the gender, race and age did not play any role in the sampling process. This means that the above elements were not used as a deciding factor for the research population, the researcher ensured a balanced representation of these, where possible. The reason for not focusing on gender, age and race during sampling was to ensure that access to the knowledgeable and willing participants was achieved.

### 1.4.4 Summary of the study

Employing the basic interpretive qualitative research design, the research examined how the participants make meaning of the phenomenon. This design drew from the

constructionism and the phenomenology to understand how the participants interpret their experiences, how they construct their life worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Following is the detail of the chapters in this report.

### 1.4.5 Chapter Organisation

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the topic by providing the background to the participatory governance of the new democratic order in South Africa. Based on the unpacking of the research problem statement and purpose thereof, the research questions that guided the study were posed in this chapter. This chapter also shows the gap in available knowledge base in regard to the assessment of the application of meaningful citizen engagement notion in the processes of IDPs and budget formulation. Furthermore, in the scope of the research, the chapter presents the practical outcomes of the research and the delimitation thereof. Finally, the chapter outlines the flow of thesis chapters, providing brief description of each.

**Chapter 2: Contextualising the study**

Due to the large area and setting that the study covered, a separate chapter was created in order to discuss the context in its entirety. As such, this chapter details the context of the study in terms of the place, environment, date and time. In terms of the context, the Auditor-General's audit findings and the overall profile of the province of Gauteng are presented and discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the comparative profiles of the municipalities that were sampled for this research. The research attempted to establish whether there was a nexus between the audit achievement of the municipalities and the actual delivery of services. This was achieved by profiling the municipalities in terms of their demographics, economic performances, employment and poverty and inequality data. The chapter also considers the relationship between the citizen protests and citizen engagement as a motivation for the research. The chapter further presents the significance of the study, which contrasts the current system with the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. This is augmented by the discussion of the theoretical context of the research,

the discussion of the status quo in the public participation system of local government, and the introduction of the meaningful citizen engagement concept into the discourse.

**Chapter 3: Survey of literature**

This chapter will elaborate on the theoretical framework and the literature review that formed the conceptual basis for the study. The conceptual framework attempts to locate the origin of the concept of integrated development planning by discussing the different notions of democracy and the democratic theories relevant to the study. Of significance from this chapter is the unpacking of the deliberative democratic theory as a basis for the understanding of meaningful citizen engagement. This chapter also provides detailed analysis of the notion of deliberative democracy as a tool for measuring meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes. The chapter also introduces the criteria that have been developed as a procedural fairness for measuring citizen engagement.

**Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

This chapter describes the research methodology in terms of various approaches (paradigms), the design of the study, and the collection and analysis of data. The approach that will be employed in this inquiry is based on qualitative methods and techniques, and the chapter reveals, through literature survey; why and how this approach will enhance the understanding of the theoretical and policy issues surrounding the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. In this chapter, the specific research design for this study and the reasons for its selection are discussed. Finally, the chapter presents the section on how the data will be collected and analyzed.

Further to the above, this chapter shows how the reliability and validity of research findings will be ensured. The ethical considerations are also discussed in this section of the research report. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitation of the study and the conclusion.

**Chapter 5: Presentation of research findings**

Findings of the research are presented and briefly discussed in this chapter, in accordance with the themes that were developed through the research and interview questions. The chapter has been organised in a manner that would guide the reader through the research and interview questions, using direct quotations from the respondents thereof.

The findings are discussed after every presentation per theme or sub-heading. In this way, the salient points from the findings are well illuminated and easily connected to the analysis thereof. The chapter closes with a section of conclusion, which summarises the key points from the findings and discussions. Care is taken not to analyse or interpret the data in this chapter.

**Chapter 6: Interpretation and Analysis of data**

The interpretation and analysis of data from the findings are conducted in this chapter. The discussion in this chapter is presented in such a way that the story from the findings is clearly brought to the fore. The chapter interprets the findings from all the sources of the research, and analyses their key points in relation to the research questions. The main discussions of the themes and the chapter summaries attempt to demonstrate that the findings did address the research problem and questions. This is made simper by the presentation of summaries of analyses at the end of each thematic analysis.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion**

This chapter serves as the conclusion on the preceding chapter and the research as a whole. For the purpose of alignment and clarity, this chapter has also adopted the thematic format that is similar to those of Chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, this chapter presents the implications of the research findings on the institutional arrangements and the citizenry at large. The future direction of the research is suggested in this chapter as well, with the concluding remarks of the project as a whole included as conclusion of the chapter.

# CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is worth noting that the organisation of chapters in this thesis has deviated from the standard research handbook, where normally the second chapter details the literature reviewed. This deviation is due to the following two reasons: The first reason is the fact that the study covered a large area, and as such, generated more contextual data during the research. This necessitated the creation of a separate space in order to discuss same in details. The second reason for having a separate contextual chapter was to provide the theoretical context in more details. The theoretical context entailed the discussion of the incidents of service delivery protest in relation to meaningful citizen engagement, as well as locating the concept, in comparison with the *status quo.* The latter part of the discussion resulted in the alignment of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement with the notion of deliberative democracy as a basis thereof.

Every study is based on a specific context for the purposes of framing and focusing it at a specific area. The context may include time or date, place and specific occasion, event, institution or environment which may be linked to the problem being studied (Badenhorst, 2007:19). As such, the context of this study included the discussion of the Auditor-General of South Africa's findings of the 2010-2011 financial year (event and time/date), an overview of the Gauteng province and the comparison of all the sampled municipalities (place). Also included in this chapter is the the theoretical context of the research, discussed in terms of the *status quo* in the public participation system of local government, and as a rationale for the study. The above-mentioned section is presented in a manner that highlights the problems that are faced, and to some extent, created by the current public participation system. This chapter also serves to introduce the notion of meaningful citizen engagement and its theoretical basis.

## 2.2 AUDITO-GENERAL OF SOUTH AFRICA: 2010-2011 AUDIT FINDINGS ON MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE

Certain municipalities that are situated within the province of Gauteng, in South Africa were selected to conduct this study. The province is made up of three metropolitan (metros) municipalities (Category A), seven local municipalities (Category B) and two district municipalities (Category C). The three metros are the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), the City of Tshwane and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM); the seven local municipalities are Emfuleni, Lesedi, Merafong, Midvaal, Mogale City, Randfontein and Westonaria; the two district municipalities are Sedibeng and West Rand (WRDM) (AGSA, 2012:28).

Based on the above-mentioned classifications and categorisation of municipalities as well as the AGSA reports, two municipalities on Categories A and B, respectively, and one municipality on Category C were studied. These municipalities were selected by utilising the AGSA's audit outcomes per category. For example, where all the municipalities in a category achieved the same audit outcomes, only one municipality was examined in that category, vice-versa. The researcher attempted to identify the municipalities that achieved clean, unqualified, or qualified audit opinions from the AGSA during the 2010-11 financial year. This period was ideal, as it was assumed that most municipalities were working hard in an attempt to comply with the targets set by CoGTA. The CoGTA department had set a target of achieving no adverse or disclaimer audit opinions by the local government in the 2010-11 financial year. This target was one of the milestones towards the targets set in the department's Operation Clean Audit 2014 (Powell, Donovan, Ayele & Chigwata, 2014:1). Subsequent to the above, the premier of the Gauteng Province, also launched the namesake provincial campaign, which aimed to have all the municipalities achieve at least 60% financially unqualified audit reports. The above-mentioned targets meant that the province's municipalities had to work hard during the 2011-12 financial year as well (AGSA, 2012:28). The choice of the 2010-2011 financial year as a baseline for the proposed inquiry was based on the discussion below as well as on the increasing trends of violent service delivery protests that were directed at various municipalities during that period (Municipal IQ, 2012; NT, 2011:22).

However, for inclusivity and comparison purposes, performance reporting on predetermined objectives (PDOs) for the past five years (2008–2012) have also been utilised to sample the appropriate municipalities for this research. In accordance with the above, the study also examined trends of citizen engagement activities of each selected municipality in the period of five years from 2008 to 2012, with the aim of understanding the meaningfulness of such activities from the perspectives of the relevant communities. Data from these reports also formed part of the data collection and analysis for this study.

Although the AGSA's overall audit outcomes includes, amongst others, reports on the auditees' findings arising from the audit of the financial statements as well as compliance with laws and regulations, this study was concerned with only one aspect of the AGSA's audit outcomes findings, namely, audit outcomes of the reports on PDOs (AGSA, 2012:44). Sampling of the municipalities for this study was based on their performance in terms of the AGSA's audit findings on the selected municipalities' reports against their PDOs (service delivery targets). Performance reporting on PDOs measures the actual performance against the municipality's strategic objectives as set out in that municipality's five-year IDP (AGSA, 2012:31, 40). Therefore, performance information on PDOs plays an important role of

> Informing the public, oversight bodies and other stakeholders on whether the auditees are delivering public services by comparing their performance against their budgets and strategic plans… (AGSA, 2012:31).

The fact that about 70% of the auditees in the 2010-2011 financial year obtained findings on PDOs indicates that reporting on PDOs remained one of the major challenges in achieving clean audits (AGSA, 2012:44). The reason for employing this approach of sampling was to determine whether there was a link between the success or failure in the selected municipalities' actual performance on PDOs (service delivery) and the planning for local development and service delivery (IDPs & Budgets). As such, sampling of the municipalities in the following manner enabled the researcher to understand whether participatory planning (integrated development planning) and participatory budgeting led to better service delivery or not.

## 2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE GAUTENG PROVINCE

The profiles of the sampled municipalities can be better understood in the context of a larger profiling of the province as a whole. Following is the discussion pertaining to the total profile of the Gauteng province, on the basis of which, its municipalities will be studied and understood. The profiles of the subject municipalities will also be presented in this section.

Situated in the north-eastern part of South Africa with headquarters at one of the fastest growing and economically active cities, the City of Joburg (CoJ-Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality), the Province of Gauteng is the smallest of the nine provinces, yet the most densely populated (Stats SA, 2012:10). Figure 1 depicts the locality map of SA, showing the location of the province of Gauteng (insert top left). In this map, it is clear that the Province of Gauteng remains the smallest in the country when compared with others. As can be seen, the province is landlocked between the following four provincial borders: it is bordered on the south by the Free State province, to the west by North West, Limpopo to the north, and Mpumalanga to the east (Bradshow et al., 2000:4).

**Figure: 1 Map of provincial boundaries since 2001 (Locality map of South Africa)** ***(Source: Stats SA, 2012)***



On the other hand, Table 1 below presents the comparison of population increases in all provinces as recorded in the censuses of 2001, 2006 and 2011, respectively. This table indicates lucidly that the population of SA has grown from 40.6 million in 1996 to 51.8 million in 2011. In terms of this table, the Province of Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN), followed by that of Gauteng, were the most populated in both Censuses 1996 and 2001. However, during the Community Survey (CS) of 2007 and Census 2011 the province of Gauteng took a lead as the most populated area in the country, leaving KZN on the second spot. In the period between 2007 and 2011, the population share of Gauteng increased by 15%, followed by that of Western Cape and KZN with 10.3% and 0.1%, respectively (Stats SA, 2012:16). Clearly, at 12.2 million, the population of Gauteng Province is the highest in all the South African provinces.

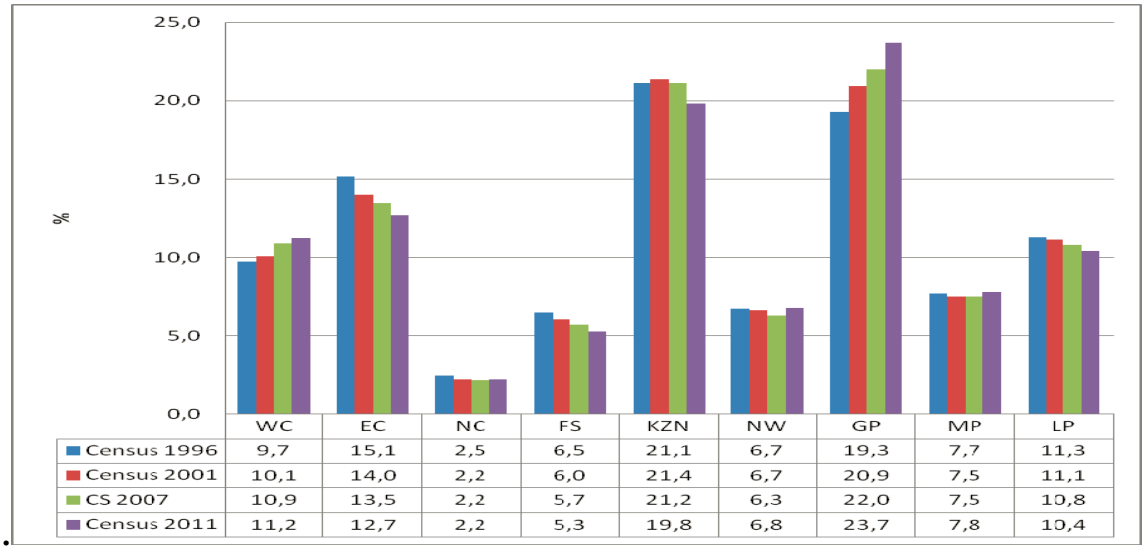
**Table 3: Population and percentage change by province: Censuses 1996, 2001 and 2011 and Community Survey 2007** ***(Source: Census 2011)***

| Province | Census 1996 | Census 2001 | 1996-2001 % Change | CS 2007 | 2001-2007 % Change | Census 2011 | 2007-2011 % Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WC** | 3 956 876 | 4 524 335 | **14.3** | 5 278 585 | **16.7** | 5 822 734 | **10.3** |
| **EC** | 6 147 244 | 6 278 651 | **2.1** | 6 527 747 | **4.0** | 6 562 053 | **0.5** |
| **NC** | 1 011 864 | 991 919 | **-2.0** | 1 058 060 | **6.7** | 1 145 861 | **8.3** |
| **FS** | 2 633 504 | 2 706 775 | **2.8** | 2 773 058 | **2.5** | 2 754 590 | **-1.0** |
| **KZN** | 8 572 302 | 9 584 129 | **11.8** | 10 259 229 | **7.0** | 10 267 300 | **0.1** |
| **NW** | 2 727 223 | 2 984 098 | **9.4** | 3 056 083 | **2.4** | 3 509 953 | **14.9** |
| **GP** | 7 834 125 | 9 388 854 | **19.8** | 10 667 505 | **13.6** | 12 272 263 | **15.0** |
| **MP** | 3 123 869 | 3 365 554 | **7.7** | 3 643 507 | **8.3** | 4 039 939 | **10.9** |
| **LP** | 4 576 566 | 4 995 462 | **9.2** | 5 238 285 | **4.9** | 5 404 868 | **3.2** |
| **SA** | **40 583 573** | **44 819 778** | **10.4** | **48 502 059** | **8.2** | **51 770 560** | **6.7** |

Furthermore, Figure 2 below clearly shows that there was a noticeable increase in the percentage share of the population in Gauteng from 19.3% in 1996 to 23.7% in 2011, whilst

the share of KZN remained almost the same (21,1% in 1996 to 19,8% in 2011) (Stats SA, 2012:14).

**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of population by province, 2006 – 2011** ***(Source: Census 2011).***




| | WC | EC | NC | FS | KZN | NW | GP | MP | LP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Census 1996 | 9,7 | 15,1 | 2,5 | 6,5 | 21,1 | 6,7 | 19,3 | 7,7 | 11,3 |
| Census 2001 | 10,1 | 14,0 | 2,2 | 6,0 | 21,4 | 6,7 | 20,9 | 7,5 | 11,1 |
| CS 2007 | 10,9 | 13,5 | 2,2 | 5,7 | 21,2 | 6,3 | 22,0 | 7,5 | 10,8 |
| Census 2011 | 11,2 | 12,7 | 2,2 | 5,3 | 19,8 | 6,8 | 23,7 | 7,8 | 10,4 |

The census of 2011 also revealed a rapid trend of migration of the country's population to the province of Gauteng. Accordingly, over 1 million people migrated into the province during the census period, temporarily increasing the local population (Stats SA, 2012:26). In addition, a large number of non-South African citizens (7.1% of the total population) were found to be temporarily residing in the province during this period (Stats SA, 2012:29).

The emphasis on population growth and migration in this research was necessary to determine the pressure and challenges that the province and its municipalities encounter with regard to the delivery of services. Similarly, the issues of unemployment and poverty are relevant to the discussion and in understanding the relationship between service delivery protests and the performance of the relevant municipalities. Consequently, the wards that were selected for this study were those that had higher percentages of unemployment, poverty cases and high rates of service delivery (hot spots) in recent years.

The province of Gauteng is regarded as an economic nucleus of the country and the continent of Africa, and "her fourth largest economy, after South Africa, Egypt and Algeria" (Bradshow et al., 2005:4; GPG, 2005:4). The province contributes largely in,

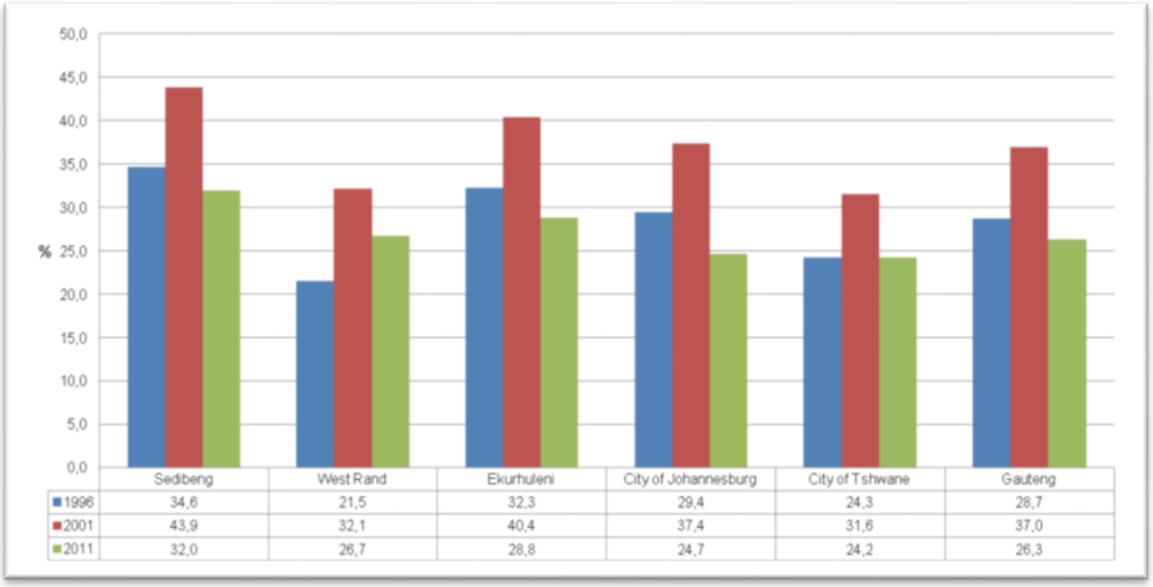
amongst others, the financial, manufacturing, transport, technology, and telecommunications sectors of the country (Bradshow et al., 2005:4). As a consequence, this province is seen as a major contributor and determinant of economic and social development in the continent of Africa (GPG, 2005:4). For example, the province is responsible for a third of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and it generates approximately 10% of the total GDP of sub-Saharan Africa and about 7% of total African GDP (GPG, 2005:7). Amongst others, the province of Gauteng's critical role in the continent and the South African Development Community (SADC) region emanates from the following reasons. It is a "home to most corporate head-quarters of multi-national corporations active in the Continent; a critical air transportation hub in the region and a major link between Continental and International air traffic" (GDP, 2005:7). For example, through the "Johannesburg International Airport, it provides quick and direct connections with most primary airports in the region, the continent and internationally; and playing a critical role in the road and rail transportation and logistical support, especially in the sub-continent" (GPG, 2005). The practical example is the City Deep container depot, situated in the CoJ, which serves as an important inland port, supporting trade in the region. As a consequence of the above, Gauteng receives more migrant labourers than any other provinces and Africa countries in general.

The economic successes of the province of Gauteng are always marred by the ever-present complex duality. For example, the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor has not been adequately addressed (GPG, 2005:6). In terms of the Growth and Development Strategy (GPG, 2005:6), an unacceptably high percentage of the provinces' residents are still trapped in poverty. The opportunities to engage meaningfully in the provincial economic activities and growth have benefited those sectors that are generally financially secure and stable, and those who have the necessary skills, means and resources to participate in the economy. According to the Gauteng GDS (2005:7), some of the socio-economic gaps and challenges in the province that still need to be addressed are:

> Continued high levels of poverty and unemployment; provision of adequate housing to approximately 23,9% of households in informal settlements and 10,5% households living in "back yards" or traditional housing; ensuring that the 8% of our population that has no education receives basic literacy; provision of electricity to households for various purposes: 20% of our population still need electricity for lighting, 30% for heating purposes and 27% for cooking purposes; and provision of piped water to the remaining 2.5 % households.

Due to the province's vast economic opportunities, more job seekers have flocked into the province, but the economy has been unable to absorb them all into the formal employment, increasing the currently unemployment rate to 25.7%. Notably, this figure is a consolidation of all the municipalities' unemployment rates. As such, the following graph (Figure 3) demonstrates the unemployment rate profiles of all the municipalities in Gauteng as recorded in the past three censuses of 1996, 2001 and 2011.

**Figure 3: Unemployment rate (official definition) by district municipality – 1996, 2001 and 2011 (*Source: Census2011 – Gauteng Report*)**




| | Sedibeng | West Rand | Ekurhuleni | City of Johannesburg | City of Tshwane | Gauteng |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 34,6 | 21,5 | 32,3 | 29,4 | 24,3 | 28,7 |
| 2001 | 43,9 | 32,1 | 40,4 | 37,4 | 31,6 | 37,0 |
| 2011 | 32,0 | 26,7 | 28,8 | 24,7 | 24,2 | 26,3 |

As can be seen, the graph above (Figure 3) shows the trends in unemployment rate between various periods, in this case, determined by the censuses. The data, therefore, suggests that unemployment tended to increase in 1996 and 2001, and thereafter (up to the Census of 2011) declined when compared across the municipalities of Gauteng (Stats SA, 2012: 16).

## 2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT OVERVIEW

The South African local government sphere emerged from the erstwhile white administration as an uncoordinated, disparate level of government (De Visser, 2009). The

effects of the past dispensation on the local socio-economic development have been cited elsewhere in this thesis. A need to coordinate the local government and recognise it as an independent sphere of government that is capable of meeting its new developmental mandate was addressed in the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996:81-85). Having been elevated to the pivotal position of a development agency, the local government sphere had to be guided by a comprehensive development plan to achieve its new mandate (Mac Kay, 2004:1). The Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is based on the concept of the developmental local government (DLG), was born out of the above-mentioned need (Mac Kay, 2004: 1).

In terms of the legislation, South African municipalities are divided into three categories, namely, a single-tier Category A, and a two-tier local government in Category B and Category C municipalities (RSA, 1996: 82; RSA, 1998). Category A provides for the establishment of the metropolitan municipalities, Category B provides for the establishment of the local municipalities, and Category C provides for the establishment of two-tier district municipalities. Notably, the district municipalities are made up of a number of local municipalities per province that are grouped and administered or governed together, hence the two-tier label. In this tier, a Category C (district) municipality essentially shares a jurisdiction with a number of Category B (local) municipalities, whereas a metropolitan municipality (Category A) has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area of jurisdiction. It follows then, that a metropolitan municipality has legislative competence over all the functional areas listed in Schedules 4B and 5B of the Constitution of 1996, and the municipalities in the two-tier relationship share the responsibilities in their areas. As such, Category C municipalities possess seniority status over Category B. Even though Category B municipalities are responsible for their IDPs and Budgets, these should be aligned with the main districts'.

The above-mentioned system of categorising was further expanded during the third and final establishment phase of local government (post 2000) in order to clearly understand the various and unique challenges facing each of the 283 municipalities (CoGTA, 2011:8). Currently, South Africa has a total of 278 municipalities that are allocated to these categories in the following manner: eight metropolitan municipalities, 226 local municipalities and 44 district municipalities (AGSA, 2012:21).

Numerous other approaches to categorise and classify municipalities have been developed by different national departments and agencies (CoGTA, 2011:57). Amongst others, classification approaches were developed by the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework (MIIF), the Project Consolidate, the Council for Science and Industrial Research (CSIR), the National Treasury (NT) and CoGTA. These approaches were developed as a way of acknowledging the fact that municipalities in the country are not the same, and as such, they do not face similar service delivery and developmental challenges (CoGTA, 2009:106). The categorisation and classifications that have been adopted by the NT, the MIIF and the CoGTA were considered in this research.

CoGTA, in both its Local Government Turn Around Strategy (2009a) and The State of Local Government (2009b) reports, has adopted the MIIF approach of municipal categorising. According to CoGTA (2011: 57), the adoption of the MIIF approach is due thereto that it "uses legal categorisations of municipalities and further disaggregates them into particular typologies based on spatial characteristics, size of institution and budget, population and percentage urban population." Accordingly, these characteristics are likely to remain fixed over time, say a period of a year or two. For the above reasons, this categorisation is believed to be a fairly good base that can be used to understand different profiles of the municipalities (CoGTA, 2009:8; 2009:57).

Following are the seven sub-categorisations of the original legal categories, i.e. Category A, B and C, as compiled and employed by the MIIF 7 (2011:10), the NT (2011: 193) and CoGTA (2009:8; 2009:16-17; 106), and expanded by the office of the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA, 2012:21)

Category A: 8 Metropolitan municipalities: Large urban complex with population over 1 million people, and accounting for 56% of all municipal expenditure in the country.

Category B1: 19 Local municipalities with large budgets and containing secondary cities.

Category B2: 27 Local municipalities with a large town as a core. There is a large variation in population sizes among these municipalities and they have a large urban dwelling population.

Category B3: 110 Local municipalities with one or two small towns, relatively small populations and significant proportion of urban population but with no large towns as a

core. Rural areas in this category are characterised by the presence of commercial farms as these local economies are largely agriculturally based.

Category B4: 70 Local municipalities which are mainly rural with communal land tenure and villages or scattered groups of dwellings; with, at most, one or two small towns in their area. They are typically located in former homelands.

Category C1: 23 District municipalities which are not water service authorities.

Category C2: 21 District municipalities which are water service authorities.

In order to better assess whether meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes may lead to the alleviation of service delivery backlogs within the South African local government, the study was broadened to incorporate various categories of municipalities. The researcher examined a number of municipalities in each category in the study in order to gain a deeper insight on the nature of the relationship between the citizen engagement activities and the service delivery challenges. That is, whether better and inclusive planning does lead to better service delivery or not.

Furthermore, in order to provide a holistic view of the above-mentioned differentiation of municipalities in terms of functionality, socio-economic profiles and backlogs status; CoGTA (2009:106) undertook a preliminary research to develop the Municipal Spatial Classification System. In terms thereof, the following four quartiles were identified:

Class 1 consisting of 57 most vulnerable local municipalities, which are poor performers that fall within the lowest percentile nationally; Class 2 consisting of 58 second most vulnerable local municipalities, which are found in commercial farming areas with small towns, and within former apartheid homelands; Class 3 consisting 58 second highest performing local municipalities that contain small farming areas supported by small mining towns and they fall outside former apartheid homelands; and Class 4, which consists of 58 of the highest performing local municipalities that are characterized by the highly urbanized communities, large urban centres and mining towns. This totalled about 231 local municipalities (CoGTA, 2009: 107-109). The NT further classified municipalities by assessing their level and capability to implement the standards of the Generally Recognised Accounting Practices (GRAP) (Scott, 2008:3). In terms of the Government Notice No. 773 issued by the NT on 1 July 2004, municipalities are classified as ‘high capacity’, ‘medium

capacity' and 'low capacity' based on the above-mentioned assessment (SA Government Gazette, 2004). Currently, 48 municipalities are rated as 'high capacity' municipalities, and these include the entire metropolitan and some district municipalities, which are relatively large organisations (CoGTA, 2009:122-3; Scott, 2008:3). The above-mentioned classification and categorisation of municipalities have assisted the researcher in identifying the municipalities to be examined for this thesis. This is because they propose and inform a differentiated approach to the management and governance of our municipalities across the rural and urban landscape of the country (CoGTA, 2009: 122-3).

**Comparative profiles of the sampled municipalities**

Prior to the launch of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) by CoGTA in 2009, a rapid assessment of the state of local government was undertaken. That assessment found that the local government was effectively "in distress," due to wide-ranging systemic problems, including massive service delivery backlog, a breakdown in governance, corruption, fraud, and rampant service delivery protests (CoGTA, 2009a). In this section, the above-mentioned findings were utilized to compile a comparative profile of all the sampled municipalities for the study. The purpose of doing that was to show that the financial management and service delivery challenges were experienced by various municipalities across the province, and to learn how some of the municipalities were able to change their fortunes.

For ease of reference and statistical understanding of the selected municipalities, the following table (Table 4), representing quick facts for the sampled municipalities, will be employed throughout the discussion of their profiles. It is worth noting that all the data in Table 4 have been sourced from the Gauteng municipal report of the Census 2011 (Stats SA, 2012). Due to the comprehensive nature of the provincial profile, minimal profiles of the municipalities will be provided in this section to avoid duplication. The purpose of providing the profiles of individual municipalities is to present comparative evidence in regard to similarities (and differences) in both the governance structures and the socio-economic situations of the sampled municipalities.

**Table 4: Consolidated Fact Sheet for the Sampled Municipalities (*Source: Stats SA, 2012*).**

| Description | ELM | MLM | WRDM | WLM | EMM | COJ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geographic area (km²) | 966 | 1 722 | 4 082 | 640 | 1 924 | 1 645 |
| No. of people | 721 663 | 95 301 | 820 995 | 111 767 | 3 178 470 | 4 434 827 |
| Pop. growth 2001-2011 | 0.9% | 3.9% | 1.0% | 0.2% | 2.5% | 3.2% |
| No. Black African | 616 095 | 55 643 | 650 132 | 102 147 | 2 502 769 | 3 389 278 |
| No. Whites | 86 948 | 36 869 | 137 041 | 7 862 | 502 439 | 544 530 |
| No. of Coloureds | 8 356 | 1558 | 20 550 | 750 | 85 910 | 247 176 |
| No. of Indians / Asians | 7 078 | 750 | 9433 | 342 | 68 058 | 216 198 |
| No. of households & size | 220135 (3.2) | 29965 (3.0) | 267 397 (2.9) | 40101 (2.6) | 1015465 (3.0) | 1434856 (2.9) |
| Population density / km² | 747.1 | 55.3 | 200.9 | 174.6 | 1 652.0 | 2 695.9 |
| No. of wards | 45 | 14 | 100 | 16 | 101 | 130 |
| No. of formal housing | 187 876 | 24 042 | 194 395 | 23 643 | 786 257 | 1 167 935 |
| No. of informal housing | 30 649 | 5 380 | 67 737 | 15 550 | 218 259 | 249 823 |
| No. with flushing toilets | 198 978 | 24 718 | 220 048 | 25 435 | 890 040 | 1 298 412 |
| No. with pit latrines | 15 409 | 3 576 | 35 764 | 12 549 | 80 613 | 86 336 |
| No. using bucket | 2 029 | 645 | 4 743 | 556 | 23 594 | 28 648 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. with no toilets | 2 257 | 606 | 4 506 | 1 049 | 11 806 | 11 491 |
| No. with piped water | 207 341 | 24 835 | 222 593 | 26 035 | 884 931 | 850 079 |
| No. with no piped water | 1 260 | 1 266 | 5 219 | 315 | 11 311 | 19 854 |
| % with electricity | 202 903 | 23 770 | 218 339 | 25 770 | 834 444 | 1 303 046 |
| % with refuse removal | 199 645 | 24 897 | 212 610 | 29 292 | 908 191 | 1 391 394 |
| No. employed | 202 543 | 37 336 | 293 335 | 40 585 | 1 126 844 | 1 696 520 |
| Unemployment rate | 34.7% | 18.8% | 26.3% | 29.5 | 28.8% | 25% |
| Average annual income | 86 895 | 145 180 | 100 812 | 63 945 | 125 688 | 183 247 |
| Dependency ratio | 43.8% | 41.9% | 39.2% | 36.4% | 39.4% | 37.6% |

Pursuant to the above discussion, various wards of the following municipalities were selected for this study: two metropolitan municipalities (Category A), Ward 2 of the City of Johannesburg (financially qualified opinion and findings with opinion on PDOs) and Ward 32 of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (financially unqualified opinion with findings and opinion with no findings on PDOs); due to the fact that both of the provinces' district municipalities achieved financially unqualified opinions with findings, one of the two district municipalities, i.e. Ward 2 of the Westonaria Local Municipality (West Rand District Municipality) (Category C), with no findings on PDOs was considered. Furthermore, two local municipalities, Ward 11 of Midvaal (Category B3 - financially unqualified opinion with findings and opinion with findings on PDOs) and Ward 36 of Emfuleni (Category B2 - financially qualified opinion and opinion with findings on PDOs) were also examined. No municipality in the Gauteng province achieved a clean audit opinion from the AGSA during the 2010-11 financial year.

## Profiles of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (the metros)

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, Act 117 of 1998, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (City of Johannesburg or CoJ) and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) are classified as Category A. Even though the two metropolitan municipalities (metros) share most of the characteristics, they often perform unevenly on their financial management and service delivery. It is for this reason that the two are studied in comparison in order to understand their different performances.

### Geographic profile:

According to the 2003/04 IDP (CoJ, 2013: 13), the CoJ is located within the centre of the Province of Gauteng, and is bordered on the north by Tshwane metropolitan area, on the east by the EMM area, on the south-east by the Midvaal Local municipal area, on the south by Emfuleni Local municipal area, and on the west by the WRDM area. The boundaries of the area extend from Orange Farm in the south to Midrand in the north and from Roodepoort in the west to Modderfontein/ Bruma in the east (CoJ, 2003: 15). On the other hand, the EMM municipality is located east of Johannesburg, and south of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, along the east-west Johannesburg – Maputo Corridor as well as the east-west gold and coal mining belt; and the north – south iron and steel corridor (EMM, 2013:120).

In response to the legislative requirement that communities should have easy access to the government services, the two metros have adopted the urban management systems that operate on regional scales. In terms of the 2013 – 2016 IDP Review (CoJ, 2013: 9), CoJ adopted the urban management system that operates on a seven distinct regional scale in order to manage the city. These regions are represented in the map below.

**Figure 4: Map of the seven regions of the City of Johannesburg. (*Source: 2012-2016 City of Johannesburg IDP*)**




The EMM, on the other hand, is administered in terms of three distinct regional areas, namely North, South and East that are further divided into twenty customer care centres (EMM, 2009: 4, 8-9). Figure 5 and Figure 6 below depict the regions of the EMM and the customer care centres, respectively. The map clearly depicts the existing CCCs, those that need to be improved (Brownfields) and those that need to be newly constructed (Greenfields).

**Figure 5: Three Regions of the EMM (*Source: City Planning Department, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality*)**

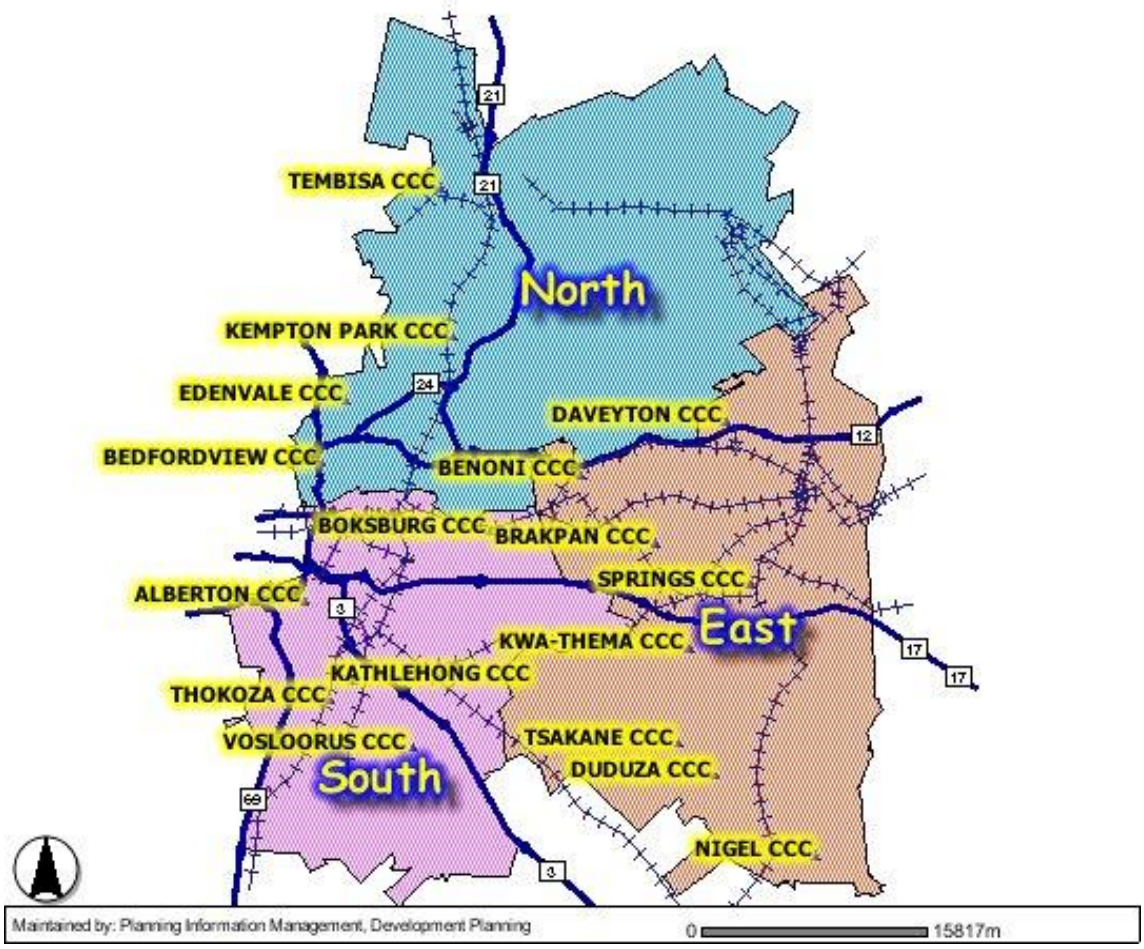
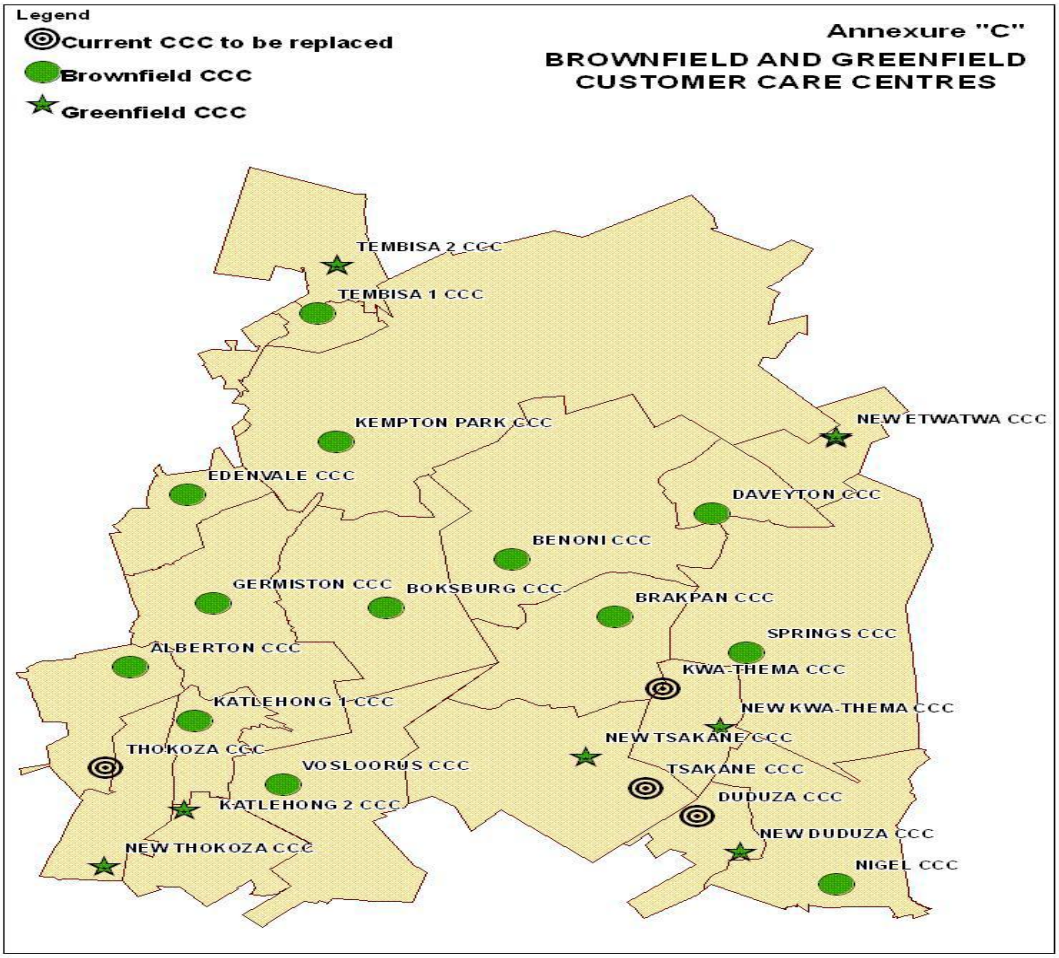


**Figure 6: Customer Care Centres of the EMM (*Source: CCCs Business Plan, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, November 2007*)**




Understanding the population dynamics and profiles of the two metros had been achieved by considering these regional management systems. This is due to the fact that issues such as poverty, deprivation and unemployment are geographically concentrated (CoJ, 2012: 13).

Together with the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, the two metros fall within what is called Global City Region or GCR (CoJ, 2011:39). GCR refers to a notion that helps in understanding the geography of economic competitiveness within a province or a country (CoJ, 2011: 22). The idea of GCR is premised on the regional economies that consist of one or more metropolitan area, and their vicinities (CoJ, 2011: 18). The economies of such areas are symbolized by the various networks of specialized but

complementary activities that are supported by large multifaceted local labour markets (CoJ, 2011: 39). A combination of the above areas results in a strong and competitive economy that is rapidly growing (CoJ, 2011:23). The main feature of the GCR is the availability of multi-centres of economic activities, which in the case of Gauteng Province, can be found in the three metropolitan municipalities of Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni (CoJ, 2011: 39). Globalization, with its consequences of free movements of people, goods and services across the countries, as well as regional and geo-political developments such as of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and G20 countries; define the emergence of Gauteng as a GCR (CoJ, 2011: 22). Notably, the above scenarios necessitate the introduction of new institutional arrangements amongst cities as new areas of investment, knowledge exchanges and cities and social partnerships emerge (CoJ, 2011:22).

As part of the GCR, the two metros are regarded as economic engines of the country as a whole. This is due to their huge contribution to the national GDP (CoJ, 2010; EMM, 2011), and being home to crucial industries such as mining and steel production (EMM, 2013:10). Both metros are also regarded as transportation hubs, satisfying both the local and international needs (EMM, 2013:10; CoJ, 2003:13). For example, the state-of-the-art rail, road and air links connects both metros directly to Durban, which houses the largest South African Indian Ocean port (EMM, 2013:10). Furthermore, the EMM is home to the OR Tambo International Airport, which services the entire continent and connects to major cities throughout the world (EMM, 2013:10).

The above-mentioned characteristics of the two metros have led to their recognition as destinations of choice for those seeking economic opportunities (CoJ, 2013: 11; EMM, 2013: 10). However, massive challenges in terms of urban poverty, inequality, social exclusion and underdevelopment still remain as a result of the large rate of migration (CoJ, 2012: 13-14).

**Demographic profile:**

Demographically, the metros are home to a sizable population, which borders on overpopulation when considering their total extent (See Table 1 above). Accordingly, the

CoJ is home to some 4.4 million people, accounting for about 36% of Gauteng population and 8% of the national population (Stats SA, 2012). On the other hand, the EMM with the population of 3.2 million accounts for about 25.5% of the province's population and approximately 5.4% of the national population (Stats SA, 2012). The populations of the two metros are defined by a long history of local and international migration, as the metros continue to provide the main metropolitan gateways for the local and foreign people seeking economic opportunities (CoJ, 2013: 10). Notably, this has led to major population growth for the two metros, with increasing household movements being recorded in the regions during the previous census. According to the statistics, the population of the CoJ grew by 3.2% in the period between 2001 and 2011, whereas that of the EMM grew by 2.5% in the same period (Stats SA, 2012; CoJ, 2013:11).

Concomitantly, the above-mentioned population growths led to the sharp increase in the households of the two metros, and by implication, more demands for basic municipal services.

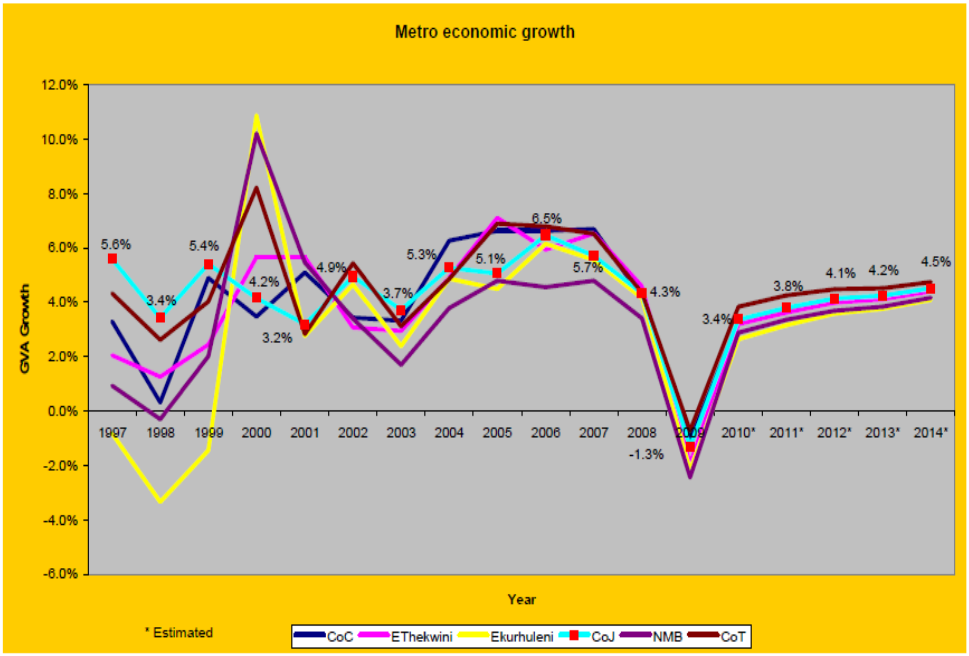
**Economic profile and Unemployment**

The economic landscapes of the two metros have changed drastically from their humble origins. For example, both metros' economic structures were originally dominated by mining in the early industrial development years (EMM, 2013:18). However, a diversity of sectors has developed in recent years, with the services sector (i.e. finance, insurance, real estate and business services) being the dominant one (CoJ, 2011: 49; CoJ, 2013: 20). As stated above, the two metros are now well-recognized economic and commercial hubs of SA, which may be attributed partly to the well-developed road, rail and air network that radiate from them to the rest of the country and the world, thus promoting large capital and infrastructure investment. (CoJ, 2003: 13).

Considering the following graphical representation (Figure 7), it is evident that the economy of the CoJ and the EMM, when compared to the other metros, continued to grow steadily (CoJ, 2011:26). Even though the two were also hard-hit by the effects of the financial crisis of 2008, recovery has been quicker, with projections of 4.5% growth by 2014 being predicted for the City of Johannesburg (CoJ, 2011:26).

**Figure 7: Economic growth patterns for SA Metros – 1997- 2014 (*Source: CoJ, Department of Economic Development, 2010*).**

*Graph 2: Economic growth patterns for SA Metros - 1997 to 2014 (City of Johannesburg, Department of Economic Development 2010)*




Since the economies of the two metros are the largest in the country, and contributes more on both the national and provincial GDPs, any change in the national economic environment has a ripple effect in those of the two metros (CoJ, 2011:19).

Even though the economy of the CoJ indicated a steady growth trend, this is not matched by the employment rate patterns (CoJ, 2013: 18). In terms of the 2012 – 2016 IDP (CoJ, 2013:18), the employment in the CoJ comprises 90.1% formal employment and 9.9 informal employment, whereas, the unemployment rate was estimated to be 24.7% (Stats SA, 2012:16). Figure 3, indicates that, even though unemployment in the City fell down from 37.4% as recorded during the Census of 2001, at 24.7% (Stats SA, 2012); it was still higher.

According to Malikane at al. (2012 in CoJ 2012: 15), regional economic analysis reveals the different unemployment rates amongst the CoJ regions, with Region D showing the highest level of unemployment at 47.7%, followed by Region G at 28.1%, Region F at 26.2% and Region A at 15.7%. With regard to the EMM, unemployment is evenly spread

throughout the regions, but is concentrated at those that are inhabited by black South Africans. These areas are mostly located at the outskirts of the urban areas, where most informal housing are situated.

**Inequality and poverty:**

Just like the story of economic development and unemployment in the CoJ, inequality and poverty are also regionally concentrated (CoJ, 2013:14). This is in congruent with the trends of unemployment in the City, which is also geographically concentrated. The logic behind this scenario is based on the fact that high unemployment rate leads to higher levels of inequality and poverty, as evidenced in the CoJ's Gini coefficient of 0,63 in 2009 (CoJ, 2012:13). Research clearly revealed the concentration and differences of regions in terms of the people living in poverty and deprivation (Malikane, et al., 2012 in CoJ, 2013). Accordingly, Region G has the highest number of people living in poverty, followed by Region D and A, whilst the number of people in poverty is lower in Region B (CoJ, 2013:15). Consequently, the continuous growth of the CoJ posed major challenges in terms of urban poverty, inequality, social exclusion and underdevelopment (CoJ, 2013:12).

In terms of the Census 2011 (Stats SA, 2012), a period between 2001 and 2011 saw the general income doubling in the CoJ. However, this growth in earnings also increased the gap between inequality and poverty amongst the racial groups. The below table (Table 5) reflects individual income distribution in the CoJ as recorded during the Census of 2011.

**Table 5: Individual income distribution in the City of Johannesburg.**

| City of Johannesburg: 2011 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Population Group** | **Black / African** | **Coloured** | **Indian / Asian** | **White** | **Other** | **Total** |
| **Monthly income** | | | | | | |
| | 1,379, 842 | 99, 373 | 74, 041 | 133, 041 | 13, 730 | 1, 700, 764 |
| R1 – R400 | 292, 741 | 10, 846 | 2, 271 | 4, 238 | 990 | 311, 086 |
| R401 – R800 | 100, 281 | 3,827 | 1,799 | 4, 075 | 1, 175 | 111, 158 |
| R801 – R1600 | 294, 654 | 15, 119 | 9, 402 | 14, 700 | 2, 953 | 336, 829 |
| R1601 – R3200 | 360, 595 | 10, 488 | 7,387 | 16, 336 | 3,249 | 398, 055 |
| R3201 – R6400 | 229, 083 | 15, 533 | 13, 847 | 32, 579 | 2, 287 | 293, 329 |
| R6401 – R12 800 | 129, 384 | 19, 042 | 22, 155 | 61, 309 | 2, 404 | 234, 291 |
| R12 801 – R25 600 | 79, 418 | 15, 371 | 25, 063 | 83, 639 | 2, 147 | 205, 638 |
| R25601 – R51 200 | 35, 058 | 6, 553 | 15, 933 | 63, 345 | 1, 385 | 132, 274 |
| R51 201 – R102, 400 | 12, 025 | 1, 945 | 5, 864 | 30, 304 | 556 | 50, 694 |
| R102, 401 – R204, 800 | 3, 881 | 572 | 1, 431 | 9, 534 | 190 | 15, 607 |
| R204, 801 or more | 2, 953 | 448 | 1, 060 | 5, 486 | 169 | 10, 117 |
| Unspecified | 419, 428 | 44, 267 | 33, 739 | 76, 617 | 5, 708 | 579, 760 |
| Not applicable | 49, 936 | 3,907 | 2,205 | 8,576 | 601 | 65, 225 |
| **Total** | **3, 389, 278** | **247, 276** | **216, 198** | **544, 530** | **37, 545** | **4, 434, 827** |

Recent statistics on general income in the City of Johannesburg shows that the income figures more than doubled between 2001 and 2011, and that inequality is still rampant in the City (CoJ, 2013:14). In 2011 whites earned an annual average income of R360 000, 00; Indians / Asians an average of R259 000, 00; Coloureds earned R142 000, 00; and Blacks earned R68 000, 00 (CoJ, 3013: 14). Various reasons have been proffered for this disparity in earnings, especially of the white minority group's clearly higher earning.

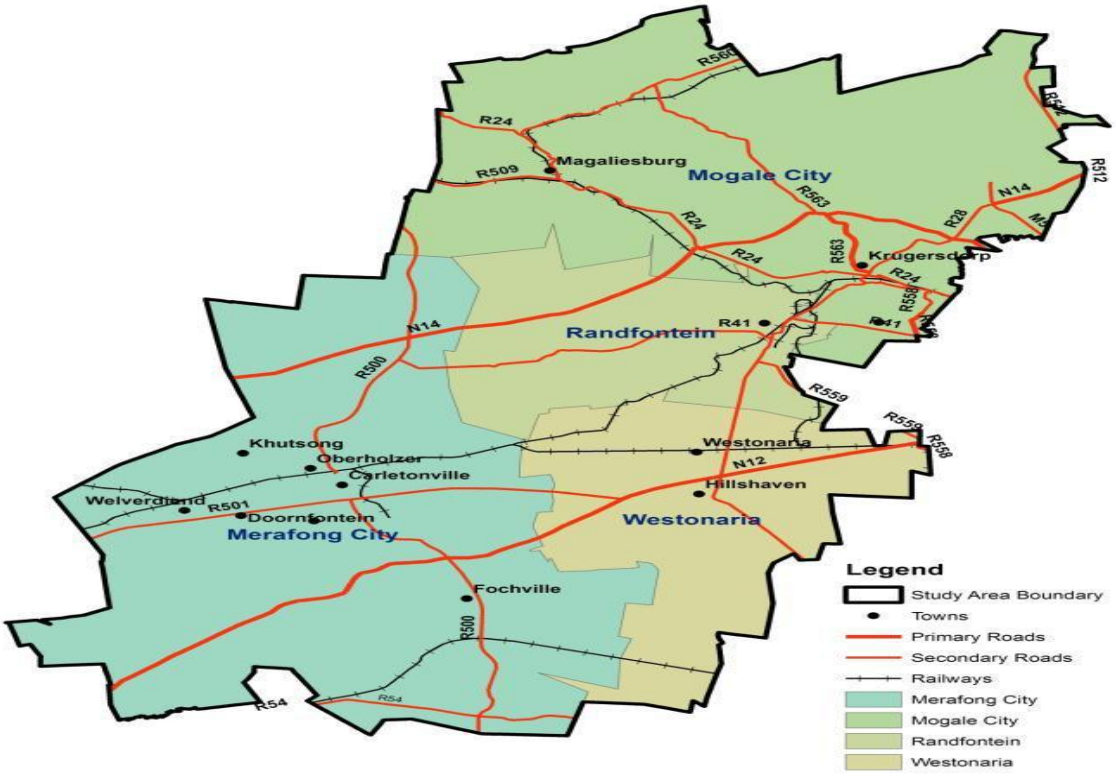
## West Rand District Municipality (WRDM)

### Demographic profile

In terms of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 117 of 1998, the WRDM is a category C municipality that is located on the south-western edge of Gauteng Province. It is important to note here that, the WRDM also serves as a local municipality in the District Management Area (DMA) that is known as Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, which also forms part of this District (WRDM, 2012:30). The WRDM comprises of four local municipalities, namely, Mogale City local municipality (MCLM), Randfontein local municipality (RLM), Westonaria local municipality (WLM) and Merafong City local municipality (MECLM).

The WRDM is bounded by the North West Province to the north, western and south-western sides, which include the Madibeng LM, Rustenburg LM, Ventersdorp LM and Tlokwe LM (WRDM, 2012: 30). On its eastern area, the WRDM is bounded by the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, the CoJ and Emfuleni LM within the Gauteng Province (WRDM, 2012: 30). The District is situated relatively close to the hub of economic activities of the Province of Gauteng, such as the CoJ; and is traversed by major roads, namely, the N12 and N14. These national roads networks provide opportunities in regard to the future economic development of the district. Potential economic opportunities are created by the fact that these roads provide a good regional access between the WRDM and Johannesburg to the east, Pretoria to the north and the NW Province to the north-west. The district as a whole is characterised by common spatial and physical features (WRDM, 2012:31).

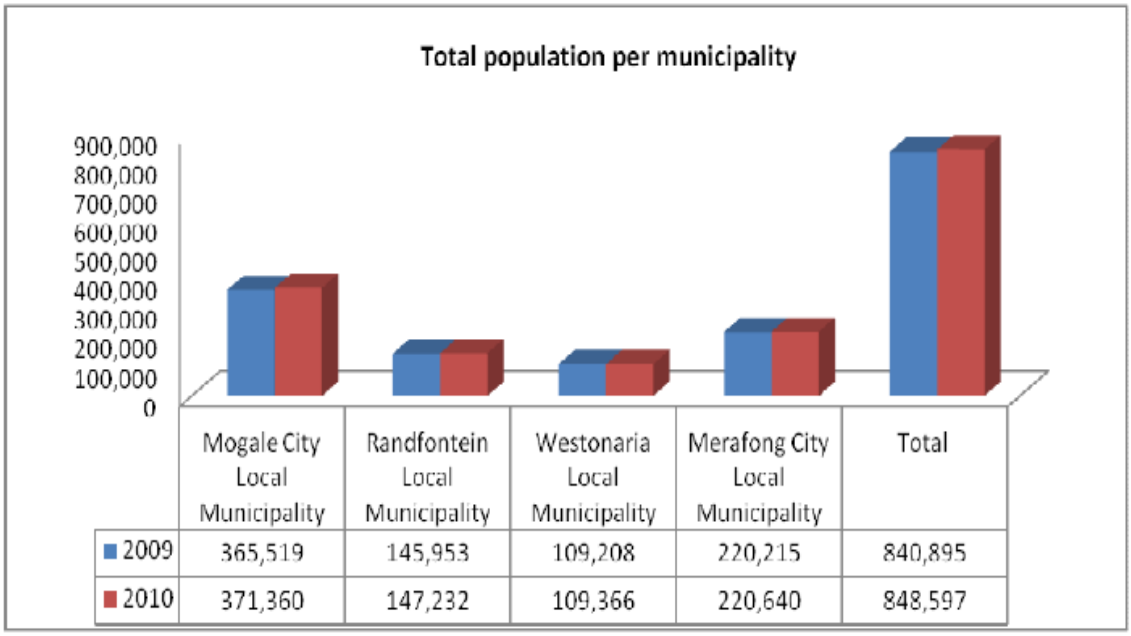
**Figure 8: Map of the WRDM with all transportation networks *(Source: West Rand District municipality, 2012).***




## Demographic profile

In terms of the Census of 2011 (Stats SA, 2012:38), the total population of the WRDM grew from 744 627 in 2001 to 820 995 people in 2011, representing 1.0% growth rate. However, the HIS Global Insight projections of 2010 differs with those of the Census of 2011 in that the total regional population is reflected as 848 597 people (WRDM, 2012:33). Figure 9 illustrates the stated projections. From the illustration, it can be deduced that at 43.8%, Mogale City and the DMA were the highest contributors to the total population of the district (WRDM, 2012:33). The second highest contributor, yielding 26% of the total population in 2010, was Merafong City LM, followed by Randfontein LM (17.3%) and Westonaria LM, which contributed only 12.8% of the total regional population (WRDM, 2012:33). The table below, Table 6, represents the racial composition of the total population of the region in 2010. Accordingly, at 79%, Africans constituted the largest proportion of the district population, followed by Whites at 17.9%, Coloureds at 1.9% and Asians 1% (WRDM, 2012:33).

**Figure 9: Total population per municipality (*Source: Global Insight, 2011*)**




Furthermore, the projections of the Global Insight have produced the composition of the region's population as represented in the table below. It is important to note such projections are mostly far beyond those reported by the Census of 2011. Where there is a discrepancy, the researcher elected to use the results presented by the Statistics South Africa (Census 2011) since those have been more transparent, widely reported and accepted as more accurate.

**Table 6: West Rand Region's Total Population Distribution by Race (*Source: Global Insight Data, 2011*).**

| **Race** | **Total** | **Total percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| African | 670, 720 | 79.0% |
| Whites | 152,078 | 17.9% |
| Coloured | 16,910 | 1.9% |
| Asian | 8,904 | 1.0% |
| **Total** | **848,612** | **100%** |

**Economic profile**

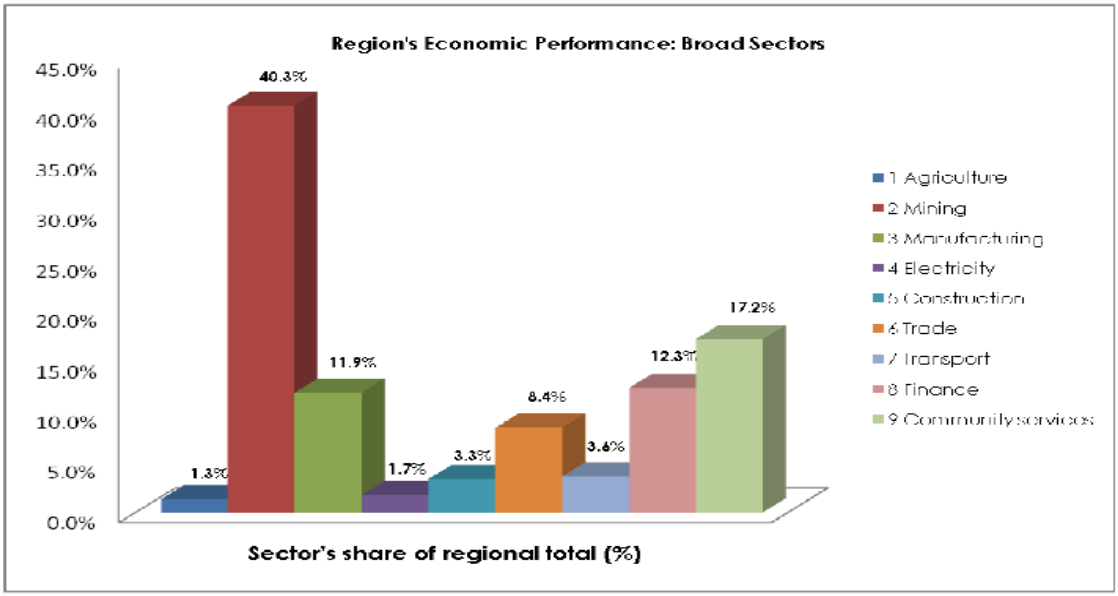
According to the HIS Global Insight Southern Africa report (2011), the economy of the WRDM is dominated by the mining sector, which contributed about 40.3% to the WRDM GDP in 2010, followed by community services sector at 17.2% and financial services sector at 12.3%. After a slight decline in the mining sector caused by price fluctuations and commodity demands, mining once again became an important sector in the 2011 analysis, contributing the most to the WRDM GDP, as depicted in Table 7 below (WRDM, 2012:52).

The graph below, Figure 10, also corroborate the above-mentioned table in that the mining sector remains the most contributing sector of the economy in the district during 2010. Accordingly, mining contributed about 40.3% to the economy, followed by the community services at 17.2%.

**Table 7: Sector contribution per %: 2011 Average Growth in GDP (*Source Global Insight, 2011*)**

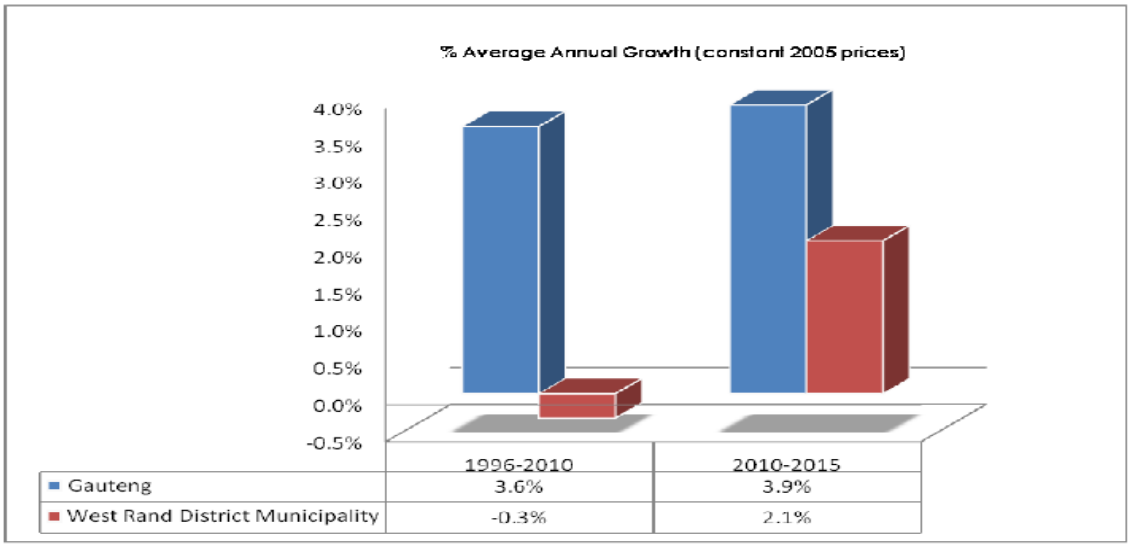
| **Broad Sectors** | **WRDM** | **Mogale City Local Municipality** | **Randfontein Local Municipality** | **Westonaria Local Municipality** | **Merafong City Local Municipality** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Agriculture | 1.3% | 2.2% | 1.4% | 0.4% | 0.7% |
| 2. Mining | 40.3% | 2.6% | 18.1% | 77.9% | 71.0% |
| 3. Manufacturing | 11.9% | 22.5% | 18.4% | 2.6% | 2.5% |
| 4. Electricity | 1.7% | 3.8% | 0,4% | 1.0% | 0.3% |
| 5. Construction | 3.3% | 5.3% | 5.0% | 1.4% | 1.4% |
| 6. Trade | 8.4% | 12.5% | 11.2% | 4.4% | 4.9% |
| 7. Transport | 3.6% | 6.6% | 4.1% | 1.2% | 1.3% |
| 8. Finance | 12.3% | 18.7% | 24.3% | 3.1% | .6% |
| 9. Community Services | 17.2% | 25.8% | 17.0% | 8.0% | 12.3% |
| **Total Industries** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0** |

**Figure 10: Sector contribution to the economy as a percentage *(Source: West Rand District Municipality, 2012)***




The analysis of the WRDM's economic performance has been undertaken in comparison with other major economies. In this case, analysing the economic performance of the district has been compared to that of the Province of Gauteng (WRDM, 2012: 49). Figure 13 is the graph that depicts the projected annual economic growth of the WRDM when compared to that of the Gauteng province. For the period 1996 to 2010, the district growth has been at -0.3%, which indicates underperformance when compared to that of Gauteng province. The region's economy is projected to reach an average of 2.1% for the period 2010 to 2015 compared to the province's 3.9%. This analysis may only mean that the district remains the poorest in the province, and that put pressure to the ability of the municipalities to provide free basic services to their communities.

**Figure 11: Percentage of Average Annual Growth (Constant 2005 prices)** ***(Source: West Rand District Municipality, 2012)***

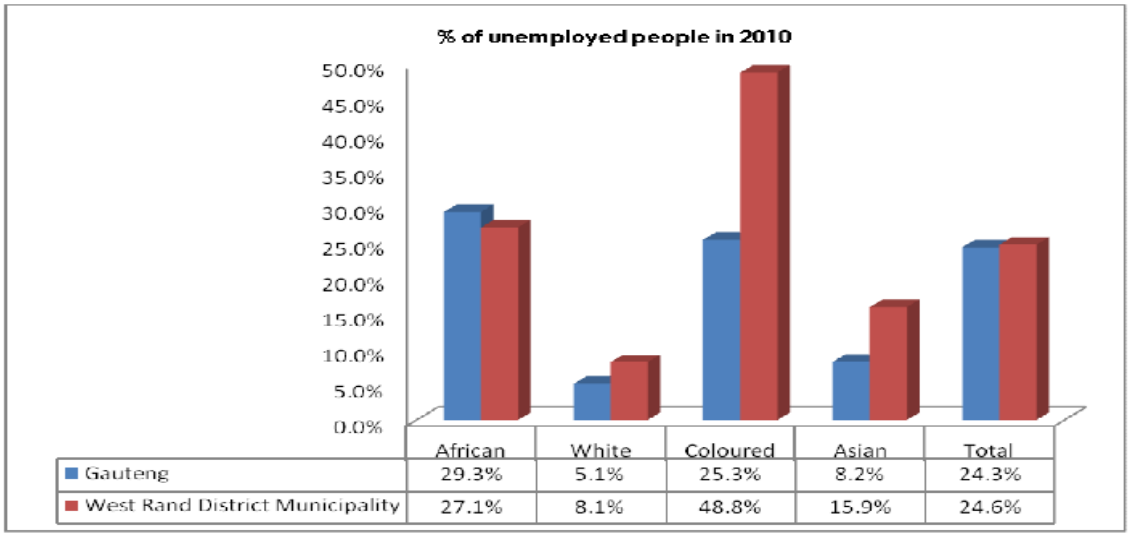



## Unemployment & poverty

The major structural issues that have contributed to high unemployment and poverty in the area include persistent low economic growth, retrenchment from mining due to the decline in mining and insufficient diversification of the economy. Figure 12 depicts the graphic representation of unemployed persons in the region during 2010. In terms thereof, the total unemployment rate of the WRDM was at 24.6%, almost the same with that of the Province, which was at 24.3%. In terms of racial composition, the Coloured was the most unemployed race during that period at 48.8%, and was followed by Africans at 27.1%. The high rate of unemployment had a major impact on the livelihood of the citizens as it means a lot of them were unable to cater for all of their basic needs. The effect is the increase in poverty, as the majority remains economic inactive due to the lack of opportunities. This implies the increase majority who need services, and who cannot afford to pay for them. As a consequence, the municipality has to fork deep in its pockets to meet the service needs without compensation from the beneficiaries. Failure to satisfy the needs of the majority results in service delivery protests that have been a daily feature in our local government.

**Figure 12: Percentage of Unemployed People in 2010**

2.16.2 Percentage of Unemployed People In 2010




| | African | White | Coloured | Asian | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gauteng | 29.3% | 5.1% | 25.3% | 8.2% | 24.3% |
| West Rand District Municipality | 27.1% | 8.1% | 48.8% | 15.9% | 24.6% |

## Midvaal and Emfuleni Local Municipalities

### Geographic profile

Together with Lesedi Local Municipalities, Midvaal Local Municipality (MLM) and Emfuleni Local Municipalities (ELM) are three of the municipalities that make up the Sedibeng District Municipality. MLM is a Category B3 whilst ELM is classified as a Category B1 municipality in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, 117 of 1998. The MLM is located in the southern parts of the Gauteng Province and is bordered by two provinces, namely Mpumalanga to the east and Free State to the south (Midvaal, 2013:19). Figure 13 (below) shows that the City of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality are situated to the northern area of this municipality.

**Figure 13: Locality map of Sedibeng District Municipality with adjacent Gauteng municipalities *(Source: Midvaal IDP 2013-2018).***




As a Category B3 municipality, the spatial structure of the MLM is mostly rural in nature, with approximately 50% of its area constituted by farms and small holdings that are used for agricultural purposes (Midvaal, 2013: 20). Amongst others, the municipality is comprised of 79 farms (total of 12 563 portions) and 32 agricultural or small holdings (a total of 4078 holdings) (Midvaal, 2013:21). This picture demonstrates how rural the municipality is, and it presented the researcher with another perspective, different from others, mostly urban municipalities selected for this study. The area offers approximately 300 business sites and 450 industrial sites. Midvaal LM consists of 14 wards, and has one town, Meyerton, as a core and the major urban development is concentrated therein (SA LED Network, 2012). Situated along R59, Meyerton also serves as the Central Business District (CDB) of the municipality (SA LED Network, 2012). Other small towns, such as

Walkerville, De Deur, Henley-on Klip, Klip Rivier Business Park, Grace View Ext 3, Waterval, Randvaal, Tedderfield, and Walkerville, only serve as service centres to the surrounding rural areas (Midvaal, 2013:22). These settlements are characterized by agricultural holdings, rural residential uses and farms (SA LED Network, 2012).

The ELM, on the other hand, is situated at the western part of the district, and made up of 45 wards (ELM, 2013:3, 6). It covers the southern part of the Gauteng Province, extending along a 120 km axis from east to west (ELM, 2013:3). Emfuleni LM is bounded by the Vaal River, the Metsimaholo LM and Fezile Dabi DM (Free State Province) to the south, Midvaal LM to the east, the CoJ area to the north and Westonaria and Potchefstroom LMs (North West Province) to the west (ELM,2013:3).

The municipality has two main city or town centres, namely, Vereeniging and Vanderbilt Park, Sasolburg is only 10km to the south, across the provincial boundary. ELM forms a heartland of what was formerly known as the Vaal Triangle, renowned for its contribution to the iron and steel industry in South Africa (ELM, 2013:3). ELM also consists of six large peri-uban townships of Evaton, Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Boipatong, Bophelong and Tshepiso; all of which still lacks essential community facilities except for a number of shopping centres and malls that have been developed in the past. (ELM, 2013:3). Within approximately six kilometres of the above-mentioned townships, there are ten small suburban settlements, and a number of large residential areas that requires considerable infrastructure development and environmental upgrading (ELM, 2013:4).

**Demographic profile**

According to the Census of 2011 (Stats SA, 2012) the MLM has a total population of 95 300 people. Accordingly, the population of the municipality grew from 52, 679 in 1996 to 95 300 in 2011(Stats SA, 2012). This represents an increase of 55.2% during the census period. Of this growth, the African population grew at a rate of 3.59% whilst the White population grew by 1.4% (Midvaal, 2013:22). These statistical facts are clearly depicted in Table 3 above.

Table 3 above depicts that in 2011, the total population of the ELM amounted to 721 663 people (Stats SA, 2012). In terms of the statistics from Census 2011 (Stats SA, 2012), the population grew from 658 422 in 2011 to 721 663 in 2011, representing a 10%

increase. Accordingly, the racial composition of the area by the year 2011 is presented in the following table

**Table 8: Emfuleni LM Population distribution by race group – 2001 to 2011** ***(Source: Stats SA, 2012)*****.**

| Race | 2001 | 2011 |
|---|---|---|
| Whites | 92 213 | 86 948 |
| Black / African | 553 307 | 616 095 |
| Coloured | 7 011 | 8 356 |
| Indian / Asian | 5 891 | 7 078 |
| Other | 3186 | 3186 |
| **Total** | **658 422** | **721 663** |

The above table clearly indicates that the African population is the largest in the municipality, and that it has been growing rapidly since 2001. In terms of the table, the African population grew from 553 307 in 2001, to 616 095 in 2011, representing about 11.3% increase. On the other hand, the White population decreased from 92 213 in 2001 to 86 948 in 2011 (ELM, 2013: 5). This is a worrying fact as statistics revealed that poverty and unemployment are geographically and racially concentrated in the country as a whole as it existed prior to 1994, it means that poverty is rife in this municipality as well (Global City Region Observatory, 2009). In terms of the Global City Region Observatory (GCRO) Quality of Life Survey of 2009 (GCRO, 2009) when compared with other municipality within the Gauteng City Region, ELM exhibited a reduction in poverty and inequality between 2009 and 2011.

**Economic profile**

The industrial and commercial activities in the MLM are clustered along the main routes such as the R82 and the R59, and around existing nodes (SA LED Network, 2012). Several small order commercial and industrial activities are also located in the Meyerton area further to the south, which can be described as an economic hub of the MLM area. As a Category B3 municipality, it follows then that agricultural activities will occupy larger part of the area. Accordingly, agricultural holdings filled the largest parts of the north-western portion of the municipality. Together with mining, agricultural forms the primary economic sector of the municipality (Midvaal, 2013:22). In 2011, mining contributed about 0.3% whilst agriculture contributed 1.3% to the Midvaal GVA (Midvaal, 2013:22).

Even though the agricultural contribution is not that significant, it plays a major role in the provision of food security and the creation of employment for unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Midvaal, 2013:22). Other sectors of the economy, including manufacturing, electricity generation and construction, complete the secondary sector of the economy of the area (Midvaal, 2013:22). At 24.06%, the manufacturing sector is the largest contributor to the MLM GVA.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion of the context within which the study was conducted, it is clear that during the 2010/2011 financial year, the municipalities of the Gauteng Province performed dismally. The findings of the AGSA revealed a deep seated challenges within the various municipalities in the province, which led to an extensive overview and comparative survey of same being undertaken by this researcher. The overview and the comparative profiling further highlighted major differences amongst the municipalities of the province, and provided the researcher with better understanding of the sampled ones. Furthermore, profiling the individual municipalities in terms of their socio-economic, geographic and demographic dynamics enabled the researcher to understand the issues per municipality well. This also had a bearing on the selection of various wards within the municipalities on which to concentrate the study. The above profiling also revealed that poverty is geographically located in all the selected municipalities, with the African

community being the most affected. It also revealed that the level of unemployment and inequality was located in geographic areas where service delivery protests were mostly taking place (hotspots) (Municipal IQ, 2012).

## 2.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INCIDENTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS AND THE PRACTICE OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 2.6.1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of a relationship between the incidents of public protests and the institutionalisation of participatory governance during this study was only meant to reveal signs of the lack of meaningful dialogue and engagement between the local government and the local communities (Masiwa, 2007). Furthermore, it was meant to assist the researcher in examining whether there was a relationship between participatory planning or lack thereof, and the incidents of public disenchantment towards the local government. As such, this section is by no means a representation of the causal-effect between the two phenomena.

**Understanding Citizen Discontent in a democratic state**

It may be argued that the advent of democracy in South Africa empowered the majority of the most marginalised and poor communities with knowledge and understanding of their human rights to basic services as citizens (RSA, 1996). However, the first decade of democracy saw the particular communities adopting a ‘wait and see attitude’ towards the performance of the newly established local government administrations (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006: 13). It would seem that ‘the wait and see’ attitude was wearing thin from the communities, as in approximately a decade of democracy in South Africa, a wave of popular, and often violent protests directed at local government, were observed (Buccus et al., 2007:4). According to Buccus (2010) the particular communities felt that their voices were being ignored; their anger took them to the streets in a bid to draw attention to their frustrations.

As posited by Marion Young, often the protesters are propelled by anger, frustrations and distrust at what they think is an unwillingness of those in power to acknowledge and rectify the injustices that their institutions perpetuate (Young, 2001:673). It is believed that the main source of public distrust, and confrontation with their municipalities emanated from the feelings of being ignored when major decisions or policies were made, thereby missing on the opportunity of influencing the outcomes of the same (Rowe, Horlick-Jones, Walls, & Pidgeon, 2011:332; Buccus, 2010; Friedman 2010 in Kgalefa, 2010; Atkinson, 2007:58; Young, 2001: 673). The above sentiment is summed up nicely by Dennis and Owen (2001:401 in Nabatchi (2010:380) thus:

> Public dissatisfaction with politics and government is connected fundamentally to popular perception about the political process and representation. In a fully operative democracy, people are likely to have developed firm expectations that they have a right to be heard, and that officials should be responsible to their needs and take action. If people have come to feel that their own needs, wants, interests, concerns, values, or demands are not being effectively represented in the policy process, then no matter how felicitous the nature of the system outputs is perceived to be, popular resentment likely will result.

Furthermore, the activists in the community eschew deliberating with those in power due to the mistrust that result from the distribution of power between the two parties (Young, 2001: 673).

Locally-based masses that were instrumental in the demise of the apartheid regime expected the envisaged developmental local government system to promote popular or direct participatory democracy wherein they would be engaged when decisions and policies that directly affect their lives were made (Benit-Gbaffou, 2007:26; Buccus, 2010:1).

As highlighted by the National Treasury (NT), the crisis in the credibility of local government is manifested in the declining trust between the local citizens and their municipalities. This is evidenced by, amongst others, the growing number of violent service delivery protests (NT, 2011: 22). According to the recent reports on service delivery protests in SA, the year 2012 will go down as the year of major protests in the country because more service delivery protests took place in that year, since the inception of the democratic government (Municipal IQ, 2012; Yende, 2012). In terms of the findings of the Municipal Hotspot Monitor (Municipal IQ, 2012), service delivery protests that were recorded between January and July 2012 accounted for 22% of all protests recorded

between January 2004 and July 2012. This means that the first half of the year 2012 alone accounted for almost a quarter of this period. The report by Yende (2012) also corroborated these findings in that police statistics obtained by the paper revealed that between January and May 2012 about 372 service-related protests have been recorded in the whole country.

Figure 14 below depicts the major service delivery protest year-on-year that took place between January 2004 and July 2012. It is worth noting here that service protests also vary per province (i.e. categories or classes of municipalities). This is also depicted graphically in Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14: Major Service delivery protests by year (2004 – July 2012 - *Source: Municipal IQ Municipal Hotspots Monitor)***

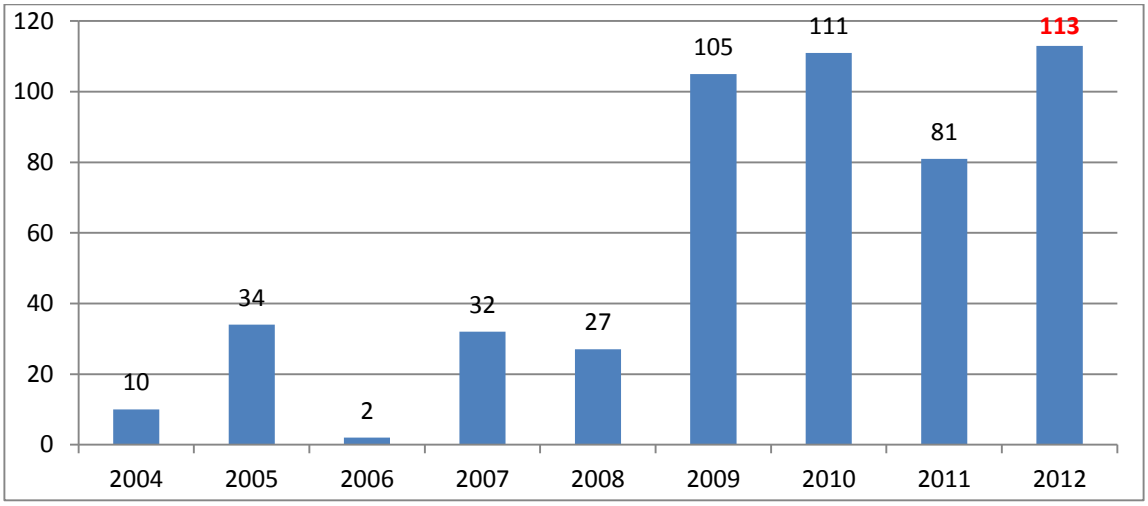
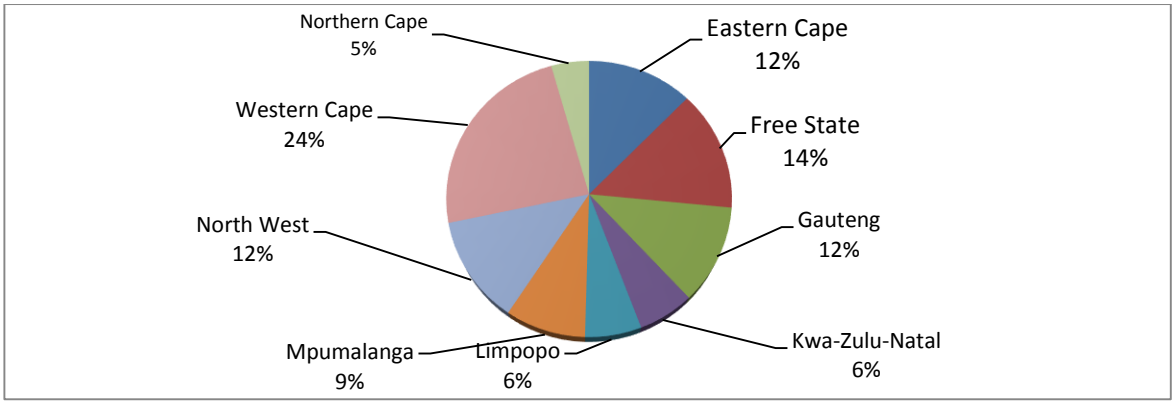


**Figure 15: Service delivery protests by province 1 Jan - 31 July 2012 (*Source: Municipal IQ Municipal Hotspots Monitor, *rounded off)***




In terms of Figure 15, it is clear that Western Cape has been the most affected province with about 24% protests recorded there. It is followed by the Free State Province with 14%, whereas Gauteng, which is the subject of the proposed study, trailed with about 12% protests recorded during that period. From Figure 16 it can also be deduced that more protests activities were seen in the years 2009 and 2010, with 105 and 111 protests recorded, respectively. However, even before the end of 2012, a higher number of protests at 113 had been recorded by July of that year, which confirms the above assertion that, if the current trend continues, this will be a year in which more protest took place in SA.

**Understanding the relationship between the angry citizenry and the participatory governance.**

Various reasons for protests have been proffered by different researchers, analysts and commentators, dismissing the notion that all protests resulted from lack of service delivery by the local government (Kgalefa, 2010; CoGTA, 2009; Atkinson, 2007:63). For example, Friedman, cited by Kgalefa (2010), indicated that it was antidemocratic to claim that citizens are protesting because they want 'service delivery', he argued that such claims deny citizens of their own voice. This argument is echoed by Durant (1995:26) as one of the four reinforcing trends that contributes to the democratic deficit. According to Durant (1995:27), the first trend is when a "policy-challenged, vocal, and increasingly impatient citizenry" who holds a view that government's attempts at addressing their concerns lack legitimacy and accountability, wishes to participate more meaningfully in the affairs of

government. Democratic deficit is defined by Nabatchi (2010:378) "as a situation where democratic organisations, institutions and government are seen as falling short of fulfilling the principles of democracy in their practices or operation." This definition is echoed by Chomsky (2006), who refers to democratic deficit as a disconnection between "citizen opinions and preferences, and political decisions and policy outcomes." Whereas Durant (1995:30) sees democratic deficit, which results from the four trends she identified, as a "policy implementation structure that is too hollow in capacity to nurture policy goals, public approbation or a truly deliberative democracy."

Buccus (2010:1), on the other hand, avers that the wide and violent protests that are currently observed in the country "are in response to a crisis of local democracy" rather than a crisis of service delivery. This calls the legitimacy of the democratic state into question, as citizens withdraw from political activities and also withdraw their political support (Easton, 1965, 1975 and Miller, 1974). On the other hand, the Municipal IQ (2012) indicated that most protests during the year 2012 have taken place in the urban metropolitan due to the in-migration from the rural areas to the cities in search of job opportunities. Accordingly, this trend increases the population of big cities as hundreds of informal settlements mushroom on the periphery of these large metropolitan areas (Municipal IQ, 2012; Managa, 2012:2). This in-migration serves to expose the gap between household economies in the formal townships (sub-urban) and the informal settlements (CoGTA, 2009:10). This rationale emanates from the fact that most recorded protests in the big cities are staged by the citizens of less formal townships and the informal settlements. Another contentious point of reason is the fact that about 56% of South Africans were reported to be living in poverty in 2009, which indicates continued dependency by the communities on their local government for poverty alleviation interventions (CoGTA, 2009:10). The above-mentioned trends of service delivery protests also enabled the researcher to examine the relationship between the municipalities regarded as hotspots for protests and the effectiveness of the local planning activities (IDP & Budget processes) in those municipalities.

Recent research reveals that the public discontent, if not addressed, "may threaten the stability and overall political health" of a country (Dalton, 2006; Dennis & Owen, 2001; Durant, 1995; Macedo et al., 2005; Putnam 2000). In addition to democratic deficit, the

threat can also manifest itself in citizenship deficit, which refers "to an erosion of civil society and civic engagement and more specifically, to an erosion of civic skills and dispositions among the general public" (Nabatchi, 2010:378). This may be seen as "a decline in the political engagement (working for political parties, signing petitions, attending political rallies or speeches, and interest in running for political office)" (Putnam, 2000); Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Wattenberg, 2002). This can also be evident in the "decline in civic disposition such as internal and external political effectiveness (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990), and trust in government" (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000). There has been an observation of declining social capital, evidenced by the lack of participation in the civic organisations by the South African citizenry at large.

However, Nabatchi (2010:379) observes a problematic relationship of the democratic and citizenship deficits in that the two phenomena support and influence one another in a following "circular causal process: As citizens withdraw from political activity, their preferences are less known and, therefore, less well reflected in public policy decisions." This, in turn, results in further citizen withdrawal from the political and civic activities as more and more decisions of the government poorly reflect their preferences (Nabatchi, 2010:379).

### 2.6.2 CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussion it can be concluded that there is a correlation between the service delivery protests in the country and the practice of participatory planning and budgeting. This is due to the fact that, despite the provision of certain services in the hotspots areas, the public was still not satisfied by the top-down approach that has been employed. The government seemed to fail to listen to the needs of the communities, but instead provide what it felt was required by them. This is sufficient evidence that there is a lack of meaningful engagement between the local government and the public. For if there was, there wouldn't be a need for the community to engage in unlawful and destructive protests.

Even though the study was not entirely concerned with examining the development trends in the sampled municipalities, the following findings have been made: - skewed

development patterns were found to be still existing and alive in all municipalities. As such, development and service delivery still followed the unequalled patterns, namely, the infrastructure development and service provision in all the sampled municipalities, including those that have obtained unqualified findings from the AGSA, are still divided according to the class system. Three classes were observed in all the units of analysis, namely high-income class, middle-income class and low-income class (occupied mostly by the unemployed). In terms of this classification, all Priority 1 services were fully provided (Level 3) in the high-income and middle-income classes. On the other hand, most low-income class areas were lacking some basic Priority 1 services. The research found that most of the municipalities were unable or unwilling to provide most needed Priority 1 services such as roads, potable water, electricity, sanitation, firefighting, municipal health services and storm-water drainage in the low-income class communities.

Furthermore, this study found no causal link between the AGSA audit findings and the delivery of basic services. It was observed that some best performing municipalities on PDOs were also failing to provide all their citizens with the same level of services. This has ascertained the fact that poverty is geographically concentrated as the affluent areas were best provided than the poor areas. Sadly, in some municipalities, such areas were only separated by a street or a road, which made the skewed development more glaring. This shows that more focus is on financial information reporting and not on enhanced control that will detect and prevent findings on noncompliance with laws and regulations, and reporting on PDOs (AGSA, 2012:21).

## 2.7 **PROBLEMATISING PASSIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **2.7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The section on **'the brief history of participation in development'**, briefly presents the origin of the concepts of participation in general, and participation in development in particular. The discussion will first focus on the synopsis of the post-colonial participatory development discourse in relation to the thesis of this research. The 'critical discourse of participatory development' discussion will consider the various critiques of the participatory development presented in the post-development discourse. The critiques will

enable me to display the significance of this research in the light of the current circumstances. The section will also dichotomize the post-colonial debates on participation in development with the current debates, in order to highlight the similarities and differences within the current debates. With this section, the contemporary debates on this discourse are presented in a juxtapose fashion with the work that that has been covered in the citizen engagement discourse. In this way, I will be able to locate my thesis in both the current and the past discourses, and also elucidate my stance within these.

The remaining part of this section will briefly consider and discuss **'the effects of the dominant political ideology in South Africa.'** The section will mainly consider whether there are elements of authoritative deliberation exhibited by the current governing party. As a dominant political party at this stage, the discussion will examine the influence this have on the models and principles of citizen engagement practices as legislated. The problems and weaknesses in the current public participation model that is currently employed by the local government in South African, will be considered in this part of the section. The abovementioned problems and weaknesses will be discussed in terms of the following approaches.

In the first approach, the discussion will focus on the *status quo* in the South African local government participation practices. The second approach will focus on providing a brief overview and the definition of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement and the discussion of how proper application of this concept in the formulation of IDPs and local budgets may lead to improved service delivery to the affected communities. The last approach will focus on the hegemony of ruling party to the effective participation system. In essence, this is a consideration of the political context, that is, the implications of the ruling party's development dogma on possible meaningful citizen engagement.

The last part of the section will present the brief '**case for the notion of meaningful citizen engagement,'** and will emphasise its reliant on the concept of deliberative democracy, its benefits and the criteria to assess it.

### 2.7.2 The brief history of participation in development

As argued in chapter one, participation has become a central part of every developmental legislation in South Africa. For this reason, it is imperative that the origin and development of this phenomenon be traced in order to locate the subject of this study. It is worth noting that this study is the direct result of the perceived failure of the current participatory approaches. Participation in development has a varied history that cannot be summed up in a single discussion (Hickey & Mohan, 2004: 5). Different approaches to development have employed participation in one way or another, in furthering their intents (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:5; Henkel & Stirrat in Cooke & Kothari, 2001:168).

According to Richards (1995), participatory approaches to development began as tools to subvert development orthodoxy. Nevertheless, participation in development effectively became one of the key concepts of the new development orthodoxy (Henkel & Stirrat, 2001:169). In their chapter of *Participation: the new Tyranny*, Henkel and Stirrat (in Cooke & Kothari, 2001:1) describes the new development orthodoxy as a sum of loosely connected ideas and approaches developed in response to what was viewed as the failure of the old orthodoxy. This new conception of the terms of development was an attempt of moving away from focus on developing the 'undeveloped' world to becoming 'modern', in a Western or Northern fashion. It attempted to define participatory development approach in terms of the cultural diversity of the societies involved, and in their own terms and needs (Henkel & Stirrat, 2001). The new approach recognized the need for the development projects to be initiated at the grassroots of 'beneficiaries', rather than being imposed upon them. As such the new turn in participatory development shared common values such as following:

- A stress on bottom-up rather than top-down approaches;
- A stress on empowerment;
- A stress on the marginal;
- A stress of the state; and
- A celebration of 'local' or 'indigenous' knowledge (Henkel & Stirrat, 2001:171).

It is worth to note here that participatory development is not an entirely new concept, it has its own long history of development. However, there is no consensus at when it first appeared in the literature, but I opted to adopt the earliest date for the purpose of tracing its history. Even though the concepts of participation and participatory first appearance in the development discourse in the 1950s, it can be argued that its earliest use occurred in India (Rahnema, 1997:156; Gandhi, 1962 [1908]; Lewis, 1997: 371). This is confirmed by the words of Lewis whilst tracing the genesis of 'local participation and governance,' thus:

> Localism – grassrootism – development from the bottom up – has been enjoying one of its periodic surges in the realm of development-policy discourse in the past couple of decades. Indians, if they wished, could claim a measure of paternity for the phenomenon, for one of the latter's gurus, assuredly, is Gandhi (1997:371).

Being amazed at the fresh philosophies from the 'under-developed world', many early theorists hailed the Gandhian thought as the "well-articulated alternative to industrialization" (Marglin, 1962) and as "an outstanding thought from the Third World" (Kothari, 1988:63). Consideration a tabular presentation of 'a selective history' of participation in development theory, (Table 9) below, it is clear that, internationally, the literature on participatory development emerge in about the 1940-50s, as an approach to community development. This is the phase that is recognized as the height of colonialism. Development was a prescribed orthodox to 'modernize' the wild and uncultured colonies of the world (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). The selective history of development theory debate has been set in terms of the imminent / immanent divide. This divide approaches development as a "form of specific interventions to manage 'those surplus populations' on the one hand *(imminent)*; and development as historical process of social change *(immanent)*" (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:10, [italicized words added]). According to Hickey and Mohan (2004:10) the relationship between the imminent and immanent focus is a persistent concern in development as more contemporary studies tends to focus on imminent more than immanent processes of development. Accordingly, the effect of this skewed focus on specific interventions often takes a technocratic approach to development, in the expense of underlying social issues affecting the beneficiaries (Hickey & Mohan, 2004: 10-11). Table 9, although selective, takes us through the earliest appearance and development of the participatory development theory up to the present day. Since then,

participation became treated as a synonym of democracy, transformation, equity and empowerment.

**Table 9: Participation in development theory and practice: a selective history**
***(Source: Hickey & Mohan, 2004:8-9)***

| Era | Approach | Institutional and intellectual influences | Development theory: approach to immanent processes and imminent interventions | Approach to citizenship | Locus/level of engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1940s – 1950s | Community development (colonial) | United Kingdom Colonial Office<br><br>1944 Report on Mass Education in Africa | *Immanent*<br>(Re) produce stable rural communities to counteract processes of urbanization and sociopolitical change, including radical nationalist and leftist movements<br>*Imminent*<br>Development requires participation and self-reliance; cost-sharing. *Animation rurale*, adult literacy and extension education, institution-building, leadership training, development projects | Participation as an obligation of citizenship; citizenship formed in homogeneous communities | Community |
| 1960s – 1970s | Community development (post-colonial) | Post-colonial governments (social welfare or specialized departments) | *Immanent*<br>As above; also development of state hegemony, moral economy of state penetration<br>*Imminent*<br>As above; also health, education | | |
| 1960s | Political participation | North American political science | *Immanent*<br>Political development dimension of modernization theory. Participation as securing stability, legitimacy for new states and strengthening the political system<br>*Imminent*<br>Voter education; support for political parties | Participation (e.g. voting, campaigning, political party membership) as a right and an obligation of citizenship | Political system and constituent parts; citizens |
| 960s – 1970s | Emancipatory participation (EP)<br><br>Liberation theology (LT) | Radical 'southern' researchers / educationalists. Freire, Fals Borda, Rahman<br><br>2nd Vatican Council, Latin American Catholic priests. Gutierrez, Sobrino | *Immanent*<br>Analyse and confront 'structures of oppression' within existing forms of economic development, state formation, political rule and social differentiation<br>*Imminent*<br>EP: Participatory action research, conscientization, popular education, support for popular organizations | Participation as a right of citizenship; participatory citizenship as a means of challenging subordination and marginalization | Economic and civic spheres; communities; citizens |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | LT: Form base Christian communities, training for transformation, popular education | | |
| 1970s – 1990s | 'Alternative development' | Dag Hammarskjold Conference 1974 Development Dialogue, IFAD Dossier. Nerfin, Friedmann | *Immanent*<br>Critique of 'mainstream' development as exclusionary, impoverishing and homogenizing; proposal of alternatives based around territorialism, cultural pluralism and sustainability<br>*Imminent*<br>Popular education; strengthen social movements and self-help groups | Participation as a right of citizenship; citizenship as a key objective of alternative development, to be realized in multi-level political communities | Initially focused on communities and civic society, latterly the state through 'inclusive governance' |
| 1980s – present | Populist / Participation in development | Development professionals, GOSs (e.g. MYRADA, IIED) World Bank Participation Learning Group, UN Agencies Chambers | *Immanent*<br>Little direct engagement; implicit critique of modernization<br>*Imminent*<br>Failure of top-down projects and planning; participation required to empower people, capture indigenous people's knowledge, ensure sustainability and efficiency of interventions. Participatory: rural/urban appraisal, learning and action, monitoring and evaluation; NGDO projects. | Focus on participation in projects rather than in broader political communities | Development professionals and agencies; local participants |
| Mid – 1990s – present | Social capital | World Bank Social Capital and Civil Society Working Group. Putnam, Bourdieu, Narayan | *Immanent*<br>Social capital promoted as a basis for economic growth<br>*Imminent*<br>Local institution building, support participation in networks and associations | Participation as a right and obligation of citizenship | Civic associations |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Late 1990s – present | Participatory governance and citizenship participation | Participatory Research and Action (Delhi), Institute for Development Studies, Brighton (Participation Group) | *Immanent* Development requires liberal or social democracy, with a responsive state and strong civil society. Some focus on social justice *Imminent* Convergence of 'social' and 'political' participation, scaling-up of participatory methods, state-civic partnerships, decentralization, participatory budgeting, citizens' hearings, participatory poverty assessments, PRSP consultations | Participation as primarily a right of citizenship | Citizens, civil society, state agencies and institutions |

The institutionalization of participatory approaches to development in the African context can be traced to the 1990 international conference in Arusha (1990). The declaration statement from the conference clearly states this as follows:

> Popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits (Arusha, 1990).

According to Baah (2003:1), there have been two types of development initiatives in the post-independent Africa, which are those initiated by African states and those that were initiated for African states by the outside world. Even though the Africa initiated development lasted a short period (between 1960 and 1970), these were mostly successful in bringing meaningful human development, compared to the 'alien' initiatives (Baah, 2003:1). However, history recorded the massive failure of the African initiative, such that by the 1980s, there was total decline in most independent states' economic growth and human development. This was evidenced by the massive debt and increased poverty in the African continent thereafter (Baah, 2003:3). This inevitably facilitated the renewed dependence to the international world, especial the West, for economic survival.

The period between 1980 and 1990 in Africa was characterized by the widespread poverty, diseases, starvation, and ignorance that has never been seen before in the world (Baah, 2003:6). The situation was well-captured in the following statement from the paper

that was delivered by the ANC delegation at a SADCC conference in Harare on 28 March 1988:

> We have seen [in all parts of Africa] the frightening and pleading eyes of both young and old, reduced almost, to animal condition by want and deprivation. We are familiar with the tragic spectacle of children; mothers and fathers running though refuse heaps in search of morsels of food that had been thrown away because they were no longer wanted. Stomachs distended to the point of bursting; eyes protruding sightless from deep sockets; legs so thin you wonder how they manage to support a body that is itself covered in scabs and festering sores; all these the results of man-made conditions that condemn millions to a life of hunger, homelessness, disease, ignorance and absence of protection from cold, heat, rain and the parching winds [of Africa].

From that period onwards, African leaders work frantically to reverse the situation in their respective lands, leading to heavy reliant on the donors and loans from the West. Institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were on hand to dish out bailout loans. However, these only served to impose more hardships in the continents, as they came with conditions. Such conditions led to the development being imposed again to the continent, with the aim of controlling the spending of the loans, and securing the return on investment. Needlessly, the 'participation' so imposed had nothing to do with affording the local citizens any meaningful say in their development. As alluded above, such participation, which later developed into participatory research, was intended the generate local knowledge by the outside development workers and researchers (Kothari, 2001:140) according to Kothari (in Cooke & Kothari 2001:140), participatory research is "a technique for knowing particular kinds of subjects." As such, participatory approaches were mainly justified in terms "of sustainability, relevance and empowerment." (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:5).

## Critique of the participatory approaches

In criticizing the participatory approaches to development, Cooke and Kothari (2001:5) gently mocked the main aim of the approaches, and stressed that there was no evidence that such aim was achievable. Accordingly,

> The ostensible aim of participatory approaches to development was to make 'people' central to development by encouraging beneficiary involvement in interventions that affect them on over which they previously had limited control or influence."

These authors' main critique focused on "externally imposed and expert oriented forms of research and planning" that became popular with the institution of external donors as mentioned above (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:5). Even though this new development orthodoxy emerged as a response to the shortcomings of the top-down, technical approach to development, it was found to be wanting. Robert Chamber's Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to participatory development, an evaluation of the participatory rural development is the main focus of criticism by these authors. Citing an array of theorists and researchers, and those who contributed to their volume (*Participation: the New Tyranny?*), Cooke and Kothari (2001: 5) claimed that the populist participatory approach was extensively reviewed and criticized in terms of its technical limitations and its theoretical, political and conceptual limitations.

This populist participatory approach faced more backlash in the 1990s as this was the heightened period of Structural Adjustments (Baah, 2003:5), and the implementation of developments in most of the Third World countries (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11). The most criticism concerned the emphasis of the approaches on localism and the empowerment claims (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:5; Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11). The critique on this lines of argument is on point, and this research also grappled with same, decades later. This thesis has revealed that, despite conducive environment for meaningful engagement being created in South Africa, it was still limited in procedures, theory and politically. However, there is a main contextual variance between the critiques mentioned above, and those labelled in this thesis that has to be acknowledged. The setting of the participatory development approaches and the political developments are not the same as the current ones. The participatory development approaches as we understand them, and their subsequent critiques, proceeded from the colonial and post-colonial era, up to the period of Structural Adjustments. As alluded above, their main critique concerned the imposed development projects, which inevitable adopted top-down, technical approaches. Despite their noble intentions, the approaches, according to Cooke & Kothari (2001, 3-4), served to tyrannize the participatory development initiatives. On the other hand, this study focused on an entirely different context of development, which initiated from within the country. Even though some aspects of the conception of public participation system in South Africa exhibits influences of the historic approaches, they are legislated and initiated from within.

As such, the Tyranny critique cannot absolutely hold water in the local context, except to provide the important learning curves to the practitioners and academics alike.

Furthermore, Cooke and Kothari and associates (2001) failed to appropriately treat the ever-increasing evidence indicating the deepening and extension of participatory approaches' roles in development (Hickey & Mohan, 2001:11), with few successes reported such as 'empowered participatory governance' (EPG) (Fung & Wright, 2001) Many other participatory approached and initiatives that symbolize a major shift from the old orthodoxy of participation in development, have been developed and experimented with in recent years. These signaled the participatory turn of sorts, and are characterized by the introduction of communicative or discursive democracy in the engagement processes. These initiative are manifested in more expanded and deepened forms of participatory democracy,

> The evidence so far in the millennium suggest that participation has actually deepened and extended its role in development, with a new range of approaches to participation emerging across theory, policy and practice…Most significantly, people in developing countries are continually devising new and innovative strategies for expressing their agency in development arenas.

On the basis of the above, Hickey and Mohan (2004:3) suggest that focus should now be placed on establishing the participatory development approaches as a truly transformative and empowerment tool, rather than focusing on which of their generation can offer real answers. In this vein, Hickey and Mohan (2004:5, 9) offer the methods on which "different approaches to participation can be characterized and compared" as follow: the locus and level of engagement, ideology / political project, conception of citizenship, and links to development theory. Accordingly, adopting these axes of analysis will explicate the particular forms of participation to be adopted and the purpose thereof (Hickey & Mohan, 2001:5). Careful consideration of the abovementioned methods leads to the conclusion that political ideology and development theory have an inextricable relationship, that can determine the success or failure of the development project envisaged. This then necessitates the reflection on the implications of dominant political ideology in South Africa on the practice of citizen engagement during the period covered by the study.

### 2.7.3 The effects of the dominant political ideology of South Africa

Understanding the environment in which the participatory discourse and practices take place in South Africa is a key to the proper analysis of the challenges facing the system of public participation. This is echoed by Hickey and Mohan (2004: 15) in that

> The deeper understanding of local sociopolitical dynamics and their relationship to other scales of governance called for above requires an historical analysis of how institutions and agencies evolved over time.

The changing state in response to the 1994 democratization and decentralization of political power in South Africa, also necessitate the need for broadening the debates about issues of participation into the governance and the management of the country (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:4). Since the ushering of democracy in the country, only one political party, the ANC, had dominated the political scene, ensuring that its ideology and agenda are permanently entrenched in all the governance issues. The ANC itself had to grapple with its inevitable evolving nature, from being a liberation movement to becoming a fully-fledged political party in government (Lodge, 2014). According to Qobo (2014:97), the ANC had to deal with paradoxes of transforming itself into a modern political party whilst also accommodating both a mass movement character. This, as Qobo posits, had to do with the new government's adopting a character of a developmental state (2014:97). As a liberation movement, the focus had been on defeating the governance system that operated in terms of race and colour. Thus, the ticket that delivered power to the ANC had been on the narrative of equal opportunities for all citizens irrespective of their colour, race, class, gender, age, language, geographic location religion, or sexual orientation (ANC, 2012: 4). This, according to various Strategy and Tactics documents of the ANC, had to be evidenced by the achievement of the radical political and economic transformation in the country (ANC 2007, 2012). In its eighteenth ($18^{th}$) year in power, at the fifty third ($53^{rd}$) conference in 2012, the ANC confirmed the adopted 2007 Strategy and Tactics with amendment (ANC, 2012: 2). The interest of this document to the researcher is its summation of the "transition from apartheid colonialism to a National Democratic Society", particularly the reflection on the evolving character of the ANC.

Amongst others, the ratification of the 2007 Strategy and Tactics is important for this research for its affirmation of the strategic goals of the National Democratic Revolution

(NDR), as the main political project of the ANC. The NDR is a political project that was meant to ensure that the ANC in government does not lose its strategic goal for the total emancipation of the poor and marginalize masses from the legacy of apartheid (ANC, 2012). This project was to be driven by the ANC-led alliance encompassing the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the federation of labour unions, namely the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In the 2012 Strategy and Tactics document, the key objective of the NDR is described as follows:

> The main content of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) …remains the liberation of Africans in particular and Blacks in general from political and social-economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female (ANC, 2012:3).

The 2012 Strategy and Tactics lists, amongst others, the following as one of the requirements for the realization of the human rights enshrined in the country's 1996 Constitution:

- The means for citizens to exercise the full range of their human rights, including progressive realisation of socioeconomic rights, and for checks and balances in a law-governed society.
- Popular participation of the people in the process of development. And with special focus on the poor and marginalised.
- Building a united and inclusive South African nation in which the multiple identities based on class, gender, age, language, geographic location and religion are a source of strength, adding to the diversity of the continent and humanity at large.

Whereas the 2007 Strategy and Tactics focused on the sustenance of NDR, the 2012 Strategy and tactics is concerned with the building of the National Democratic Society (NDS). The document (ANC, 2012) summed up the socio-economic character of the NDS as the rectifying of historic injustices of the past and the creation of a democratic state. One of the many characters of the NDS is

> A political and socioeconomic system which places the needs of the poor and social issues such as health care, education, basic services and a social security floor at the top of the national agenda.

Clearly, the above shows the real character of the ANC and its commitment to the total liberation of the masses from the clutches of poverty and underdevelopment. However, the

agency to stay relevant to the legacy of liberation, and in power tended to sabotage the progress of achieving these strategic goals. Recently, the ANC has been repeatedly criticised of leaning more on neo-liberal ideologies of economic and development, than the socialist one, thus neglecting its loyal supporters, the poor and marginalized (Qobo, 2014; Lodge, 2014). The first of such accusations stemmed from the abandonment of its first economic policy – the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), adopted in 1994. The RDP leaned more on the DLG, and the developmental state, thus more favourable to the poor and the working class. Replacing the RDP with the more liberal-oriented economic policy, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Plan (GEAR) in 1996, did not endear the ANC to its alliance partners (Qobo, 2014:101). It was not strange, therefore, for the first salvo of criticism to be fired by its political allies, the COSATU and SACP. The main contention amongst the tripartite partners were based on the differing positions held for the developmental direction adopted by the ruling ANC for the country. The two partners still "championed state interventionism, and broadly leftist positions", whereas the ANC was shifting towards the liberal leaning approach to economic management of the GEAR framework (Qobo, 2014:101-102). The two organization had since been on the case of the ANC at different stages of its government administrations. Nevertheless, the masses have sustained their loyalty to the ANC, toeing the line in all sectors of the society.

When the cracks of divisions caused by the above conflicting views, and the factionalism from internal leadership in-fighting became more visible in the ANC (Lodge, 2014:1), its support began to decline, with its official opposition gaining more in the process. Those who would not get their way, would always leave the party to form own political parties, or to join forces with the opposition. The dismissal of its wayward youth league president, Julius Malema, on the eve of the 2009 general elections signaled the major shift in the balance of power for the ANC. The formation of a splinter political party by Malema saw the large chunk of the ANC support, especially the unemployed youth, moving their membership and support to the newly formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This, on its own, changed the political landscape of South Africa. Even though the party maintained a strong face in public thereafter, it is understandable that the new political developments would cause shivers to the core of any ruling party. It is believed

that the ANC, like any other political party, had explored certain measures to minimize the threat of the new party. The question is: to what extent would the ANC go in order to keep holding onto the levers of power. Being the main dominating party for a long time would have caused the ANC to be complacent, taking the electorate for granted. There had never been a threat of losing the ruling power before, as was the case with the introduction of the EFF to the political scene. Coupling this with its many setbacks, scandals that had engulfed its president, Mr. Jacob Zuma and his administration, the escalation of corruption and personalization of power (Lodge, 2014:1), and the many mal-administrative actions that are being committed by the government under the party, the odds are that the ANC is now left with participatory spaces as the only fora available for exerting any influence to the masses. This is even more so at the local level, where the culture of public participation is vibrant. It has been mentioned elsewhere in this thesis that the public spaces at the local level have been left to the full control of the ruling party in that ward. As Cornwall (2004 in Hickey & Mohan 2001:80) reminds us, participatory spaces are often shaped by power relations, they are not neutral as they are made to look. As such, power relations within a participatory space determine what is possible within the spaces (Cornwall, 2001: 80-81). Assessing power relations in participatory spaces, Gaventa (2001 in Hickey & Mohan 2001:34) has this to say:

> Power analysis is thus critical to understanding the extent to which new spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, or whether they are likely to be instruments for reinforcing domination and control.

Until the last local government elections in 2016, the ANC has been a dominant political party in all the provinces but one, the Western Cape. As such, the ANC had unfettered access and influence on the masses that depended on its government for survival. Research, including this one, has revealed that some of these public participation mechanisms had been abused by the ward councillors or any influential local leader for political gains in the past (Lodge, 2014:3). The above raises the question of freedom in the participation of the community in the face of the political hegemony of the ANC within that space. Freedom in participation "is the capacity to participate effectively in shaping the social limits that define what is possible" (Hayward, 1998:2). In other words, participation as freedom goes beyond the right to participate effectively, and includes "the right to define and to shape

that space." (Gaventa, 2001:34). Therefore, it is highly likely for the ANC in the local level to control the participatory spaces for in order to contain dissenting voices. In the final analysis, the hegemony of the ruling party and its and its continued hold to power can possibly be explained by the increasing incidents of neo-patrimonial politics within its leadership (see Lodge 2014, Butler, :6).

Furthermore, the signs of the emergence of a radical form of deliberative democracy that has been observed in South Africa, could also pose a challenge to the party. This is better represented by the popular service delivery protests, which mainly questioned the legitimacy of the government (Easton, 1965, 1975; Miller, 1974; Durant 1995:27) As a long-term dominating political party, the ANC may have attempted to subvert this new kind of popular participation through the use of subtle authoritarian means. If unchecked this may easily breed the incidents of authoritarian deliberation.

Authoritarian deliberation has been developed by He and Warren (2006) using the authoritarian China as a case study. Accordingly, the main features of this phenomenon includes, *inter alia,* a one-party state, development of deliberative institutions under the influence of the ruling party, and the limitation and control of genuine deliberation by the state (2006:2). According to the authors, all other requirements of a true democratic state are met under this regime, however these are heavily control by the ruling party (He & Warren, 2006). Surely, South Africa is not there yet, as it still enjoys a multi-party democracy, based on the constitution and the rule of law. Furthermore, compared to the homogeneity that characterizes the Asian states, the high incidents of authoritarianism, South Africa boast a diverse political and ideological character (Qobo, 2014:99). This is strengthened by the existence of a liberal constitutional democracy that dictates a strong parliament authority. This means that, for the state to degree to promulgate legislation that will give it liberty to implement radical or authoritarian measures, it requires a certain degree of support, both internally and externally (Qobo, 2014:99). Thus the ANC, as a governing party, would need to secure maximum political leverage and uncontested legitimacy, resembling that of authoritarianism, in order to put its grand policies in place (Qobo, 2014:99). As stated above, the lack of such conditions in South Africa ensures the sustenance of constitutional democracy, thus annulling any legitimate spaces to establish the authoritarian deliberative culture (Qobo, 2014:97). However, if local politics remain

unchecked, there are vast opportunities for the informal form of authoritarian deliberative democracy to creep therein (Lodge, 2014:3).

**The *status quo* and its 'problems'**

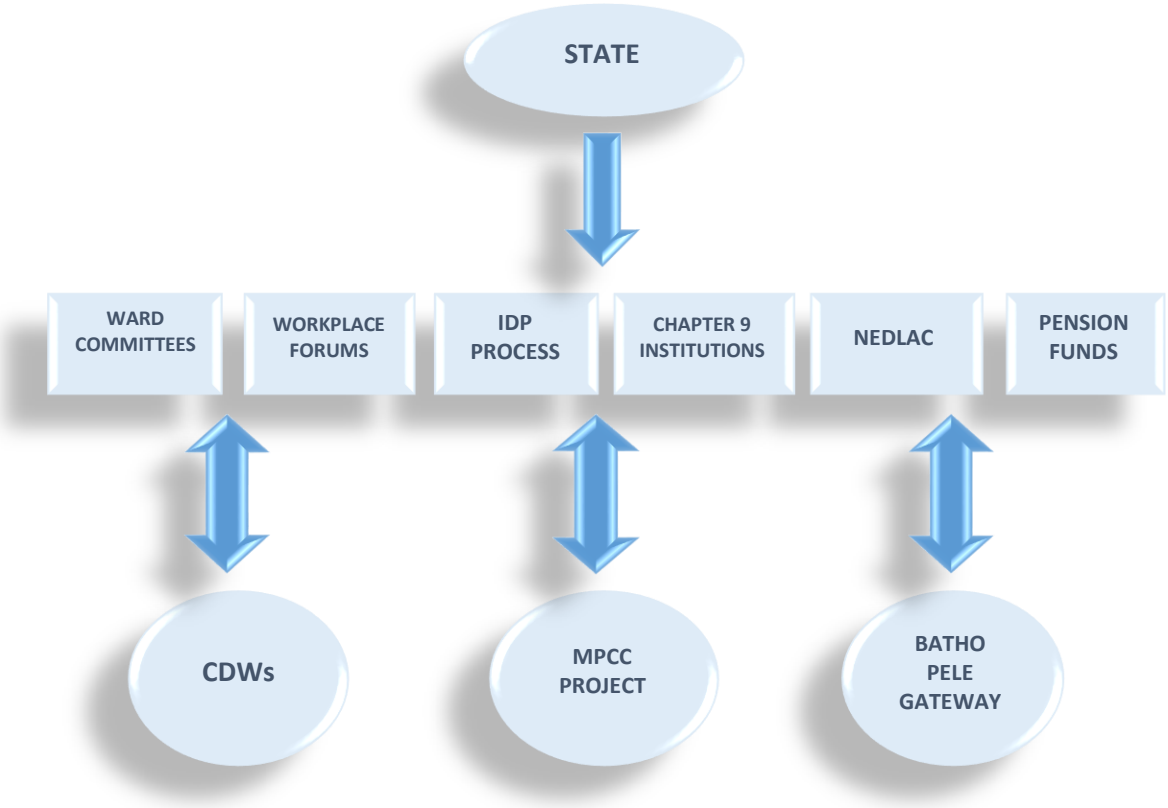
The need to engage people on matters pertaining to their lives is well recognized in the local polity (Kabemba, 2003:2; Hicks & Buccus, 2007:2; Arnstein, 1971:2). The efforts of the local government sector to ensure that this need is satisfied are evidenced in a number of mechanisms that the government has created for public participation. Certain Acts of legislation were promulgated to facilitate a number of interfaces between communities and their elected representatives (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) 2008)

Following are some of the mechanisms that have been entrenched in the system of participatory governance in South Africa: Ward Committees (WC) (launched in 1999), Izimbizo project (launched in 2001); Community Development Worker (CDW) initiative (launched in 2003); and *Batho Pele* principles that emanates from the White Paper on the Transformation of Local Government, 1997 (DPLG, 2007:21). Ward Committees have been established as legitimate structures to facilitate interaction between the residents of the Ward and their political representatives, more particularly during the formulation of the IDPs and Budgets (DPLG, 2007:54). Infused within the ward committee system, is another mechanism for local community planning, referred to as Community-Based Planning (CBP) (DPLG, 2007:21). CBPs assist ward committees in aligning planning with IDPs, Budgets and performance management systems, amongst others. The CBP initiative is also instrumental in supporting the wards during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their plans, and in using discretionary funds that they control (DPLG, 2007:21). Izimbizo were created to augment the Ward Committees in that municipal executives engage with select communities on specific policy implementation issues. In this way, Izimbizo are mainly employed to solicit feedback from the communities on policy implementation and developmental imperatives. The CDW initiative was created as an endeavour to build a working, two-directional and participatory interface between the government and the citizens for the sake of advancing development and effective governance. CDWs are also required to provide support to ward committees and community groups at large (Policy

Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) 2008) (See Figure 16 for the illustration of the above-mentioned mechanisms, sourced from the Ten Year Review 2003- PCAS, 2008).

Considering all the above mechanisms raises a question that has been ignored for ages, that of the effectiveness of the Ward Committee system. If the Ward Committee system was effective, why introduce the Community Development Workers system? However, since this question falls outside the ambit of this research, it will require its own research process to be fully addressed.

**Figure 16: Mechanism for citizen participation as envisaged by the Ten Year Review Process *(Source: PCAS, 2003:10-14)***




The public participation discourse in the South African local government is synonymous with these passive processes discussed above, which are mainly conducted for the purpose of complying with legislation. For example, in some cases, during the IDP and Budget formulation processes, communities are only consulted after the final drafts had been compiled and ready for approval by the relevant municipal councils (Friedman, 2006:8; NT, 2011:77, DPLG, 2007:25-26; Smith, 2004:15). Needless to say, such an initiative does not afford all the affected local communities the opportunity to deliberate

on the issues that affect them. One would expect that the IDP, as a strategic planning instrument that guides and informs all planning and development initiatives of the municipality, would afford all stakeholders the opportunities to deliberate on issues beforehand. From the literature (Fourie & Reutener, 2012; Friedman, 2006; Kabemba, 2003; Hicks, 2007; Hicks & Buccus: 2007; Langa & Jerome: 2004; Smith, 2004); this researcher has not come across any evidence of meaningful engagement of citizens by their local governments in South Africa.

In a representative system of governance like South Africa, participatory governance is crucial to ensure that participatory spaces are created between elections (Friedman, 2006:5; Hicks & Buccus, 2007). Accordingly, participatory governance may serve one of the two purposes: "to bind organised constituencies to agreed policy outcomes or to offer voice to the voiceless" (Friedman, 2006:6). However, in implementation, most of the above-mentioned mechanisms fall short of affording local communities the voice, that is, real opportunities in terms of being influential on the final policy outcomes and decisions. (Gaventa 2005:3; Hicks & Buccus, 2007:2; Fung & Wright, 2001:5; Friedman, 2006:3, 8; Bishop & Davis, 2002:14). In most cases these mechanisms become ceremonial and passive as no tangible effects proceed from them towards the final policy and decision-making outcomes (Smith, 2004:15). Hence, this research was concerned with a question of the meaningfulness of the mentioned engagement spaces by, and between the citizens and their local governments.

The first manifestation of problems with the currently employed passive public participation model in South Africa is evidenced by the observed and, or perceived inability of the local government to satisfy the basic needs of the broader population of the country (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:80; CoGTA, 2009a:4). This deficit in service delivery has resulted in the poor and marginalised communities taking to the streets in protest, in a bid to raise their plight to the local authorities (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:81; Buccus et al., 2007:4; Buccus, 2010; Masiwa, 2007; NT, 2011). Chief amongst various reasons proffered for the protest actions and public dissatisfaction is the inefficiency in service delivery and distrust in local government (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:81; NT, 2011:22). It is in this context that this study proposes meaningful citizen engagement in the IDPs and budgeting processes as a means to ameliorate service delivery backlogs in the local government. It

was anticipated that direct engagement of the citizens in planning and budgeting processes would restore public confidence in the ability and willingness of the local government to provide quality services (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:81).

The second weakness that has been observed in the current model of local government participation pertained to the degree of significant decisions around local government planning and budgeting (Smith, 2004:2). The reason for the importance of decisions on government budgets arises from the fact that these decisions determine how state resources are allocated and utilized (Smith, 2004:2). The logic underpinning this justification was the belief that meaningful engagement of the marginalized and socially excluded citizens in the decision-making processes during the formulation of IDPs and local Budgets would ensure that their needs and aspirations were prioritized and would reflect in the final budgets and plans (Smit, 2004:2; Mac Kay, 2004:4, Souza, 2001; Wampler, 2000; Avritzer, 2000). The justification behind this assumption is that citizens would be able to exert influence on the decisions regarding the plans that get implemented and how funds are allocated (Smith 2004:2; White Paper, 1998). This logic is evidenced in the number of global experiences of participatory budgeting (PB) and participatory planning (PP) that are discussed in this research report. Strengthening this justification is the historical background of planning and budgeting in South Africa, which had been undertaken as a top-down, technical approach (Makwela, 2012:84; Smith, 2004:2). This approach questions the validity of the beneficial claims that are often made in support of participation, such as bottom up, people-centred and process-oriented (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:4).

### 2.7.4 The case for Meaningful Citizen Engagement

With the new dispensation, various Acts of legislation (see section 3.4.5.1 of this thesis: Legal framework for citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes) were promulgated to redress the above anomaly, and to address the inequalities that resulted from it (Nyalunga, 2006; Smith, 2004:2). Even though a number of progressive policies and legislation promoting participatory governance have been developed by the democratic government in South Africa, there seems to be a challenge with proper implementation of the same (Fourie & Reutener, 2012: 81; CoGTA, 2009). The preceding discussion of the

challenges faced by the current model of public participation summed up the argument of this study. It is the assumption of this study, as the topic suggests; that meaningful citizen engagement in the planning and budgeting processes at local government may lead to better service delivery.

The definition of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement above was crafted as an expansion of the citizen engagement concept. On the other hand, citizen engagement is also regarded as an expanded version of public participation in the local governance. As such, meaningful citizen engagement stretches beyond the normal two-party engagement between the officials and the citizens. The concept proposes the dual nature of engagement, which can take place between citizens only, and between the citizens and government. The nature of such an expanded engagement will be characterised by a collaborative and iterative processes of deliberation by and between citizens themselves and between citizens and government representatives (Phillips & Orsini 2002 in Abelson and Gauvin, 2004: 8).

The implicit assumption of the meaningful citizen engagement concept is that only when the empowered, well-informed, rational and equal parties deliberate amongst each other on issues of common interests, can the engagement result in a meaningful contribution to specific public policy, development plans or service delivery decisions (Young, 2000: 21; Gibson 2006:2 in Svara & Denhardt, 2010:15; Gaventa, 2005:9; Fung & Wright, 2001:7; Shapiro, 2003:3; Mendelberg, 2002:153).

In essence, the concept of meaningful citizen engagement leans more on the notion of deliberative democracy. Thus, the significance of this study and the unpacking of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement throughout the report may be better understood when discussed in the context of deliberative democratic theory.

According to Mendelberg (2002:153) various deliberative democratic theorists and empirical researchers argued that the following benefits may accrue due to the application of public deliberation to the resolution of local policy dilemmas and/or the formulation of public policy or local strategic plans such as the IDP and budget. Accordingly, public deliberation is expected to derive the following benefits: citizens will become more engaged and active in local government affairs (Barber 1984); tolerance for differing opinions will increase (Gutmann & Thompson 1996); “citizens will improve their

understanding of their own preferences and be able to justify those preferences with better arguments" (Chambers 1996; Gutmann & Thompson 1996); belief in the democratic process will be enhanced as people who deliberate become empowered and feel that their government truly is "of the people" (Fishkin 1995); "political decisions will become more rational and informed by relevant reasons and evidence (Chambers 1996); the community's social capital will increase as people bring deliberation to their civic activities (Fishkin 1995; Putnam 2000); the legitimacy of the constitutional order will grow because people have a say in and an understanding of that order" (Chambers 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Furthermore, Mendelberg (2002:153) added more benefits of deliberative democracy thus: "citizens are more enlightened about their own and others' needs and experiences, can better resolve deep conflict, are more engaged in politics, place their faith in the basic tenets of democracy, perceive their political system as legitimate, and lead a healthier civic life."

Chambers (2003: 318), on the other hand, posits that, central to all theories of deliberative democracy is the belief that, under the right conditions, deliberation may promote tolerance and understanding amongst the participants, thus facilitating the change in positions and opinions, and finally lead to consensus. The criteria or conditions for the assessment of meaningfulness of the citizen engagement in the local government will be discussed in details in the conceptual framework. The treatment of this assessment will be facilitated through the adoption of a notion of the conceptual criteria for public deliberation as described by Thompson (2008:501). Based on this criteria, the assessment will be discussed under the following sub-headings: political inclusion; political equality; and reasonableness and accountability.

### 2.7.5 CONCLUSION

This section considered the theoretical context of study through the consideration of the genesis of the participatory development notion. The concept was traced from its first appearance in planning literature in all angles. Various historical critique of the concept was briefly discussed in this section, in contrast to the contemporary notions. The section further considered the implications of the dominant political ideology in South Africa on the manner in which citizen engagement is undertaken. Issues such as neo-patrimonial

politics and authoritarian deliberation were considered in analysing the challenges facing the participatory system.

Through the extensive discussion of the deliberative theory and the introduction of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement, this section managed to justify the importance of the study that was undertaken for this thesis. Furthermore, this section presented an insightful contrast between the *status quo* and the proposed notion of meaningful citizen engagement. In the discussion, an elaboration of the theoretical background of the meaningful citizen engagement concept, that is, deliberative democratic theory, was also provided. It is no doubt that reading this section will open a window into the purpose and the significance of this research, as these were clearly demonstrated herein.

# CHAPTER THREE: SURVEY OF LITERATURE

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the survey of the relevant literature that underpinned the study. This has been divided into the literature that enabled the researcher to anchor the study in terms of the theory, which is aptly referred to as the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework section of the chapter discusses all the main concepts that gave insight to the understanding of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. The chapter also consists of the section that is concerned with the literature review. Literature review was employed to locate the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes of the local government within the wide participation literature and discourse as defined and understood in this thesis. Titled literature review, this section will also survey the literature that clarifies the elements of aligning the priorities, planning, budgeting, implementation actions and reporting required of the South African municipalities by the relevant legislation. The recent and current discourse on the concepts of participatory budgeting and participatory planning are also considered in this section, in relation to the global experiences.

## 3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.2.1 Integrated Development Planning: a key municipal planning function in South Africa

Interestingly, one of the Priority 1 (one) functions for the municipalities in South Africa, which is often ignored, is the planning function. Since the promulgation of the Municipal Systems Act in 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), all municipalities in the country are required to undertake a planning activity that would result in the formulation of the vision and the mission statements, as well as developmental plans and objectives for a five-year period. In essence, this function should encompass all planning in relation to spatial, economic and social development of the municipality in a very comprehensive and integrated style, hence referred to as integrated development planning (NT, 2011:33, Smith 2004:14). This is arguably a very crucial planning function for the municipalities as it

informs priorities, budgets and the actual delivery of services. The resultant product of the municipal planning function has come to be known as integrated development plans (IDPs).

As alluded above, the IDPs were ushered by the introduction of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 in the local government level of South Africa (Smith, 2004:14). In terms of this Act, an IDP "is the principal strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all planning and development, and all decisions with regard to planning, management and development, in the municipality" (DPLG, 2000:44). This description is echoed by the World Bank, in that IDPs are seen as the main planning and development tools for the local government sector in South Africa (World Bank, 2011:61). Accordingly, IDPs are positioned as principal forums for citizen participation and input in policy and decision-making in that they should reflect the needs and priorities of the public in the municipal budgets (World Bank, 2011:61). It is believed that through the IDP consultations, the needs of the community would be identified and budgeted for in the next financial years.

The main purpose of this new approach to planning and budgeting was to realise the ideal of developmental local government as espoused by the White Paper of 1998. According to Smith (2004:14), all municipalities were required to develop and implement the IDPs for their entire administration areas. Accordingly, an IDP document is required to address, amongst others, the following: detail an assessment of the community developmental needs; prioritise these needs in terms of importance and urgency; present a development vision and strategy of the municipality to reach the set goals; and, audit the available resources, skills and capacities of the municipality (Smith, 2004:14). Even though an IDP is an official five-year strategic plan of the municipality, the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 stipulates that the document be reviewed annually for the purpose of performance assessment and review of the community needs (Smith, 2004:14).

Furthermore, when considering the skewed development planning history of South Africa, it became inevitable for the new democratic administration to integrate the spatial, social and economic planning in the country's local government. The country's new policymakers and planners had to conjure an integrated approach to development that would ensure the successful integration of the local governance and planning of the New South Africa (De Visser, 2009:7; Mac Kay 2004:17). Since the purpose of this research

was concerned with, *inter alia*, the processes and outcomes of the sampled municipalities' IDPs in addressing service delivery and developmental backlogs; it makes sense to unpack this novel IDP concept in details here.

The concept of integrated development planning (IDP) emerge in the late 1940s from the work of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (later the World Bank) economic mission to Colombia, whose sole aim was to formulate a general development program for that country (Escobar, 1995:24). The findings of the mission emphasised an integrated approach towards the development of that country (International Bank, 1950 in Escobar, 1995:25). According to Escobar, it was the first initiative in the history of development that saw programs developed in all sectors of social and economic aspects, instead of specific plans for the particular fields. The most important feature of the program which has now resurfaced in the local IDP is its detailed development prescriptions, which included goal-setting, "quantifiable targets, investment needs, design criteria, methodologies and time sequences" (Escobar, 1995:25). The report, in particular, introduced the importance of careful planning, organization and allocation of resources in order to ensure the integrated development. In its last paragraph, the emergence of the integrated approach of development planning has been captured thus: "Equally inescapable is the conclusion that with knowledge of the underlying facts and economic processes, good planning in setting objectives and allocating resources and determination… a great deal can be done to improve the economic environment" (International Bank 1950 in Escobar, 1995:25).

#### 3.2.1.1 Development

Nowadays, every nation in the world strives after some form of development, with the developing world being the most engaged in development pursuits. Even though a lot of criticism have been levelled against the notion of development in the past (see Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995 and Todaro, 1994, amongst others), the need for development, particularly in the emerging economies, could not be overemphasised (Escobar, 1995:5). It is widely acknowledged that the concept of development was first affirmed through the famous 'fair deal' inaugural speech of the former president of the United States of America (USA), Harry Truman in 1949 (Escobar, 1995:3). In that speech, Truman announced a new

dream of "… a program of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing…" to alleviate the poverty which engulfed the most part of the world's population at that time, which ironically is still a challenge, almost a century later. From that period onwards, every country, especially the less-economically accomplished ones, are still grappling with the concept of development. The question of how to develop has turned into a fundamental problem as countries embark on systematic, detailed, and comprehensive interventions to try and better their social and economic situations (Escobar, 1995:6).

The notion of development has been described in different ways by various observers and theorists, indicating that it means different things to these people, based on their particular contexts. The following definitions of development, amongst many others, capture the essence of meaningful citizen engagement in development. To Stiglitz (1999)

> Development represents a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, traditional ways of dealing with health and education, traditional methods of production, to more 'modern' ways…

On the other hand, Williams (2002) defines development as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. Development is further defined as "the satisfaction and continuous improvement of the basic needs of the people and the maintenance of the environment" (Sunmunu in the Alternative Development Strategies for Africa (ADSA), 1990:66-67). On the other hand, Esau (2007) describes development as a participatory process of integration that promotes sustainable growth, equity and the empowerment of the poor and marginalised communities.

According to the Human Development Report (United Nations, 1990:9), "…the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives." A key aspect of development is thus social equity, in the sense that development must benefit everyone and improve the quality of life of the poor and disadvantaged (De Visser, 2005: 12). Furthermore, Seers, (1979 in Szirmai 2005:7); lists the following as deriving from development: "decrease in poverty and malnutrition; decline in income inequality; and improvement in employment situation." On the other hand,

Sunmunu (in ADSA, 1990:67) proposes, *inter alia*, the following alternative strategies for development in Africa: development of human resources; satisfaction and continuous improvement of the basic needs of the people; maintenance of a healthy environment; creation and generation of employment; food security and food self-sufficiency; population management; integrated industrialisation; development of sports and culture; and *full participation of the people in all aspects of governance*[emphasis added]. The above strategies capture the principles of the IDP, without which the plans would fail to produce any tangible development and changes in the quality of life of those whose survival heavily depend on the effective and efficient provision of goods and services by the government. From the above definitions of development, the following elements can be identified, the material element, the dignity of the people and the freedom of choice.

***(i) Material element***

In the spirit of developmental local government (DLG) (1998) and the Human Development Report (1990), the primary objective of development should be to satisfy the material needs of the people. In other words, development should benefit the people by addressing their material well-being such as improvement of living standards, reduction of absolute poverty, social and economic equality, sustainable delivery of basic services and maintenance of a healthy environment, amongst others. This kind of development should be differentiated from the concept of 'developmentalism', in terms of which, "… development is initiated from the outside realm of the lives of those in need of development and development is a top-down approach" (De Visser, 2001:2).

***(ii) Local participatory democracy***

The RDP (1994), and the DLG (1998), amongst others, stress that development should seek active involvement of the citizenry and yield continuous empowerment thereof. This means that development should not be 'ordered' on, and / or 'inflicted' upon those that need it, but it must be initiated and carried out by those who will benefit from it (De Visser, 2001:2; Stiglitz, 1999:5). Development initiatives must commence with the freedom of those needing development to participate in the design and implementation thereof. This is basically what is missing in the concept of developmentalism: empowerment of the people

to make their choices and to freely determine the outcomes of development (De Visser, 2001:2). However, the empowerment rhetoric often overlooks the key element of equity in development, wich is also the root concept of the term 'empowerment' (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:14). It is thus necessary to acknowledge the intricacies of power relations in the society as a whole, not only between the central institution and the citizens. As stated by Foucault (1980:98 in Kothari 2001:141), "Power … is never localized here or there…". Analysing and understanding the centre of power in the Foucaldian theory would enable a shift form focusing on the centre and national institutions of government, to other micro or local points, such as elites and leaders in the communities (Kothari, 2001:141). In this way, the notion of empowerment in development will be better understood and possible achieved.

***(iii) Choice***

"… A man develops himself by joining in free discussion of a new venture and participates in the subsequent decision; he is not being developed if he is herded like an animal into a new venture." (Nyerere in Nengwkhulu 1996). Development and the freedom of choice imply that people are empowered to make their informed choices and decisions on the kind of development they envisioned. This will address the problem of coercion and co-optation into the predetermined development plans, and will satisfy the requirements of development as espoused in the RDP, DLG and IDPs. According to Hyden (2001:19), development becomes sustainable if it is owned and generated by real people working together.

For meaningfulness, development is always better understood when employed in the context of various approaches. The development literature can be categorised amongst the following key approaches: economic development, community development, social development, and of course, sustainable development. Community and social development are often used interchangeably as they are both concerned with the provision of basic goods and services that enhance the living standards of the people. These include the provision of housing, health services, education, infrastructure development, environmental health and safety, and other goods and services without which, the lives of the people would be in danger.

It has been argued that, for the development initiative to have a permanent effect on the community's lives, it must be sustainable (Hyden, 2001:13). The most quoted definition of the concept of sustainable development is provided by the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:43) thus: "Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

On the other hand, Goodland and Ledec (1987:36), define sustainable development as a pattern of social and structural economic transformations (developments) which optimises the economic and other societal benefits available in the present, without jeopardising the likely potential for similar benefits in the future. Sustainable development is based on the following three (3) fundamental premises:

- that we must live on the planet not as short-term visitors, but as permanent residents;
- that we must take a holistic approach to dealing with our livelihood predicaments; and
- that we must have a vested interest and stake in any development effort (Hyden, 2001:13).

This type of development will require a shift in governance and in the institutional arrangements, as it requires a more integrated and inclusive way of dealing with issues. The suggested changes in local governance to accommodate sustainable development will be presented in more details in the literature review section of this chapter.

#### 3.2.1.2 Planning

The planning function has many uses and can appear in various forms. It can be short-term, such as the twelve-month Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) of a municipality; medium-term, which may span between three to five years, such as the IDP; or a long-term plan that may have a life-span above five years, such as the National Development Plan-Vision for 2030, (2011) of South Africa or a provincial and national Growth and Development Strategy (GDS). As such, the municipal planning function is mainly concerned with planning related to the spatial, economic and social development of

the municipality (Du Mhango 1998 in Mac Kay, 2004: 18; NT, 2011:34). All planning has certain common attributes. These include looking ahead, making choices, and where possible, re-arranging the future actions for attaining objectives or setting limits to the consequences (Waterston, 1965:8).

According to Waterston (1955:8), "… planning is the exercise of intelligence to deal with facts and situations as they are and find a way to solve problems." On the basis of the above definition, planning can be viewed as an organised, intelligent attempt to select the best available alternatives in order to achieve specific goals. It represents the rational application of human knowledge to the process of reaching decisions which are to serve as the basis of human action.

The above analysis of planning can be referred to as collaborative planning, wherein different parties (with differing views) come together during the planning process in order to find a mutually-beneficial solution. This can be a perfect way to bring together local communities in dialogues that affect the society at large, such as budgetary issues, land use planning, human settlement and employment issues (Innes & Booher in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:34). Furthermore, the cited authors cautioned that collaborative policy dialogue amongst diverse stakeholders can only work if the dialogue is authentic not rhetoric (Innes & Booher 2003 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:37, Isaacs 1999). It follows then that, collaborative planning dialogue must be characterised by the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the problem, for it to succeed (Innes & Booher 2003 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:37).

It is argued in the rest of this thesis that the processes employed by the municipalities during the IDP process where planning and budgeting are finalised, would be much enriched if they employ collaborative policy and/or planning dialogue. As Habermas (1981) has argued, this would ensure that all interests are engaged in the policy discourse, and thus communicative rationality would be achieved (Habermas, 1981). Furthermore, the hypothesis of this research is that, if sufficient spaces are opened for the beneficiaries of the proposed planning and development to influence final decisions and budget allocations, resources would be channelled to the right direction. It is further argued that directing the resources to the felt needs would result in the reduction of service delivery backlogs in the local government as development would address the relevant community

issues. Collaborative planning, using authentic dialogue, may result in the diverse stakeholders achieving reciprocity and consensus, enhancing their relationship, learning and creativity in the resolution of problems (Innes & Booner 2003 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 52).

However, achieving the above results has been hampered by the fact that planning and budgeting processes are firmly institutionalised in both practice and law. As elaborated in the beginning of this report, the South African local government has a plethora of legislation that governs the manner in which its governance is carried out. Our current practice of participatory planning is firmly embedded in the above-mentioned legislation, which is not a bad thing. However, this has proved to be too rigid, which also constrains the public participation initiative in terms of what it can achieve, as practitioners are always anxious to comply with the requirement of the law, rather than to achieve meaningful engagement of the citizens. In this instance, Innes and Booher (2003 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 51-54) have identified the alternative models of planning that are often used in most public policy processes in the United States of America (USA); which can be similarly applied to the local (SA) context. Table 9 below depicts the alternative styles of planning as identified by Innes and Booher (2000; 2003), and a brief description of same follows.

**Table 10: Four styles of planning (*Source: Innes and Booher 2000&2003*)**

| | | low **Diversity** high | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Interdependence of interest** | Low | Technical bureaucratic<br>*Convincing* | Political influence<br>*Co-opting* |
| | high | Social movement<br>*Converting* | Collaborative<br>*Coevolving* |

It is worth noting that each of the above-mentioned approaches works well in different contexts of planning and policy-making, and as such, are all useful in those contexts (Innes & Booher, 2003: 51 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 51-54). These authors identified four styles of planning that are in constant use, namely; the technical bureaucratic model, the political influence model, the social movement and the collaborative style. Following is a brief discussion of the models of planning as developed by the authors. The technical bureaucratic model focusses much on analysis, regulation and implementing stated objectives. This style of planning will work well where there are no divergent and interdependent views and interests, in that the technocrats and bureaucrats only focus on a single objective. The political influence model, on the other hand, is much concerned with the influence of the political leader in the allocation of divisible benefits. This is a very sensitive planning style as it is prone to abuse. For example, it can be manipulated by politicians as a means for amassing more power, thereby guaranteeing votes during the next election. This style can work well in ensuring that the resources are distributed equitably to the masses. However, the fact that each interest will be concerned with getting a piece of the pie, whereas the political leaders may be using it for political enrichment, provides little hope for collaborative dialogue. The interest groups that are excluded by the utilization of the political influence model are often accommodated in the social movement style of planning. As the term suggests, the social movement style revolves around mobilising grassroots support to influence decisions. In the South African local government, this has been evidenced through the service-delivery protests by the citizens and the media attention on the performance of the local government. Innes and Booher (2003:52 in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 51-54) argue that, even though the social movement style recognises the importance of interdependence of interests, it does not deal with the full diversity of interests properly. According to the authors, the only method of planning that incorporates both full diversity and interdependence of interests and issues is the collaborative one.

A better understanding of the above-mentioned models of planning can be garnered through contrasting same in terms of the use of four Cs, as per Table 9 above. Accordingly, the technical bureaucratic model is concerned with *convincing* decision makers through analysis of what is the right course of action. The political influence, on the other hand, is

about *co-opting* the stakeholders to buying into the predetermined policy direction. The social movement is concerned about *converting* stakeholders into a particular vision and policy statement. On the other hand, there is collaborative model, which attempt to *coevolve* all players to a common understanding, direction, as well as encouraging learning processes amongst participants (Innes & Booher, in Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003:52).

As defined by the Municipal Systems Act, 2000, the IDPs are viewed as strategic planning instruments of the municipalities, and apart from encompassing the above-mentioned elements of planning, are required to also satisfy the principles of strategic planning. Furthermore, in order for the IDPs, as strategic planning tools, to be employed successfully during the planning and budgetary processes, their planning shall be aligned with broader developmental framework (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:5). In the two metropolitan municipalities that were studied for this thesis, the IDPs were aligned to the broad and long-term Growth and Development Strategies (GDSs). The IDP could be an optimal tool to ensure that the above development objectives are achieved, as they simplify the plans and align them to the real challenges and available resources to address them.

### *(i) Strategic planning*

Strategic planning refers to a set of concepts, procedures and tools that are designed to assist leaders and managers with the ability to plan during the changing circumstances. Globally, the planning and development world is not static; it is influenced by rapid changes that take place in the technological, social, political and economic environments. Drawing from Olsen & Eadie (1982) Bryson (1995:1), defines strategic planning as "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does, and why it does it." Accordingly, strategic planning can be said to be successful only when it enhances strategic thinking and action, not when it replaces the two activities (Bryson, 1995: x). It follows then that, for an organisation to derive best results from the application of strategic planning, the organisation needs to apply effective methods of information gathering, development and exploration of alternative strategies, with an emphasis on what implications the present decisions will have in the future (Bryson, 1995:5).

It is argued that the application of strategic planning can be useful in facilitating communication and participation, accommodate divergent interests and values amongst the stakeholders (Bryson, 1995:5).

As a consequence of this, strategic planning would be able to produce better and realistic decisions and plans that would result in the successful implementation. Various authors have argued that strategic planning is capable of producing different benefits for organisations (Steiner, 1979; Barry, 1986; Koteen, 1989; Mercer, 1991; Nutt & Backoff, 1992; Berry & Wechsler, 1995). For the purpose of this research, two key benefits that the IDP, as a strategic tool for the municipality, should produce are briefly discussed below, as proposed by Bryson (1995:7). The first benefit should be the improvement of decision-making by the organisation. In this case, the strategic planning tool should focus the attention of a municipality towards the crucial service delivery and developmental issues and challenges that it is facing. Amongst the benefits that can be derived from the application of strategic planning method is the development of strategic thought and action. This benefit should be preceded by the extensive and systematic gathering of information about the organisation's internal and external environment, including service delivery demands from the communities.

Already, the local government is obliged by the legislation to undertake such assessment through consultation and involvement of the communities in their planning and budgeting. However, the big question posed in this research, is whether this is being done in a meaningful fashion, that is, in a manner that presents the communities with opportunities to influence final plans and allocation of resources. The second, crucial derivative from the employment of strategic planning methods is enhanced organisation responsiveness or improved performance. Even though there is no guarantee that strategic planning would yield the above benefit, organisations that engages in this planning method are encouraged to respond judiciously to their internal and external challenges, and to deal effectively with changing environments (Bryson, 1995:7)

For the above benefits to be derived from the IDPs and local government budgets, effective and meaningful engagement of communities is required. The above sentence brings us to the notion of participatory planning (PP), which has been introduced

internationally in countries such as Brazil, India, North America, Germany and others (ÖGUT, 2008).

***(ii) Participatory Planning***

The concept of participatory planning (PP) may be defined as a process in which the ordinary citizens collaborate with the government officials in identifying and prioritising of the felt needs of the community (Vijayanand, 2005:1). In order to ensure realism and alignment with available resources during the process of PP, planning has to be done against the proposed budget (Vijayanand, 2005:1). Following the above scenario simultaneously moves PP closer to the notion of participatory budgeting (PB) (to be discussed later in this thesis). Local plans such as the IDP are crucial to ensure that the outcomes of PP in the local level are consistent with the municipal-wide, the provincial and the national objectives (Vijayanand, 2005:1). As such, the South African local government is obliged to align its plans to the broader national and provincial goals in order to ensure that the country is moving towards the same direction.

According to Du Mhango (1998:4) in Mac Kay (2004:18) the integrated development planning is a type of planning that synthesises all the spatial areas, developmental sectors (inter-sectorial integration) and modules such as economic, social, institutional, political and environmental sectors into a coherent planning and development programme and budget on a long-term basis. Figure 17 (below) depicts the advantages of PP to the process of decentralisation and development planning.

**Figure 17: Advantages of Participatory Planning (*Source: Vijayanand, 2005:2)***

i) Planning is relevant to all local governments, developed and under-developed, urban and rural, big and small.
ii) Participatory planning facilitates the involvement of different sections of society each having different development interests and expectations; it affords opportunities for activists, volunteers and professionals to contribute to reconciling the different interests into a development agenda, in partnership with elected representatives and government officials.
iii) Participatory local level planning throws up local solutions to different development problems unfettered by technological, institutional, or ideological fixations.
iv) It motivates people to back up their participation with contribution in cash, kind or labour, to stretch out public resources to match the requirements as per local priorities.
v) Participatory planning implies local data collection and analysis facilitated by experts – this is a good base for reflection and development action, leading ultimately to empowerment.
vi) It facilitates social accountability through enhanced information flow as well as awareness of deeper developmental issues.
vii) Participatory planning generates the desire for developmental learning, affording entry to concepts like gender, social justice, environmental sustainability, mainstreaming the challenges and so on.

Participatory planning is only a beginning. If properly managed, it can lead on to a demand-led improvement of service delivery and further to responsible and responsive local government.

The IDPs, as strategic planning tools of the municipalities should inform the priorities, budgets and actual delivery of services in the municipalities, in an integrated manner. In other words, the IDP should set the priorities for budget, capital projects and service delivery over its five-year lifespan (Fourie & Reutener, 2012: 5; World Bank, 2011:61; NT, 2011:33). The AGSA reports refer to the above elements of the IDP as the predetermined objectives (PDOs) (MFMA Gauteng, 2012:31). PDOs simply refers to the five year strategic objectives of the IDP, which indicates what services the municipality intends to deliver to its local communities. The findings of the AGSA are based on, amongst others, the findings on the audits of reporting on PDOs. In essence, performance information (reporting on PDOs), indicates how well a municipality performed against strategic objectives (MFMA Gauteng, 2012:31).

### 3.2.2 Critical analysis of different conceptions of democracy

It is almost impossible to examine the issues that are pertinent to participatory governance without due consideration of a democratic model currently employed in the country (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007: 5; Gaventa, 2005:3; Bueek & Smith (2000) in Williams, 2007:30; Kabemba, 2003:6). In this instance, it is worth noting here that South Africa practices a mixture of the two systems, namely, representative and participatory democracy (Chenwi & Tissington, 2010:6). However, the dominant system is that of representative democracy in the form of proportional representative, whereby the electorate is represented by their preferred political parties in government.

As evidenced in the literature, public participation is one of the key components of democracy, and it is through its exercise that the true nature of a democratic system can be understood (Kabemba, 2003: 2). However, it is imperative to get an understanding of what democracy means in the context of this study. Huntington (1991 in Mhone and Edigheji, 2003:18) noted that the definition of democracy can be simplified by classifying it in terms of the sources of government authority, purpose served by the government and procedures for constituting the government. According to Mhone (in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 18) the first two elements of this classification emphasize "what is normally referred to as the *will of the people* as a source of authority, and pursuit of *the common good* as the main purpose of government (emphasis added)."

In other words, this classification assumes that the main task of democracy is to represent the will of the people, which reflects the common good (Shapiro, 2003:3). The justification of such a classification includes, *inter alia*, addition of substantive democracy, which refers to "effective citizen control over policy, responsible government, honesty and openness in politics, informed and rational deliberation, equal participation, and various other civic virtues" (Huntington, 1991, in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 18). The essence of the above statement is believed to encompass the meaning of democratic legitimacy by deliberative democrats, in that those affected by a collective decision should be afforded an opportunity to deliberate in the production of that decision (Dryzek & List, 2003:1).

According to Fung (2007: 443) there are various competing conceptions of democracy that occupies a large space in the debate of democratic political theory. Such conceptions include, amongst others, the direct, representative, minimalist, aggregative, deliberative,

participatory, dualist and juridical forms of democracy (Fung, 2007: 443). On the other hand, Young (2000; 19); Peroté-Peña and Piggins (2012:2); Peter (2007:331) and Flynn (2011:12) posit that in the contemporary democratic theory, perhaps the two most prominent categories are those of aggregative and deliberative theories of democracy. This assertion is echoed by Dryzek and List (2003:1) in that the democratic theory is dominated by these two approaches, with deliberative being currently the stronger of the two. For the purpose of this research, the two models of democracy, namely, the aggregative and the deliberative; are considered.

### 3.2.2.1 Aggregative democratic model and its deficits

To the proponents of the preference aggregation model of democracy, democracy is understood as "a mechanism for identifying and aggregating the preferences of citizens" in order to determine which of them are most favoured by the citizens (Young, 2000:20). As such, preference aggregating model refers to the process of aggregating the conflicting interests and preferences of voters in order to make social choices that comes closer to the widely held preferences (Perote-Peña & Piggins, 2012:1; Mansbridge 1980 in Young, 2000:19).

The roots of the aggregative model of democracy can be traced to the **s**ocial choice theory, a branch of rational choice theory that is concerned with ways of aggregating individual interests or preferences into social outcomes (Sen 1986 in Knight & Johnson, 1994:279). According to Sen (1986: 1075) social choice theory is itself rooted upon two rather distinct sources, namely the mathematical theory and the normative theories of personal welfare. The study of normative analysis of personal welfare, has been developed over the years, and is now better understood in terms of the exploration of modern welfare economics. The mathematical theory of elections and committee decisions, on the other hand, can be comfortably traced to the Marquis Condorcet (1785) and de Borda (1781), the two theorists who explored the majority rule and ranking methods during the French revolution (Sen, 1986:1075). However, through the seminal works of Duncan Black (1958) and Kenneth Arrow (1963), the mathematical theory gained prominence in the contemporary democratic theory as a form of an economic theory of democracy (Peroté-Peña & Piggins, 2012:2; Dryzek & List, 2003:2). Accordingly, the social choice theory is

concerned with relationships between individuals' preferences and social choice (Fishburn, 1973:3 in Sen, 1977: 53). As such, the aggregative model focuses on aggregating privately held preferences through voting, in order to arrive at a collective choice (Peter, 2007:331).

Deriving from a highly liberal position, the proponents of the aggregative model believe that there is no need to either publicly or privately justify personal preferences. Furthermore, in the aggregative model, apart from their role in predicting or correcting, justifications are regarded as insignificant and inconsequential to the process (Flynn, 2011:12). In this model, collective political decisions are made according to an aggregation method that should meet some form of majority preference. In this sense, the decisions shall satisfy some threshold, to be regarded as a majoritarian result which will render the decision legitimate and binding to all affected citizens. Based on the above, the liberal democrats view democracy as a way of aggregating individual preferences into a collective choice in a fair and efficient manner (Miller, 1992:55). However, the main challenge with the above is to establish the institutional structure that successfully complies with the requirements of equality and efficiency. The above resulted in a dilemma for the liberal democrats, with regard to which method to adopt, that is,

> Whether majoritarian decision-making is to be preferred or whether the ideal is a pluralistic system which gives various groups in society different amounts of influence over decisions in proportion to their interest in those decisions" (Miller, 1992:55).

The aggregative democratic model dominated the theoretical literature well up to the late 1980s (Flynn, 2011:12). During its prominence, various democratic theorists viewed the aggregative model with scepticism. For example, William Riker (1961) regarded the model as the mere "summing of preferences", whilst Sen (1970, 35-36) describes it as a "collective choice rule" that was useful to the rulers to reorder individual preferences into a unique social ordering of alternatives. On the other hand, Wollheim (1962:76) viewed the aggregative democratic model as the type of machine, into which the individual preferences are fed at fixed intervals of electing the governments.

However, the clear picture of the aggregative model is proffered by Mansbridge (1980:17) in the following detailed definition:

> Voters pursue their individual interests by making demands on the political system in proportion to the intensity of their feelings. Politicians also pursuing their own interests, adopt policies that buy them votes, thus ensuring their own accountability. In order to stay in office, politicians act like entrepreneurs and brokers, looking for formulations that satisfy as many, and alienate as few, interests as possible. From the interchange between self-interested voters and self-interested brokers emerge decisions that can come close as possible to a balance aggregation of individual interests.

The most notable point to be considered is that the aggregative model of democracy only relies on the majority decision rule as the source of authority, thus reaching whatever collective decision should be taken. The key is the fact that in the process, the minority of citizens who might disagree with the decision are made to obey it (Sen, 1977:55). According to Fishkin (2005), the model employs the system of aggregation by majority rule or other voting rules in arriving at collective decisions that are binding to all.

The theory of social choice promotes the abandoning of populist models of democracy which view democratic decisions as expressions of the collective choice or the "people's choice" in favour of liberal models wherein democratic elections are interpreted merely as a safeguard against the emergence of tyrannical rulers (Miller, 1992:57). In this sense, the social choice theory regards democracy as the system where the voters exercising their voting right at periodic intervals, remove from office governments which they dislike (Miller, 1992:57).

The aggregative model of democracy is a response to the minimalist view that citizens are incapable or are too injudicious to have, and articulate their views in the public sphere (Fung, 2007: 447). Thus in the aggregative democracy, citizens' self-interests and preferences plays a major role when a choice (vote) between policy proposals or candidates is to be made (Fung, 2007: 448; Shapiro, 2003:3). In contrast to the deliberative democracy, the aggregative democratic model places no emphasis on the values such as reasoned rule, private liberty and common good (Fung, 2007:448).

As an example of the aggregative model of democracy, representative democracy will be discussed. According to Friedman (2004 in Hicks and Buccus 2007: 98), representative democracy is the only mechanism devised so far that is capable of representing the interests of the marginalized and unorganized. Friedman stresses that representative democracy is the only mechanism of democracy that is able to establish how all (voting) citizens feel

about certain ideas or interests. However, this research subscribed to the dissenting view of those who do not agree with the above assertion. The proponents of representative democracy fail to acknowledge the truth as described in the above discussion of the aggregative democracy. It has been shown that in this model of democracy individual preferences are taken for granted, and that there is no manner of knowing what motivates such interests (Peroté-Peña & Piggins, 2012:2; Young, 2000:20; Knight & Johnson, 1994:278). In other words, the aggregative model offers no opportunity for the citizens to give reasons for their preferences. For example, South Africa practices a system of representative democracy in the form of proportional representative in which the electorate is represented by their preferred political parties in government. In this system, two forces are at play: self-interested voters and self-interested politicians (Mansbridge, 1980:17). In reality, what is happening is that voters, pursuing their self-interests, aggregate their preferences and make demands on their political representatives in parliament or in a municipal Council. In response, politicians implement the policies that correspond to the demands of their constituencies. As the detailed definition of aggregative democracy by Mansbridge above indicates, this political action is not an indication of altruism on the part of politicians in favour of their constituencies. The action is the characteristic of self-interest by the politicians that would ensure that they will be voted into power again and will keep their offices (Young, 2000:19).

Even though this is the most favoured form of democracy, it is always criticized for maintaining inequality in representation in that mostly, few members of the community; those with resources to participate, "indirectly participate" on behalf of the masses. This is due to the fact that in our real political settings, the structures of social, economic and political conditions are characterized by inequalities amongst the stakeholders (Young, 2000:17; 2001:670-3). This active and influential group constitutes what is commonly referred to as the "elite" (Kabemba, 2003:6; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007: 11; Avritzer (2003) in Gaventa, 2005:6; Mendelberg, 2002: 152; Dye, 1975, in Bekker, 1996:52).

The criticism of the aggregative model of democracy such as the one described above relates to what Young calls 'problems' (Young, 2000:20). The first criticism relates to the problem in determining the quality of citizens' preferences in terms of their contents, origin or motive, which is associated with the practice of aggregating preferences in terms of their

favouritism (Young, 2000:21). In essence, the model does not show the reason why some preferences are supported more than others. Further criticism of the aggregative democratic model is that it is promoting self-interests of each political actor without rationality and reasoning (Shapiro, 2003:3). The major critique of this model in regard to its emphasis on voting is provided by William H Riker (1982). According to Riker (1982), social choice theory highlights two kinds of challenges with voting, namely instability and ambiguity. The instability of voting is found in the fact that it can generate cyclical social orderings under certain mechanisms. This often opens electoral outcomes to manipulation through strategic voting or agenda control (Riker, 1982).

According to Sen (1977:55), the key method that is often employed to determine the outcome of voting, is the method of majority decision (MMD) (Sen, 1977:55). The main criticism against the MMD is that it only concentrates on individual preference orderings, and ignore their ranking and significance to the participants (Sen, 1977:57). On the other hand, Riker (1982) argues that because each kind of aggregation mechanism often infringes on one or another criterion of impartiality, no other standard, internal or external, is known that is effective for discerning which methods of counting votes is the best. In particular, there's no way of determining which voting method most accurately represents the popular or collective will. Therefore, this model's motivation for the acceptance of outcomes of a political process as legitimate is weakened by the above-mentioned criticisms (Young, 2000:21).

### 3.2.2.2 Deliberative Democracy as participatory governance

Over the years, a proliferation of literature that contrast an aggregative perspective on political institutions *(aggregative democracy)* – which describes politics in terms of aggregating exogenous prior preferences of citizens, with an integrative perspective *(deliberative democracy)* – which describes politics in terms of the development of preferences within a framework of rights and norms; has been observed (March & Olsen 1986; Rosenberg, 2004; Sen, 1977; 1986; Miller, 1992; Mouffe, 1999; Fishkin, 2005, Flynn, 2011, Young 2000; Chambers, 2008308). For example, in *Liberalism Against Populism,* Riker (1982) distinguishes populist from liberal conceptions of democracy thus: 'populist conception emphasises that political participation and public deliberation can

serve to articulate and advance a "general will" while liberal conceptions emphasise the role of regular elections tests in limiting the power of public officials.' The integrative perspective of democracy later came to be understood as deliberative democracy, and has been advanced since the early 1980s (Young, 2000:21; Landwehr, 2006; Bohman, 1998:400)

Even though both political perspectives share assumptions with regard to the structures of democratic institutions, they differ in terms of decision making processes (Young, 2000). As Chambers (2003:308) put it, deliberative democracy is "talk-centric" whereas aggregative democracy is "voting-centric". On the other hand, the aggregative model relies on the aggregation of individual preferences to reach political decisions, and employs voting and bargaining to determine how those individual preferences are cumulated (Mansbridge,1980; Young, 2000). Deliberative democracy moves away from competitive pluralism by encouraging the distinctive rationality of "the forum" as opposed to the rationality of "the market" (Bohman, 1998). According to Chambers (2003:308) deliberative democracy

> Begins by turning away from liberal individualist or economic understanding of democracy and toward a view anchored in concepts of accountability and discussion… [It] focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation that precedes voting. Accountability replaces consent as the conceptual core of legitimacy. A legitimate political order is one that could be justified to all those living under its laws. Thus, accountability is primarily understood in terms of "giving an account" of something that is, publicly articulating, explaining, and most importantly justifying public policy.

To many scholars, deliberative democracy is an alternative way of arriving at inclusive public decisions (Ackerman & Fishkin, 2004; Cooke, 2000; Elster, 1998; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Leib, 2004; Lindblom, 1990; Lindblom & Cohen, 1979; Roberts, 2008; Weeks, 2000; 2008). Broadly defined, deliberative democracy refers to a normative democratic theory that infuses government decision making with reasoned discussion and the collective judgement of citizens; through the linking of participation in public decision making with the practice of deliberation (Cohen & Fung, 2004). According to Elster (1998:8), the notion of deliberative democracy can be understood by detaching its democratic part from the deliberative part. Accordingly, the democratic part of the concept includes collective decision making through the participation of all those affected by the

decision or their representatives. The deliberative part, on the other hand, concerns decision making by means of arguments offered by, and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality. On the basis of this definition, deliberative democracy can be further understood "as both a normative account of the bases of democratic legitimacy and a prescription for how citizens ought to be politically engaged." (Young, 2001:672).

A key feature of deliberative democracy, when contrasted with the aggregative model, is that its processes are open to those who are affected or interested in the issues, that is, access is broad and inclusive not only to the government, public or private entities, but also includes the ordinary citizens and community groups (Nabatchi, 2010:385). As such, deliberative democracy is premised on the theory of principled negotiation (Fischer & Ury, 1981). This principle emphasise the interests that underlie and form individual preferences and positions (Innes & Booher, 2003). According to Young (2000), the interest-based approach enables the processes of deliberation to flourish, in that more emphasis is placed on the inclusiveness of the procedure and the multiplicity of values involved.

Over the years the conception of deliberative democracy has received a lot of attention, leading to the suggestion that it has 'come of age' (Bohman, 1998) and that it has taken an 'empirical turn' (Dryzek, 2008). Generally, three generations of deliberative democracy have been identified, based on the focus of their discourse. The first generation is famously represented by the two arguably most influential deliberative democrats of the late twentieth century (Dryzek & List, 2003:1), namely John Rawls (1993, 1997a, 1997b) and Jürgen Habermas (1987, 1990, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). These were joined by Joshua Cohen (1997), who, reframing Rawls arguments, conceptualized deliberative democracy in terms of 'moral requirement' (see Freeman, 2000:379). Even though the first-generation deliberative democrats' views diverge in terms of their focus, they all envisaged a highly idealized model of deliberative democracy, with the main focus being on the normative justification, interpretations and necessary procedural conditions required for the success of the deliberative democratic theory (Elstub, 2010:291, 293).

On the other hand, the second-generation deliberative democrats, effectively represented by Bohman (1996), Dryzek (1990, 2000), Young (1996, 1999) Goodin (2003), and Guttmann and Thompson (1996, 2004), emerged with a view of enhancing the first-

generation deliberative democracy by introducing the empirical requirements into the mix (Elstub, 2010:291). The second-generation attempted to move away from an idealized normative deliberative democracy as it was known, and argued for the inclusion of other forms of communication, other than focusing on the reason exchange (Elstub, 2010:291). In essence, this generation of deliberative democrats vehemently rejected the strict outcome requirement of consensus in favour of different approaches (Flynn, 2011:11).

It is argued that the current debate, commonly referred to as the third-generation of deliberative democrats, have emerged, which sought to establish the appropriate institutions to enable the achievement of deliberative democracy in practice (Elstub, 2010; Flynn, 2011). In essence, the third-generation emanated from the question of democratic legitimacy, and of how deliberation can be made realistic and institutionalized within the democratic decision-making process of a large, complex society (Elstub, 2010:292; Flynn, 2011:169).

As a developing discourse, at this stage the third-generation deliberative democrats cannot be identified with certainty as the debate is still in progress, but the following have been frontrunners in attempting to adapt the normative deliberative democratic ideal into practice. On one hand, we have theorist such as Ackerman and Fishkin (2002, 2005); and Fishkin (1995), who "attempted to show how various micro models might be adapted to mass publics." On the other hand, there are those, such as Hendriks (2006), Mansbridge (1999), Dryzek (2009), Goodin (2005) and Parkinson (2006) who "sought to recast deliberative principles in terms of a macro scale 'system'" (Flynn, 2011:169). However, locating the level or the generation of debate in the South African context is problematic, since her democracy is still at infancy. Nevertheless, due to the proliferation of literature on the first and second generation of deliberative democracy, this research attempted to infuse both of these generations, and to introduce the third one in an attempt to situate the debate on meaningful citizen engagement within the going debates and literature.

In order to understand the 'empirical turn' of deliberative democracy, deliberative democracy will be considered in this section by referring to the participatory model of democracy as an example. Due to modernization and the changing nature of citizen's needs, the liberal representative democratic institutions as a form of aggregative model of democracy, are no longer well-suited to address the pressing community demands, hence

the advocate for participatory model of democracy (Petts 2001 in Hicks 2006); Fung & Wright, 2001:1; Gaventa, 2005:1; Shankland, 2006; Healey, 2010:1; Esau, 2007:1).

According to Mc Gee et al., (2003 in Hicks and Buccus 2007:98), participatory democracy denotes citizen participation in decision-making processes outside the structures of elected government institutions. This model provides an opportunity to break the mould of inequality and offers a scope for fundamentally redressing these inequalities through the participative and deliberative process itself. Participatory democracy is understood as a situation where communities employ deliberative rules in resolving disputes and common dilemmas (Barber (1984). According to Barber (1984), the notion was introduced with the aim of enhancing a democracy that is grounded on the interaction between all actors, that is, elected and non-elected parties who were affected by a public issue. Fung states that this notion of democracy goes deeper than the structures of representative democracy due to its reliant in direct deliberation amongst citizens (Fung, 2007:450).

Of importance about implementing participatory democracy is a fact that it is not about being at the receiving end of democracy. Participatory democracy requires the active involvement of citizens from the planning stage to the implementation stage of the project (Barber 1984 in Fung 2007:450; Mathekga & Buccus, 2006:16). This means that the participants must be engaged actively in the whole process, not only at the end. Even though participatory governance has been institutionalized in the local government globally, the questions of power, depth and capacity remain unresolved (Fung & Wright, 2001: 7; Mendelberg, 2002: 161; Gaventa, 2005: 6; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007:9; Esau: 2007:1; Marais et al., 2007). The reality of the situation is that only a weakened version of participatory democracy tends to become manifest in practice, in what Hoppe (2011:163 in Bartels 2014:656) referred to as "a gap between the rhetoric of hoped-for or taken-for-granted benefits and their materialisation in reality." The current debate in the literature of participatory democracy is now focused on the empirical exploration of "how to achieve … deliberative theory in practice" (Elstub, 2010:291).

To address this malady in the current implementation of this democratic model, the theorists of participatory democracy took a new approach in what became known as a "deepening democracy project" (Gaventa, 2005:4). In this view, democracy is seen as a

process that deepen the ways in which ordinary citizens can effectively participate and take control of decisions that affect their lives (Fung & Wright, 2001:7; Gaventa, 2005:4). Based on this view and after examining five major democratic reforms that took place in various countries, Fung & Wright (2001:7) developed what they termed empowered deliberative democracy. Accordingly, the notion of empowered deliberative democracy is based on the following principles:

- a focus on specific, tangible problems;
- involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them; and
- the deliberative development of solutions to these problems.

These principles raise a pertinent question of whether these are applied in the South African practice of participatory governance or not.

In essence, the concept of participatory democratic model implies that citizens must be afforded meaningful spaces to deliberate on issues of their concern, in what is called deliberative democracy. Chambers (2003:308) describes deliberative democracy as a slightly deeper and expanded notion of representative democracy. According to her, "deliberative democracy denotes substituting the voting-centric democratic theory with the talk-centric democratic theory." This implies that deliberative democracy transcends the electoral participation towards the discursive processes and the "will-formation that precedes voting." (Chambers, 2003:308; Fung, 2007:449). On the other hand, Mc Coy and Scully (2002 in Hicks & Buccus 2007:98), view deliberative democracy as a mechanism that enriches participative democracy and enhanced civic engagement because it emphasises the quality of citizens' debate about issues. The main objective of deliberative democracy is to elicit

> Broad public participation in a process which provides citizens an opportunity to consider the issues, weigh alternatives, and express a judgment about which policy proposal is the best. This can be distinguished from other modes of public involvement through the quality and the depth of participation (Weeks, 2000:360).

In other words, the true conception of deliberative democracy is that which affords citizens not only an option to vote on policy options, but to participate at every stage of policy formulation (Chambers, 3003:317). Thus, in the deliberative model, the democratic

process is mainly concerned with the discussion of problems, conflicts and issues by all those who are affected (Young, 2000: 22).

According to McGee et al., (2003 in Hicks and Buccus 2007:98), the notion of deliberative democracy is the only "mechanism that enriches participative democracy." Deliberative democracy is viewed as the extended form of participative democracy in that it encourages debate about issues and problems felt, in a manner that affords every affected citizen the opportunity to contribute in finding a solution (Chambers, 2003: 308-309). Apart from its normative or intrinsic values, democratic theorists posit that deliberative democracy also yields instrumental values or effects for both participation and public governance (Fischer, 2006: Nabatchi, 2010:377). According to Fischer (2006:22), participatory democracy can be assessed in terms of three effects, namely, instrumental, developmental and intrinsic. Instrumental effects refer to participation designed to achieve particular goals or outcomes. People are seen to participate in order to achieve things that they cannot get through private efforts. Developmental effects refer to effects that participation can have on human development such as expanding the individual's or group's powers of education and thought, feeling and commitment, or social action. People learn from experience how the social system and surrounding environments work, come to understand diversity and tolerance, and gain political skills that help them efficaciously contribute to social change. Whereas intrinsic effects pertain to specific action-oriented skills, namely, intrinsic skills. Intrinsic benefits refer to the less tangible internal effects that result from participation such as a sense of personal gratification, heightened self-worth, and a strong identification with one's community (Nagel, 1987).

Furthermore, other democratic theorist assert that deliberative democracy may also add the instrumental benefits or values for both individual and local governance that may assist in the amelioration of citizen and democratic deficits (Elster, 1998; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, 2004; Mansbridge, 1980, 1995; Pateman, 1970; Young, 2000). The individual instrumental benefits are largely captured in the argument that deliberative democracy has an educational effect on participants (Elster, 1998; Fung, 2003; Mansbridge, 1980, 1995; Pateman, 1970). The major psychological quality that deliberative participation is expected to produce and develop is political efficacy (Pateman, 1970, Finkel, 1985; Mansbridge, 1995; Morell, 1998, 2005). However, other scholars extend these individual benefits,

arguing that deliberation can enhance a sense of citizenship through fostering and increasing political sophistication, interest, trust, respect, empathy, and or public spiritedness (Luskin & Fishkin, 2003).

In addition, participation is thought to be a circular causal process (Finkel, 1985) whereby "the more individual participate, the better able they become to do so" (Pateman, 1970:42-43). The theory is that deliberation helps participants cultivate skills such as eloquence, rhetorical ability, empathy, courtesy, imagination and reasoning capacity (Faeron, 1998). Through the active exchange of ideas, and the voicing of and listening to preferences expressed in an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1984, 1990), deliberation can help people clarify, understand and refine their own preferences and positions on issues (Elster, 1998). Even if preferences are not transformed, collective discussions may create greater understanding among the people with divergent preferences, as well as more tolerance for opposing views because people may begin to think beyond their own self-interests, to include greater concern for others and their community (Benhabib, 1996; Cooke, 2000; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, 2004).

The conception of deliberative democracy is premised upon the deliberative democratic theory that espouses reasoned rule as a requirement of deliberation (Fung, 2007:449; Thompson, 2008:498).

### 3.2.3 Deliberative Democratic Theory and deliberative (political) cultures

According to Sass and Dryzek (2014:3), deliberative theories are always thought of as emanating from the ancient polis of the Athens, which was later adopted and developed further by the western figures such as Aristotle, Burke, Mills, Rawls and Habermas, amongst others. Deliberative democratic theory is defined by Melo and Baiocchi (2006:589) as a body of political theory that seeks to develop a substantive version of democracy, which is based on public justification of individual preferences through deliberation. Most notably, the cited authors view the theory not only as a discussion-based democracy, but also as a political system in which reasonable, and equal citizens exercise legitimate authority in deliberation on issues of interests.

On the other hand, Chambers (2003:308) views deliberative democratic theory as a normative theory that offers alternative ways to enrich democracy and to criticise institutions that do not comply with its normative standard. Moreover, Chambers (2003:309) asserts that the theory of deliberative democracy "critically investigates the quality, substance and rationality of the arguments and reasons brought to defend policy and law." In essence, theorists of deliberative democracy reject the promotion of self-interest over the common good, based on reason. Such theorists support institutions and conceptions of democracy that subject political decision making on reason (Fung, 2007: 449; Thompson, 2008:498; Chambers, 2003: 309).

Even though the notion of deliberation could be linked to earlier philosophers and theorists such as Aristotle, Rousseau, Dewey and Arendt; Bohman (1998:400) argues that in its current form, it can be directly attributed to Joseph Bessette (1980). The theory of deliberative democracy gained most of its popularity from its rejection of the social choice theory of preference or interest aggregation and the strategic behaviour that is encouraged by voting and bargaining (Bohman, 1998:400; Thompson, 2008:498; Dryzek & List, 2003:2). The main rejection, which is also a defining feature for the deliberative democratic theory is its emphasis on the public justification of reasons by the citizens to each other when deliberation about issues of common interest are undertaken. Often referred to as a reason-giving requirement of the deliberative democracy, participants in a deliberation are required to provide reasons for their particular preferences to others (Thompson, 2008:498). This requirement also applies to a need to respond to the given reason or justification in a manner that is acceptable and understandable to others.

Subsequent to the requirement that deliberative democracy placed on the deliberators, is the belief that the theory of democratic deliberation also accrues the benefit of producing legitimate decisions. This benefit is ascribed to the fact that deliberative democracy "respects the moral agency of the participants" (Thompson, 2008:498). This benefit is influenced by the belief that under the conditions of deliberative democracy, participants are able to influence the transformation of individual preferences in order to reach decisions that are oriented to the common good (Thompson, 2008: 501).

Over the years the theory has evolved, moving from the 'theoretical statement' towards the 'working theory' (Chambers, 2003:307). According to Bohman (1998:401), the concerns about the feasibility of the policy, which includes addressing the questions of "how this ideal would be approximated in [the] societies [that are] characterised by deep disagreements, social problems of enormous complexity and the blunt instruments of available institutions" has now dominated the discourse of the deliberative democratic theory. Accordingly, in his survey article, Bohman presented the following review of three different ways in which the deliberative democratic ideals have changes. Firstly, Bohman indicates how the theories of deliberative democracy emphasised the process of deliberation over its ideal, which led to an overemphasis being placed on the epistemic and moral aspects of public justification (public reasoning). Secondly, the survey revealed that more interests have been allocated in the resolution of institutional problems, such as making such institutions more deliberative instead of dismissing them in favour of direct democracy. Thirdly, the survey shows how the deliberative democrats are concerned with the empirical obstacles, attempting to devise strategies of making deliberation a reality (Bohman, 1998:401). The complete survey of the three changes that has occurred in this policy justifies the assertion that deliberative democracy "has come of age as complete theory of democracy rather than simply an ideal of legitimacy" (Bohman, 1998:401).

Even though deliberation practices have exhibited a universal human ability to reason together, the character of deliberation itself differs considerably in regard to time and place, and is vastly influenced by cultural differences of the participants and that of the political setting (Sass & Dryzek, 2014:4). Two opposite claims on the cultural particularity of the deliberative democratic theory have been proposed by various theorists (Sass & Dryzek, 2014:5). On the one hand is Amartya Sen's universality claim, wherein 'democracy - as - public reason' instead of 'democracy - as - voting'; is considered a universal right for all societies. More particularly, Sen does not believe that cultural differences possess a capacity to shape the character and meaning of public reasoning (Sass & Dryzek, 2014:5).

The opposite view is represented by the claim that the growth of deliberative democracy is a result of modernisation. This is evidenced by Habermas's (1984) assertion

that the effects of modernisation are reflected in the formation of new culture in regard to political power and known traditions. As such, the communicative practices of the modernised societies, especially that which pertains to political power, exhibit the new culture and that gets institutionalised eventually.

In *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy (1996),* albeit weakly, Habermas asserts the dependency of democratic politics upon culture thus:

> Democratic institutions of freedom disintegrate without the initiatives of a population accustomed to freedom. Their spontaneity cannot be compelled simply through law; it is regenerated from traditions preserved in the associations of a liberal political culture." This is further echoed by Chambers (2008:196) in her proposition that through 'a culture of publicity, modernity offers a new context of criticism and self-reflection...

This is further echoed by Chambers (2008:196) in her proposition that through 'a culture of publicity, modernity offers a new context of criticism and self-reflection...' thereby emphasising the relationship between culture and deliberative practice.

However, the stronger case for the dependency of democratic institutions upon culture is presented by Benhabib (1988 in Sass and Dryzek, 2014:5). Accordingly, Benhabib suggests that the survival of democratic institutions cannot depend only on logically coherent political thought. It also requires the institutionalisation of a civic culture of public participation in which the voice of the affected citizens can be heard (Benhabib, 1988 in Sass & Dryzek, 2014:5, see also Fischer, 2006:25). Deliberative democracy is further limited by Sanders and Young, in a critical manner, as a particularistic and privileged speech culture - one that disadvantages women and minority groups (Sanders, 1997; Young, 1996).

The indicated claims, although positioned in opposite extremes, are useful to highlighting the challenges that are facing the South African local government with regard to reaching and responding to the needs of its diverse cultural societies. It is concerning that, during the consultations and other public engagement activities organised by the local

government sphere, the problems posed by cultural differences are not acknowledged and dealt with accordingly.

> Although it is important to analyse the material and procedural factors that enable participation, it should not be done at the expense of the underlying social conditions that are inherently necessary for participatory governance to work." (Fischer, 2006:24).

Therefore, it is necessary "… to learn how to create spaces in which citizens can meaningfully engage in shaping decisions together with state actors through durable forms of practice that advance more responsive governance" (Fischer, 2006:24).

### 3.2.4 Against deliberation

However, not everyone has been impressed by the prescriptions of the deliberative theory of democracy to the challenges of democracy (Mendelberg, 2002: 152; Chambers, 2003:318). The major critique of deliberative democratic theory emanates from empiricists, who claim that assumptions and claims made by this theory have not been empirically tested (Chamber, 2003:318; Thompson, 2008:498). This view is based on the fact that recommendations of deliberation are to be supported by substantive or empirical arguments (Sanders, 1997:348). Other critique ranges from the real structural inequalities that underpin major injustices on those disadvantaged by the political or social setting to whether the ordinary citizens have the capacity to effectively handle and deliberate on political matters (Mendelberg, 2002:152; Young, 2001: 670; Young & Mansbridge in Fung 2004:51-54). The main critique from Mendelberg emanates from the perception of skewed power relations in the real worlds of politics and the society at large, as such, she is wary of the decisions that are influenced by the powerful in the society, at the expense of the marginalised (2002:152). Furthermore, Young (2001:671) echoed the same critical view that…

> The activist is suspicious of exhortations to deliberate because he believes that in the real world of politics, where structural inequalities influence both procedures and outcomes, democratic processes that appear to conform to norms of deliberation are usually biased towards more powerful agents.

Being wary of power inequalities in the processes of deliberation, theorists such as Sanders (1997) and Young (1996) have opined that due to this shortcoming, deliberation is rendered inferior to other alternatives which have more equality built into them. A case in point is the cautionary note by Larmore (1994) and Mansbridge (1983) that during extreme disagreements, solution can only be found by using the principle of proportional representation, rather than consensual deliberation; and that deliberation may produce unintended results if not managed properly. Furthermore, the claim that deliberation mediate or transform conflict by producing some sort of consensus amongst the participants has been violently opposed by a number of theorists and scholars (Johnson & Knight 1994:282).

Empirical evidence has revealed that deliberation does not always produce the intended results due to some challenges. Some of the reasons brought forth for such weaknesses in the ideal of deliberation include the unequal distribution of material prerequisites for deliberation (Baynes, 2010:137). Accordingly, this skewed distribution of materials also leads to those who are financially marginalised being undermined, even if they can make persuasive arguments. This highlight the crucial fact on the prerequisites for successful deliberation, that is, "deliberation requires not only equality in resources and the guarantee of equal opportunity to articulate persuasive arguments, but also equality in 'epistemological authority", in the capacity to evoke acknowledgement of one's arguments." (Baynes, 2010:140).

However, the empirical fact is that deliberation might transform preferences. This line of argument emanated from the fact that publicly discussing individual preferences might reveal their shortcomings to their originators, thus compelling them to reflect on their validity and contribution to the common good. Even if the end result is opposite, the fact that preferences have been publicly scrutinised means that certain ill-conceived judgements may have been exposed in the process. The critiques of deliberative democracy are easily defeated by the above statement and by opinions of those who support deliberation. As an example, Rawls (1971:359) echoes a similar sentiment in that the consequences of deliberation, whether positive or negative, are bound to improve things in the course of time. Furthermore, an admission by Mendelberg that despite all the criticisms, the popularity of deliberation was rising elsewhere in the world, as can be noted in the number

of attempts to implement deliberative mechanisms in various parts of the world; shows the weaknesses of the critique thereof.

In contrast with the statements of the problem and the purpose of this study, the tenets of deliberative democracy are conspicuously lacking in our local governance. This study attempted to address the problems posed by the current practice of public participation in the local government, which include lack of depth and limited spaces for engagement. As a consequence of these challenges, citizens are deprived of the opportunities to deliberate on their felt problems. This was achieved by analysing whether the current participatory spaces provide meaningful deliberative opportunities to the local citizenry at large.

### 3.2.5 Theoretical foundations of Meaningful Citizen Engagement

In response to a crisis of the traditional means of public involvement in the local governance, we are observing a shift in literature from the public participation to the citizen engagement discourse (Gibson 2006, in Svara & Denhardt 2010:5; Roberts 2008 in Svara and Denhardt, 2010:5; Wyman et al., 1999 in Abelson and Gauvin, 2004:8).

Citizen engagement, also referred to the "ability and incentive for ordinary people to come together, deliberate, and take action on problems or issues that they themselves have defined as important." This definition reveals a glaring difference with that of public participation, in that the emphasis is now placed on the ability of the citizens to identify their own issues and deliberate on them to find lasting solutions thereof. It echoes with Roberts' description of public engagement in that, citizens do not rely on others to deliberate on their behalf, but need to be involved from the earlier stages until the implementation of the programmes or policies (Roberts, 2008, in Svara & Denhardt, 2010:5).

However, in the context of the South African local government, this initiative would need to be infused into the process of formulating IDPs, as this is currently one of the most recognised and popular mechanism of harnessing citizen involvement in the planning for development of their local governments (World Bank, 2011: 61; Mac Kay, 2004:). In this sense, citizen engagement will serve to deepen democracy while on the other hand building citizenship and commitment within the communities (Svara & Denhardt, 2010: 5). In the current form of public participation in South Africa, citizens are not afforded opportunities

to deliberate on issues that affect them (Pieterse, et al. (2008:15) in World Bank, 2011). Literature is filled with evidence of citizens' complaints about the manner in which 'their' problems are conceptualised from the top echelons (World Bank, 2011:61, Smith & Vawda 2003: 32-33; Marais et al., 2007), about being informed of the government's intentions in the form of consultations and hearings (Pieterse et al., 2008: 15 in World Bank, 2011:61) and about how final decisions are taken elsewhere without them being afforded an opportunity to deliberate on alternatives (Pieterse et al., 2008 in World Bank, 2011:62, Gaventa, 2006:26). Inclusion of the deliberation element in the definition of citizen engagement makes a huge different between the concept and that of 'passive' public participation processes.

Further to note is that deliberation also has challenges that might impede it if not taken care of beforehand. The first one is the cultivation of a sense of citizenship amongst the community members, for the success of deliberation depends on active citizenry. This is necessary because deliberation need not be imposed upon the people, but must come from the realization that sustainable solutions can only be found when those that feel the brunt of underdevelopment initiate discourse and constructively deliberate about issues. (Svara & Denhardt, 2010: 6). For this reason, 'citizens' are defined as "people who have a concern for the larger community in addition to their own interests and are willing to assume personal responsibility for what is going on in their neighbourhoods and communities." (Svara & Denhardt, 2010:6).

The second challenge relates to what may be termed citizen power. For the deliberation process to be effective, those who deliberate must do so from the empowered positions (Fung & Wright, 2007: 7; Arnstein, 1969:216; Fung, 2007: 449, Gaventa: 2006:24). As elaborated above, uninformed and disempowered citizens will be of no use in deliberation, since deliberation centres on the ability to justify reason for the position taken in a discourse (Chambers, 2003:308). This is what Thompson (2008:498) termed "a reason-giving requirement."

In the context of the above discussion and for the purpose of this study, the definition of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement has been developed by borrowing from the definition of the concept of engagement by Phillips & Orsini (2002) in Abelson and Gauvin (2004: 8). Accordingly, meaningful citizen engagement is defined as a

collaborative (interactive) process wherein the empowered, equal, rational and well-informed citizens deliberate amongst each other and between themselves and government representatives in order to reach consensus during the policy or decision making. It follows from the above definition that, for the engagement to qualify as meaningful, it shall satisfy the following components of this definition, namely, collaboration in dialogue and / or action; citizen empowerment through information and power, rationality (reasonableness) and an opportunity to deliberate (i.e. exchange ideas, question assumptions and offer reasons for arguments and positions).

### 3.2.6 Public deliberation as a tool for meaningful citizen engagement

The definition of meaningful citizen engagement, provided above, leans more on the notion of deliberative democracy. That is, participants in the engagement process are expected to deliberate amongst each other in order to resolve their service delivery issues. From the above, it is clear that the concept of meaningful citizen engagement is much concerned with public deliberation, a concept that emerged from the deliberative democratic theory (Delli Carpini, et al., 2004: 316). Considering deliberation as a tool for meaningful citizen engagement is not a coincidence act on the part of this researcher. From the advent of democratic theories and later those of deliberative democracy, it has been a normal practice to think of public deliberation as a foundation of participatory democracy and representative government (Barber 1984; Connolly 1983; Dahl 1989; Dewey 1954 [1927]; Fishkin 1992, 1995; Habermas 1996; Mansbridge 1983, in Delli Carpini et al., 2004: 316).

According to Melo & Baiocchi (2006:590) classical theorists such as Cohen, Mansbridge and Gutmann have developed a sophisticated case for deliberation as the only democratic process capable of arriving at political decisions that are both normatively and empirically superior to other political institutions of democracy. The main reason proffered for this account is that deliberation is the only process that issue agreeable solutions to both the diverse preferences and their originators where the allocation of limited resources is concerned (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:590). As such, the two authors consider deliberation as referring to the "discussion among equal, free and reasonable participants as part of the decision-making process." (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:590).

As with most contested theoretical concepts, various other scholars have offered equally varied, but congruent definitions of public deliberation in meaning; some of which are considered below (Macedo et al., 1999). In the views of Knight & Johnson (1994:285) deliberation is defined as an idealized process that offer a fair procedural opportunity to all participants in the political process to engage meaningfully in reasoned argument for the purpose of resolving public issues. This stylised procedure provides uninterrupted space wherein to experiment with various forms of deliberations, which further helps in developing an assessment of the deliberative process. Broadly defined, public deliberation refers to the "debate or discussion that is aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion…" (Delli Carpini, et al., 2004:315). Deliberation also refers to unrestricted conversations involving practical reasoning and which have a potential to influence the transformation of individual choice and preferences (Cooke, 2000:948). For such deliberation to be successful, it follows then that all participants must be able to exercise equal measures of autonomy and equality, that is; all shall be equally free to raise questions, challenge and offer counter-arguments during the discussion (Cohen, 1996:102). For these reasons, Cohen (1996:102) considers deliberation as a discussion among "equal, free and reasonable" participants in a decision making process.

Whereas, Chambers (2003:309), went on to describe deliberation as

> Debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants.

On the other hand, Delli Carpini et al., (2004:317) describe public deliberation as the process on which deliberative democracy takes place. Finally, Gastil (2000:22 in Delli Carpini et al., 2004:317) adds that, amongst others, public deliberation, can be seen as "discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making." An idealized citizen engagement setting of these sorts, during the priority-setting process at the municipal ward-level, would involve all interested and relevantly affected residents, exercising their democratic rights, in contributing to the need identification and priority setting. Such a gathering would be characterised by the autonomy and equality amongst the participants, wherein all present are afforded equal opportunities to participate

in all processes. This stylised engagement process would inevitably produce a consensus of sorts and would minimise or resolve potential conflicts amongst the participants with different preferences (Bohman, 1998:408).

It follows then that, in order for the meaningful citizen engagement to be realized in the local governance, public deliberation should be allowed to flourish. According to Young (2001:672), the better approach to act in a democracy in order to influence and arrive at decisions that are accepted by all the affected parties is through public deliberation. Whereas, Page (1996:1 in Delli Carpini et al. 2004:315), avers that the success of democracy depends on public deliberation. "In deliberation, parties to the conflict or disagreement propose solutions to their collective problems and offer reasons for them; they criticise one another's proposals and reasons and are open to being criticized by others." (Young, 2001:672).

From the above definitions and descriptions of deliberation, it can be deduced that most scholars agree that a truly practiced deliberation requires participants to rely more on reasons that are appropriate to the needs of all affected by the public issue (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Rawls, 1996; Habermas, 1989). As the definition of meaningful citizen engagement suggests, in order to yield reasonable, well-informed decisions for the alleviation of the service delivery challenges faced by the local government sector, effective public deliberation is required in the processes of engagement. As a consequence of the above, public deliberation as a process in which deliberative democracy takes place (Delli Carpini et al., 2004:315), is regarded as a tool for meaningful citizen engagement in the local government in this research. This is confirmed by Chambers (2003:317) thus: "a theory of democracy is a tool for arriving at determined solutions to substantiate policy disputes." (Cambers, 2003:317).

Even though public deliberation mostly takes place outside of the formal government channels, it nevertheless brings people close to the government by making them aware of the challenges that their government faces (Delli Carpini et al., 2004:315; Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006:20). Public deliberation also strengthens the representation of the affected citizens in the policy or decision making processes, since the representatives are always compelled to engage their constituencies about issues (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006:20; Young & Mansbridge in Fung, 2004:50). This brings about publicity of the process, thus

ensuring that deliberations and their outcomes are conducted in an open and transparent manner. One of the aims of deliberative democracy is the inclusion of all those citizens that would be affected by the outcomes of the decision or policy of the local government (Young, 2000:22).

Public deliberation may also improve transparency in decision or policy making process as issues are discussed publicly (Young, 2000:23; Cohen 1998:193 in Elster, 1998; Cohen 1989: 9 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996:95). Applying public deliberation will address the problem that is mostly cited by the dissatisfied citizens that decisions affecting their lives are always made somewhere else and then imposed upon them (Van Donk et al., 2008 in World Bank, 2011:62, Gaventa, 2006:26). Publicly discussing issues may also bring about accountability from all the participants because everyone must give reasons to substantiate their positions (Young, 2000: 25; Vijayanand, 2005:2; Thompson, 2008:498). Stating or giving reasons imply that actors takes responsibility for what they propose. In the case of local government, proposing that a certain resolution be adopted means that, by implication, those decisions will be implemented in the way that they have been adopted. This will then enhance the chances of holding the government to account on the outcomes of policy implementation. Accordingly, public deliberation may help to improve the results or performance of the local government in the provision of services (Vijayanand, 2005:2).

In *Five Arguments for Deliberative Democracy*, Maeve Cooke (2000) identified five arguments in favour of the deliberative democracy, and of these, he only supported the fifth one. Contrary, this research supports the four arguments that he is rejecting for the reason that his critique of them is insufficient, and that they can still be applicable in a young democracy like South Africa's. His fifth argument, i.e. *Deliberative Democracy Elucidates an Ideal of Democracy that is most Congruent with 'whom we are'* is rejected for it is narrowly contextualised, in this case, only concerned with the "inhabitants of modern Western modernity and deliberative democracy" (Cooke, 2000:954). In as much as the below four arguments (benefits) for deliberative democracy have been contested, they are nevertheless recognised in this research as having a potential of ensuring that the notion of meaningful citizen engagement is better understood when applied in practice.

The first benefit for the process of public deliberative is *Educative Power*, as proposed by Mill (1972) and Arendt (1970). Both these two theorists believed that participating in political deliberation is good in itself, irrespective of the quality of decisions or policies that are produced by the process. The two saw a potential of citizens' participating in deliberation as improving their moral qualities and making them better citizens and individuals. The second benefit is a belief that the process of public deliberation has a *Community-Generating Power.* This justification relates to the 'communitarian' views of deliberative democracy, mostly proposed by Barber (1984) and Taylor (1989). The emphasis of this version is the common good that is promoted by the process of deliberation, which is believed to lead to the individuals participating in the process desiring more inclusiveness in community life. The third benefit concerns the procedure of public deliberation. Accordingly, the procedure of public deliberation is expected to improve the *Fairness of Democratic Outcomes*. The examples of this strictly procedural view are evidenced in the theories proposed by Seyla Benhabib (1996) and Joshua Cohen (1997). The argument underpinning this view is that the procedure of public deliberation makes the outcomes of the democratic process more fair or just in as far as they are democratic. For example, Cohen (1997:73) writes that 'democratic procedures are the source of legitimacy, meaning that the legitimacy of political decisions is dependent on democratic procedures that are fair and just to all. Fourthly, Cooke (2000:952) states that public deliberation contributes constructively to the *Practical Rationality of Democratic Outcomes.* This benefit contradicts the preceding one in that it differentiates "between the fairness of the procedure and the rationality of the outcome", that is, contribution to the quality of the democratic outcomes. On the other hand, the previous argument emphasises the importance of procedure that brings about the legitimate democratic outcome.

Due to the fact that meaningful citizen engagement extends beyond passive public participation such as the collection of useful information, for example, the use of public deliberation may help to advance richer and meaningful forms of public engagement by engaging citizens on specific dialogue with focus on specific policy issues (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006:20). According to Sass & Dryzek (2014:5) "Deliberation now inhabits a central position in normative accounts of political legitimacy, and is considered by many theorists to be crucial to the functioning of democratic institutions."

Considering the above discussion of public deliberation, it can be concluded that public deliberation promises to provide free, equal, reciprocal, reasonable and open-minded communicative channel for all participants (Mendelberg, 2002:153).

### 3.2.7 Conditions for deliberative democracy as criteria for measuring meaningful citizen engagement

In recent years, the notion of deliberative democracy had gained such prominence that even critics now acknowledge its intuitive attractiveness to the political process (Cooke, 2000:947). According to Mouffe (1999:747), the concept of deliberative democracy attempts to specify a set of procedures and conditions to guide public deliberation towards reaching collective choices. Accordingly, the deliberativists are mostly concerned with both formal and informal procedures that precede the final decision, which Cohen (1996:102) has termed 'ideal deliberative procedure'. Such model of democracy is premised on ideal procedures according to which democratic institutions are assessed and criticised (Baynes, 2010:136). Furthermore, other theorists of deliberative democracy have added their voices in the articulation of preconditions, without which, deliberation may not proceed (Mendelberg, 2002:348). Amongst such conditions is the equality of all the deliberators, irrespective of class or position in the society.

Most often, the notion of deliberative democracy is analysed in terms of its normative ideals, developed along the lines of either the procedural or substantive views. According to Bartels (2014:658) the procedural views concerned the ideal procedures required to ensure fairness in public deliberation and collective decision-making. In other words, these procedures are meant to frame the deliberation environment in order to enable just and fair proceedings therein. In terms of the substantive view, democracy is considered in accordance to the values that it yields to the political process, which include equality, inclusion and freedom that are necessary to guarantee the legitimacy, rationality and fairness of collective decisions (Bartels, 2014:658; Cohen, 1996:101-2; Benhabib, 1996:69; Mouffe, 1999:746). A prerequisite for the above-mentioned values to be valid, is that all those who are directly affected should be engaged and agree upon them prior to the commencement of the deliberation process. According to Benhabib (1996:69), the features of such deliberation should include the following:

- Participation in such deliberation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry; all have the same chance to initiate speech acts, to question, interrogate, and to open debate;
- All have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and
- All have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out. There are no prima facie rules limiting the agenda or the conversation, nor the identity of the participants, as long as each excluded person or group can justifiably show that they are relevantly affected by the proposed norm under question.

The normative ideals that are mentioned above implies that, for the democratic deliberation to be regarded as a legitimate political alternative that engages all stakeholders meaningfully, it must meet certain requirements, some of which are proffered in this research report. Della Porta (2005:340 in Thompson, 2008:501) summed up the requirements of deliberation thus:

> We have deliberative democracy when, under conditions of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, a communicative process based on reason … is able to transform individual preferences and reach decisions oriented to public good.

This is echoed by Young (2001:672) in suggesting that the deliberative democratic theory provides the evaluative measurements (normative ideals) for the practice of deliberative democracy in a particular polity. Young further states that more often, the political process fail to satisfy the normative ideals when assessed by them (Young, 2001:672).

On the other hand, the National Policy Framework for Public Participation in South Africa also proposed the following, similar principles for community participation: inclusivity, diversity, building community participation, transparency, flexibility, accessibility, accountability, trust, commitment and respect; and integration (DPLG, 2007:21-22).

As alluded above, various theorists and scholars of deliberative democracy argue for similar normative ideals to be put in place in order to assess and possibly validate the legitimacy of the deliberative democratic outcomes (Young 2001:672; 2000:23-25; Cooke, 2000:955; Gaventa, 2005:9; Fung & Wright, 2001:7; Mendelberg, 2002:153; Elster, 1998; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996:95, 199; Saward in Beetham, 1994:6; Parry & Moyser in

Beetham, 1994:44; Chambers, 2003:316; Cohen, 1997: 73-72; 1989:21-22). In this research, such normative ideals for the successful deliberation shall be referred to as *conditions*. These conditions may also be useful in maintaining and safeguarding the relationships and temperaments of the deliberating parties (Young, 2000:23). However, it is not a good practice to use a similar method of analysis when evaluating deliberative democracy as "the practice is likely to produce consequences of a certain kind under specific conditions" (Thompson, 2008:501).

According to Thompson (2008:501), researchers should always distinguish between three elements when analysing political deliberation. He proceeded to distinguish the three elements as conceptual criteria, evaluative standards, and empirical conditions. Accordingly, each of these elements needs to be viewed as a different aspect which needs to be satisfied by the process of the political deliberation (Thompson, 2008:501). Based on the above-mentioned description of the elements of deliberative democracy, the evaluation of the conditions in this thesis shall be based on the notion of the conceptual criteria. Thompson (2008:502) describes the conceptual criteria as the criteria that enable the distinction in the democratic practice in terms of whether it is a deliberation or an ordinary political discussion. The criteria are also able to establish whether, if the practice is deliberation, it is better or worse; in this vein, the criteria stipulate what is necessary for the practice to qualify as deliberation (Thompson, 2008:502).

In the context of this research, the following conditions shall be employed when assessing the meaningfulness of citizen engagement processes in the local government. It is worth noting here that the following conditions are not exhaustive, other conditions may still be explored and added in the discourse.

#### 3.2.7.1 Political inclusion

In a deliberative model of democracy, the political outcomes or decisions are normatively legitimate only if all the affected members of the community are included in the process of decision making (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:590; Young, 2000:23; Cohen (1989: 22) in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Chen 1998:186 in Elster, 1998). The requirement of inclusion may be better understood through considering the definition of the concept of

citizen engagement by Gibson (2006:2 in Svara and Denhardt 2012:5). Accordingly, citizen engagement refers to the "ability and incentive for ordinary people to come together, deliberate, and take action on problems or issues that they themselves have defined as important." In terms of this definition, citizens shall be able to attend the discourse, deliberate (participate) in the discourse and participate in the formulation of agreement on the appropriate course of action (Webler & Tuler, 2002:182; Young, 2000:23).

As such, all those with vested interest in the deliberation must be able to attend, or to be physically present in the process. In other words, the deliberation venue, time and date must be accommodative to all segments of the subject community (Ndima, 2010:52). Further to emphasise is the freedom of every participant in the public deliberation to initiate the discourse. Furthermore, for citizen engagement to be deliberatively inclusive, all participants in the deliberation should participate in the discussion, that is, ask for clarification, challenge, answer, and argue, and they should also be able to participate in the decision making, such as resolving disagreements and bringing about closure of the discussion (Webler & Tuler, 2002:182; Young, 2000:23). In essence, the assumption is that when a decision is inclusive, it would enable the participants to express all their interests, opinions, and criticism. Furthermore, inclusive decision-making will also ensure that the final collective choice will be binding to all participants, including those whose arguments were not successful.

Based on the above, it is clear that the concept of inclusiveness of the deliberation is superior to all other conditions for the simple reason that no meaningful deliberation may take place without the participation of all those affected by the outcome thereof. Accordingly, the deliberative conception emphasises that collective choices shall be made in a deliberative way (Cohen, 1998:186 in Elster 1998; Cohen 1989:23 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Young, 2000:24). In Fung & Wright's notion of Empowered Deliberative Democracy, for example, an 'empowered participatory governance' (EPG) conception is based on the principles of ***bottom-up*** participation (Fung & Wright, 2001:18). This means that the solution to the problems must come from the grassroots upwards. In this kind of deliberation, participants deliberate amongst each other in order to generate group choices (Gaventa, 2005:10).

Fung & Wright (2001:7) considered five political reforms in different settings, which shared one common aspect of using the deliberative practice to resolve issues. The authors argue that these reforms 'aspire to deepen the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies which affect their lives (Fung & Wright, 2001:7). According to Gaventa (2003:5), the authors argue that the processes are participatory due thereto that they are anchored on the participation and commitment of ordinary citizens to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation. Bottom-up participation is believed to be a means to lend value to the final outcomes of decision making because it releases knowledge at the grassroots (Ballard 2007:17). The assumption of this thesis is that inclusive policy-making leads to better policy, the one which responds to the needs of the poor, which also enhances ownership and accountability, and contributes to effective implementation (Hicks & Buccus, 2007).

Inclusion of all those that will be affected by the decision in order to make continuous inputs in the way services are provided requires public deliberation to be inclusive (White Paper, 1998). Citizen engagement should be seen to be strengthening democracy by increasing participation of those who have been excluded from the political and decision–making processes (Souza, 2001:160). The fundamental aspect of ensuring that all participants deliberate freely and meaningfully is the presence of political equality in the process, that is, "inclusion shall entail a norm of political equality" (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:590; Young, 2000:23; Cohen 1998:194 in Elster, 1998).

### 3.2.7.2 Political equality

It is not sufficient to only include those that are affected by the issues in a public deliberation without levelling the distribution of power during the process, what Cohen (1998:194 in Elster 1998) refers to as substantial equality. Political equality is the second key value of deliberative democracy. All citizens' autonomy is equally important in order for each citizen to enjoy equal opportunities to offer and accept the reasons that justify collective rules and actions (Benhabib, 1996; Cohen 1998:194 in Elster, 1998; Cohen 1989:24 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989). This means that all the participants who have a capacity to deliberate shall be afforded equal opportunities to do so, that is, the rules that regulate the deliberation process must not discriminate amongst the people (Cohen 1989: 21-22 in

Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Cohen 1998:194 in Elster,1998; Young, 2000:23). Each person must be able to put issues on the agenda, propose solutions and offer reasons in support of or in criticism of proposal (Webler & Tuler, 2002:182). And each shall have an equal voice in the decision. Accordingly, the

> Participants are substantively equal in that the existing distribution of power and resources does not shape their chances to contribute to deliberation, nor does that distribution play an authoritative role in their deliberation" (Cohen 1989:23 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989).

In the context of the proposed study, all the local residents ought to be afforded equal rights and sufficient opportunities to express their preferences and concerns during the IDP and Budget formulation processes. All also ought to have equal opportunities to question one another, and to respond to and criticize one another's proposals and arguments (Webler & Tuler, 2002:182; Young, 2000: 23: Cohen, 1989: 23 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Cohen 1998:194 in Elster1998). In other words, meaningful citizen engagement shall be seen to promote free and equal opportunity to contribute in the deliberation. This condition effectively implies that participants must be equal in the sense that none of them is able to coerce or threaten others into accepting certain proposals or outcomes. This condition shall also be seen as a panacea to the now regular political conflict in the local government, aptly referred to as service delivery protests, wherein citizens often protest exclusion and demand greater inclusion. It is argued that during such protests, citizens invariably appeal for the ideals of political equality and do not accept token measures of 'involvement' (Rowe, Horlick-Jones, Walls, & Pidgeon, 2005:332; Buccus, 2010; Friedman 2010 in Kgalefa, 2010; Atkinson, 2007:58; Young, 2001: 673).

According to Warren (1999:3 in Gaventa 2005:5) the key and defining principles of democracy are that all citizens shall have a say in public affairs, and that entitlement should be available in terms of equality of all. Citizens should exercise equal control over their collective affairs. Unlike the previous strand of democratic theory, which emphasizes the importance of inclusion through participation in the democratic processes, political equality is concerned with the nature and quality of deliberation that does occur when citizens come together for discussion and debates in public spheres (Gaventa, 2005:5). Again, the notion of Empowered Participatory Governance by Fung and Wright comes to

the fore here. According to Fung and Wright (2001:25), one condition that enabled the success of meaningful public participation, and by implication, the resolution of the issues at hand, for the four approaches they studied; is that "there is a rough equality of power, for the purposes of deliberative decision-making, between participants – a condition that will be found lacking in many parts of the world."

For example, Arnstein (1969:216), considered that true participation involves a high level of empowerment of the public and a direct input into the decision process, and decries processes (such as consultative public meetings), which appear to be participative yet yield no real power.

### 3.2.7.3 Reasonableness and public accountability

An idea that all citizens in the local polity should be equally included in the political discussions, in effect, argues for a more democratic deliberation in which citizens address public problems by reasoning together about how best to solve them (Cohen & Fung 2004). As the discussion contrasting deliberation and aggregation of interests elsewhere in this report revealed, the ideal deliberative democracy is, in brief, concerned with a shift from bargaining, interest aggregation, and power to the common reason of equal citizens (Cohen & Fung 2004). According to Fung (2007:449) decisions on legislation and policies should be based on reasons that all citizens can accept. "Reasoned rule is a stringent interpretation of self-government that entails non-tyranny and public accountability" (Fung, 2007:449). This statement links reasonableness to the notion of public accountability because when the deliberators offers and accepts reasons they, in turn, take responsibility for those reasons.

In order for such engagement processes to contribute meaningfully to the IDP and budgeting processes of the local government, it must further be characterized by the process that is transparent and accountable. In other words, for citizen engagement to be meaningful, it shall have an accountability dimension built right into it (Abelson & Gauvin, 2004:8). Public deliberation calls for active citizenship as only the empowered and well-informed citizens are better positioned to engage actively and meaningfully with the state officials (Chambers, 2003:308; Young, 2000: 21; Gibson 2006:2 in Svara & Denhardt,

2010:15; Gutmann & Thompson 1997 in Chambers 2003:316; Elster, 1998; Cohen 1989:27 in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989; Gaventa, 2005:9; Fung & Wright, 2001:7; Shapiro, 2003:3; Mendelberg, 2002:153). Therefore, the concept of active citizenship carries with it the right to engage in political discourse and to hold others accountable (DIT, 2011:6; Cohen 1998:194 in Elster, 1998). Public deliberation in meaningful citizen engagement should seek greater accountability from those that are tasked with service provision by means of increased dialogue, and by monitoring and assessing performance (DIT, 2011:6).

Public deliberation puts emphasis on individual autonomy in that individuals enter the deliberation with a willingness to examine solutions for the best common interest (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006:20). This means that deliberative democracy presupposes that no single individual has a correct and sufficient solution to the public problem (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006:20). According to Young (2000:22), reasonable people come into deliberation not only to achieve their own ambitions, but to solve community problems in a collective manner. As such, every citizen that participated in the public deliberation is held accountable for the decisions taken therein, as all participants engage in a free and equal argumentative and reason-giving process.

Should citizens succeed in reaching a consensus in decision or policy making through reason-giving, then the content of those decisions or policies is said to be a good that they have in common (Fung, 2007:450). For the citizens to be engaged meaningfully, public institutions should be structured in a way that all political decision making processes are subjected to reason. In Cohen's (1989) formulation …

> Public institutions should 'mirror' an ideal deliberative process of collective decision making in which equal citizens govern themselves by making decisions that are backed by reasons that all others can accept.

This condition requires that the interaction between the participants and the local government forms a public in which people hold one another accountable (Young, 2000: 23). The reasons that officials and citizens give to justify political actions, and the information necessary to assess those reasons, should be made public. In other words, the processes and the decisions shall be guided by transparency amongst the participants. This principle of publicity and transparency is a fundamental requirement of deliberative democracy (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996).

The consequences, according to these theorists, are a more emphatic view of the other-even others considered beneath oneself; a better-informed perspective on public problems; and a broader understanding of one's interests. In this way, deliberative democracy can serve the common good where models of democracy based on narrow self-interest and negotiation may fail (Mansbridge 1991 in Mendelberg, 2002:153). To summarise, deliberation is expected to lead to empathy with others and a broader sense of people's own interests through an egalitarian, open-minded and reciprocal process of reasoned argumentation. Following from this result are other benefits:

> Citizens are more enlightened about their own and others' needs and experiences, can better resolve deep conflict, are more engaged in politics, place their faith in the basic tenets of democracy, perceive their political system as legitimate, and lead a healthier civic life. (Mendelberg, 2002: 153-4).

## 3.3 CONCLUSION

The chapter focused on the discussion of the main concepts that guided the research in relation to the problem statement and the research questions. Amongst others, the chapter unpacked the concept of Integrated Development Planning (IDP) through locating its origin in the literature and separating the two main terms, namely development and planning. Development was described in terms of its accrual benefits to the citizens, which include material benefits, enhancement of local participatory democracy and the empowerment of the locals to make own policy or developmental choices. On the other hand, planning was discussed through, *inter alia,* the use of its various styles, including the strategic and the participatory planning styles.

Further to the above, different conceptions of democracy were considered in details in this chapter. Amongst others, the two popular theories of democracy were discussed as they directly impact this research. These were deliberative democracy and its theory, and the aggregative democracy based on the social choice theory. Research showed that the two are always pitted against each other, with the deliberative democracy having upper hand over the aggregative one. However, considering the critique of the deliberative democracy, it can be concluded that it would be much beneficial to employ both concepts, as the preference aggregation is always useful where there is an impasse. The chapter highlighted ways in which these two can complement each other, which is already

happening in avenues such as legislative oversight committees, in order to reach a decision. One such way to implement when the deliberators fail to reach a consensus, would be the application of majority rule or voting from the preference aggregation model. Most often, the method that is employed during voting is the method of majority decision (MMD). It was shown in the chapter how the MMD is used to subject the minorities into submission, ensuring that all eventual accept and obey the majority decision. Apart from discarding the democratic right to ones 'own preferences, the method has no impact on the nature of democracy in practice.

Whilst the concept of meaningful citizen engagement was introduced in the contextual chapter (chapter 2), it was fully defined in this chapter to align with the deliberative theory as alluded above. The chapter also showed how public deliberation can be employed as a tool to implement the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in the local governance. The chapter closed with the introduction of the conditions for the measurement of meaningful citizen engagement, which included political inclusion, political equality, and reasonableness and public accountability.

## 3.4 LITERATUE REVIEW

### 3.4.1 The significance of governance in the local development planning.

This section will discuss the concepts of governance within the context of planning and development or that of the development planning in the local government. The focus of the discussion lean more on the works of Porter (2002) and Hyden (1992, 2001), and attempt to locate the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes of the local government. This section will also clarify the relationship between the engagement of citizens and governance as required of the municipalities by the relevant legislation in South Africa. As is evidenced in the sections that follow, there is no consensus in the meanings of the governance concept in literature since each is defined within a particular context and background. For the purpose of this section, development is understood in the context of the following definition. According to Williams (2002 in Mac Kay 2004:17), development refers to a multidimensional process that involves "major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the

acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty."

In 1989 the World Bank identified the African development crisis as one of governance, thus effectively linking the concept of governance with that of development (Hyden 1992:5). Amongst other things that were identified by the World Bank (in Hyden 1992:5) then, as affecting development were widespread corruption and the prevalence of unelected and unaccountable governments. Even though most of the nations have embraced constitutional democracy in Africa, widespread corruption in all levels of governments is still a challenge. Similarly, in most cases of poor performing municipalities in the country, the effective local governance and leadership has been found lacking (CoGTA, 2009:86). Whereas the notion of deliberative democracy focuses on the processes of decision-making by providing the normative conditions under which deliberation should take place and the nature of its contents, governance enables us to analyse the place of decision-making itself (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:591).

Hyden (1992:7) defines governance as the "conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm." In this sense, governance structures are viewed as constituting the normative framework that has been created to pursue social, economic and political ends. Thus structures manifest themselves in basic laws or rules within which decisions or policies are made and implemented. Although the structures of the new local government have been enhanced to meet the requirements of the DLG concept, implementation of these have always remained a challenge in South Africa. Governance is further defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997:2-3) as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage the country's affairs at all levels." In this perspective governance comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups may articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their conflicts (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:587).

Moreover, Osborne and Gaebler (1993 cited by Porter 2002), echoed the above definition in part, in their view of governance as the process wherein all actors collectively attempt to solve problems and meet the society's needs, using the system of government as a tool. In terms of this definition, governance has to involve all stakeholders to the

problem solving or planning process, i.e. government, private sector, groups and individuals. It must also consider all the systems, procedures and processes which are currently used for planning, management and decision making. It follows then that, for effective governance to be achieved within the local government, meaningful citizen engagement in planning, policy making, implementation and service delivery is required (Svara & Denhardt, 2010:5). Lynn Jr. et al. (1993:30 in Hyden 2001:15) further expresses the relation between the concepts of governance and citizen engagement thus:

> Governance links values and interests of citizens, legislative choice, executive and organisational structures and roles, and judicial oversight in a manner that suggests interrelationships among them that might have significant consequences for performance.

This then leads us to the consideration of what constitute effective or good governance in the local governance. In a bid to suggest what would result in better local governance in the local government, Sproats (1997 in Porter 2002), indicated that municipalities will need to address the questions of citizenship, community leadership, effective deliberation and the enhancement of the human and social capital of their communities. On the other hand, Hyden (1992:15-16) identifies the following conditions for the facilitation of good governance, which, by implication, equates the concept of governance with the notion of meaningful citizen engagement.

> Citizen influence and oversight, which refers to the ways in which citizens may participate in the political process; responsive and responsible leadership, which looks at the attitudes of political leaders in regard to their roles as public trustees; and social reciprocities, which looks at the equality and power relations amongst citizens or groups of citizens.

This is echoed by Mhone (in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003:18), in averring that good governance can only be promoted by ensuring that participation and consultation of the citizens on policy issues is taking place. He argued that the sure way of ensuring that the interests of the historically disadvantaged are taken into consideration when policies are made, is through ensuring their participation and contribution in the policy-making processes (Mhone in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 18).

Even though much of development planning takes place at the national and provincial levels of government in South Africa, introducing the concept of DLG positioned the local

government at the forefront of the local development agenda in the country. The adoption of DLG also meant that the local governance system had to be overhauled. In response to this need, the government introduced a concept of cooperative governance, wherein a system of intergovernmental cooperation would be followed when long-term strategic plans are made and implemented (DPLG, 2005). Furthermore, sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution of 1996 elevated the status of local government in SA to that of the development agency.

Whereas the previous local government system was disintegrated in the sense that each racial group had its own type of municipality, the new dispensation called for the alignment of the disparate administrative units into a uniform structure of local government administration in the whole country (De Visser, 2009:8). Notably, the disparate local government administrations resulted in the skewed development patterns within the same municipal region, as areas were developed according to the racial lines. Integration of the local government and development required scrapping of various segregation legislation and policies in favour of the more democratic ones.

### 3.4.2 Democracy and Public Participation in the local government

The recent decentralisation of authority to the local government was necessary to enable this new tier of government to redress the damages caused by the apartheid policies to the communities. Local governments, as the level of power closest to the people, including the poor and marginalized citizens, have been empowered in order to be able to strengthen local communities and intensify service delivery, and thereby deepening the foundations of democracy (Mogale in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 216). Stiefel & Wolfe (1994 cited by Mogale in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003: 220), posit that the present DLG is based on the recognition of primary linkage between development, service delivery and local public participation. This forms a basis upon which a linkage between the above-mentioned concepts of public participation and democracy are examined.

**Public participation**

According to Kabemba (2003: 2), public participation is undisputedly one of the key principles of democracy as only it is the true determinant of the nature of that democracy.

This, as Kabemba asserts, is due to the fact that democracy revolves around the people and hence, the importance of public participation. As much as participation is necessary for development, it is also crucial for democracy and good governance (Kabemba, 2003: 2). Considering various legislation that were promulgated to promote the culture of public participation in the country's governance, it can be argued that the new South African democratic government regards public participation as a cornerstone of democracy (Nyalunga, 2006). Arnstein (1969: 216) echoed the same sentiment that participation of the people in their own government is the cornerstone of democracy.

In this instance Arnstein (1969) and Pretty (1994) had identified various levels in which participation does or does not take place (see Table 10). Although the two typologies have some similarities, they highlight different levels and approaches to public participation, which are currently employed in various settings. These typologies can be used as an instrument of measurement of the degree of effectiveness and meaningfulness of the participatory planning practices.

**Table 11: Typologies of participation by Arnstein and Pretty *(Sources: Arnstein, 1969; Pretty 1994)***

| **Arnstein's level of public participation** | **Pretty et al. conception of public participation** |
|---|---|
| **Citizen control:** the citizens has the degree of power necessary to govern a programme or institution without much influence | **Self-mobilization**: this is the bottom-up approach where people take initiatives independent of external institutions. |
| **Delegated power**: the public acquires the dominant decision-making authority over a particular programme. | |
| **Partnership**: power becomes distributed through negotiations between the public and those in power. | **Interactive participation**: people participate in joint analysis. Participation is sees as a right, not just a means to achieve project goals. |
| **Placation:** few handpicked members of the public are appointed to committees while tokenisms is still the motivation for the powerful. | **Functional participation**: people participate in a group context to meet predetermined objectives related to the programme/project. |
| **Consultation:** the public is free to give opinions on the relevant issues, but the powerful offer no insurance that these opinions will be considered. | **Participation for material incentives:** people participate by providing resources in return for food or cash. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Informing:** top-down flow of information in which the public is informed of their rights, responsibilities and options. | **Participation by consultation:** people participate by being consulted by professionals. The professionals define the problems and solutions and may modify this in the light of public's responses. This process does not include any share in decision-making by the public. |
| **Therapy:** the public's attitudes are shaped to conform to those in power. | **Participation in information giving:** people participate by answering questions posed in questionnaires or telephone interviews. |
| **Manipulation:** the public is part of powerless committees and the notion of public participation is a public relations vehicle for the powerful. | **Passive participation**: people participate by being told what is going to happen or has happened. |

The above representations of the different phases of citizen participation are further simplified by the description of each level in the following tables.

**Table 12: Ladder of citizen participation (*Source: National Policy Framework on Public Participation, 2007)***

| |
|---|
| ***Citizen control*** – People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. An example of citizen control is self-government – the community makes the decisions.<br>***Delegated power*** – in this regard government ultimately runs the decision-making process and funds it, but communities are given some delegated powers to make decisions. People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.<br>***Partnership*** – an example is joint projects – community has considerable influence on the decision making process but the government still takes responsibility for the decision. Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions. Participation may also be for *material incentives* where people participate by contributing resources, for example, labour in return for food, cash or other material incentives.<br>***Placation*** – the community are asked for advice and token changes are made.<br>***Consultation*** – community is given information about the project or issue and asked to comment – e.g. through meetings or survey – but their view may not be reflected in the final decision, or no feedback given as to why not. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making.<br>***Informing*** - Community is told about the project – e.g. through meetings or leaflets; community may be asked, but their opinion may not be taken into account.<br>***Therapy*** – People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to peoples' responses.<br>***Manipulation*** – Participation is simply a pretence, e.g. with people's representatives on official boards but who are not elected and have no power, or where the community is selectively told about a project according to an existing agenda. The community's input is only used to further this existing agenda. |

**Table 13: A Typology of Participation *(Source: Pretty 1994)***

| |
|---|
| ***Passive participation*** **-** People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.<br>***Participation in information giving*** **-** People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.<br>***Participation by consultation*** **-** People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.<br>***Participation for material incentives*** **-** People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.<br>***Functional participation*** **-** People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisation. Such involvement does not tend to be at early of project cycle or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.<br>***Interactive participation*** **-** People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.<br>***Self-mobilisation*** **-** People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power. |

## Democracy

Democracy has been defined as "a form of government organised in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation and majority rule." (Ranney 1971 in Bekker 1996: 52). A quick glance at this definition reflects the requirements for the successful operation of democracy, as espoused by Marsden (1991 in Crook & Jerve, 1991:31). These include: civil liberties, tolerance of others' opinions, and consensus on the structural principles of existing society (Marsden in Crook & Jerve, 1991:31). Popular sovereignty refers to the most important tenet of democracy, which is liberation. South African democracy came about as a result of a concerted struggle by various liberation and civil organisations against the oppressive state of apartheid. All parties to the struggle were united by similar goals of obtaining equal civil liberties, equal political rights and the rule that respect the will of the majority (Friedman, 2006:2).

In a nutshell, democracy is a means by which the ruled can have a say in the way they are ruled. To many, the only mechanism that can ensure direct involvement in local governance is public participation. This implies that public participation is one of the most

important principles that can determine the nature and meaning of a democracy. As Sisk, Demichelis, and Ballington (2001 cited by Hicks and Buccus 2007: 98) put it, public participation is "intrinsic to the core meaning of democracy." Due to the above understanding, participation is often regarded as synonymous to democracy (Marsden 1991 in Crook & Jerve, 1991: 30).

It is the argument of this research that for the country's democratic project to be successful, meaningful citizen engagement spaces must be created and utilised productively. Another contentious factor to be considered when linking public participation and democracy in the South African context is the model of our democracy. South Africa has adopted the model of representative democracy, which is based on proportional representation of political parties in government. It is argued that representative democracy is the only means that comes closer to representing all the concerns of the citizens (Friedman 2004 in Hicks & Buccus, 2007:98). In a representative democracy, the electorate elects their preferred representatives into government, to represent their needs and aspirations (Craythorne, 1997:97). Critics of this purely representative model of democracy argue that participatory democracy is the only model of democracy that can offer every citizen the opportunity to be heard (Hicks & Buccus, 2007: 98). Even though participatory democracy is about participating in processes outside the structures of government institutions, some believe that only it can break the inequalities in participation, brought about by the representative democracy (Mc Gee et al., 2003 cited by Hicks & Buccus, 2007:98).

### 3.4.3 Public Engagement unpacked

From the preceding passage Abelson and Gauvin, (2004:7) made it possible to conclude that public participation refers to the

> Broad set of practices that includes passive forms of citizen involvement, where the public's views are sought as an input to a planning or a decision making process, and more active involvement through direct participation in decision-making processes and structures.

According to Graham and Phillips (1998: 237-238 in Abelson and Gauvin 2004:7), the terms "'public participation' and 'public consultation' became negatively associated with cynicism and mistrust in public officials arising from failed public participation

experiments ...” In response to the above-mentioned shortcomings of the concept of participation, several research projects have been undertaken in a bid to identify and address them. (Marais et al., 2007; Rowe & Frewer 2002, 2005, Williams in Svara & Denhardt 2010:5).

Rowe & Frewer (2005: 224) proposed the use of three different descriptions of the initiatives that were previously regarded as public participation. These descriptions are based on the flow of information between the participants and government officials, which further emphasize the importance of communication in the process of public engagement. These authors divided the concept of public engagement into three different initiatives, namely, public communication, public consultation, and public participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2005:244). Accordingly, in *public communication*, information is conveyed from the government representative (sponsor of the initiative), to the public in a one-way channel of communication. In this initiative, the public feedback or involvement is not required or specifically sought, if the public do provide inputs of any nature, these will only be recorded down without any guarantee of utilizing such inputs in decision making. In other words, the purpose of this initiative is to inform the public about predetermined projects or policy proposals of the authorities, it is not intended to solicit their views on the matter. In the context of this study, this is synonymous to the presentation of the Draft IDP and Budget to the communities, where others are not given sufficient opportunity to contribute.

*Public consultation*, on the other hand, refers to the public engagement initiative that is sponsored and organised by the government, in which information flows from members of the public to the representatives of the government. This initiative is usually employed in order to solicit certain information from the public. In this process no dialogue is encouraged as the information so obtained is regarded as representing the opinions of the local community members. This compares to the process of collecting community needs that has to be prioritised for service delivery implementation in the following financial year of the relevant municipality. The difference of *public participation* from the other two initiatives, according to Rowe and Frewer (2005: 255), lies mainly in the fact that information is exchanged between members of the public and the government representatives. This implies that there may be some degree of dialogue (and perhaps deliberation) in this process, which may involve representatives of both parties in different

proportions (Rowe & Frewer, 2005: 255).

**Table 14: The three types of public engagement *(Source: Rowe & Frewer, A Typology of Public Participation, 2005: 225).***

| | Flow of information | |
|---|---|---|
| Public Communication: | ← | Public Representative (Sponsor) |
| Public Consultation: | → | Public Representative (Sponsor) |
| Public Participation: | ↔ | Public Representative (Sponsor) |

It should be noted that in terms of Table 11, a sponsor is regarded as anyone with a responsibility to organize and initiate a participation exercise, which is usually a government department responsible for public participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2005: 254).

The above unpacking of the concept of public engagement brings to light the importance of defining and understanding the purpose of initiating a process of participation. It is extremely important for the organizers of public participation to organize such initiative in terms of a clearly defined objective to be achieved thereafter. To date, it appears that public meetings are simply organized for the purpose of engaging people on issues, without a clear objective in mind to the organizers as to what goals need to be accomplished. As a result, you find people raising their concerns in a meeting that is intended to report back (communication) to the community, or asking for feedback in a meeting that has been organized for the purpose of soliciting information from the public (consultation). This is exacerbated by the lack of public deliberation forums prior to

finalising the plans to be presented to the community. As a consequence of this, most of the community members who attends such meetings often do not have a complete picture of what is to be discussed or the purpose of the meetings.

There are various reasons for which public participation initiative may be organized. According to Glass (1979 in Rowe and Frewer 2005: 260), public participation initiative may be organized for the purpose of achieving one or more of the following participation objectives: information exchange, education, support building, supplementary decision making, and representational input. These and other objectives are crucial for the participation initiative to be effective.

### 3.4.4 International experiences and lessons on participatory budgeting and planning: The cases of Brazil and India

In essence, the subject research explored whether creating direct spaces for the meaningful engagement of citizens in the formulation of local development plans and the budgets to fund them, may lead to better policies or not. This section will consider the international experiences with regard to the participatory planning and participatory budgeting. It is worth noting that in recent years, a number of countries have been experimenting with the novel concept wherein unelected, ordinary people participate in the drawing, implementation and monitoring of the public budgets, the process that became known in literature as Participatory Budgeting (PB). Accordingly, PB has been implemented, albeit with varying degrees of success, in countries such as South Africa, other African states, Netherlands, Norway, Northern America, Uruguay, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, France and in other Latin American Countries (DIT, 2011; Smith, 2004; Fung & Wright, 2001; Souza, 2001; Langa & Jerome, 2004; Avritzer, 1999; Acioly, Herzog, Sandino, & Andrade, 2002; Pinnington, Lerner & Schugurenky, 2009; Wampler, 2000: UN-HABITAT, 2008).

However, the most hailed and popularised experiences of PB in the literature are those of the two cities of Brazil and of India, respectively. In Brazil, the experiences of the cities of Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande du Sol and that of Belo Horizonte will be considered due to their reported successes in the implementation of PB. Accordingly, the large part of this discussion will focus on the experiences of participatory budgeting in Brazil, as the main reference. The Indian experiences in participatory planning and

budgeting will also be considered in order to gain more understanding and a different perspective of this phenomenon.

Participatory Budgeting is a fairly new notion in the governance environment of public administration (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:4; Smith, 2004:2, 17; Langa & Jerome, 2004:2). PB has been defined as a democratic process in which a wide range of stakeholders without a political mandate participate, debate, analyse, prioritize and monitor the decisions taken on public expenditure and investments (Langa & Jerome, 2004: 3; UN-HABITAT, 2008: ix). Acioly et al., (2002:5) define PB as a

> Process of prioritisation and conjoint decision making through which local community representatives and local governments actually decide on the final allocation of public investment in their cities on a yearly basis.

PB processes are public deliberation opportunities in which citizens are directly involved in the planning of the budget, local financial policy-making and the equitable distribution of public resources (Wampler, 2002:2; Souza, 2001: 160; Langa & Jerome, 2004: 3). Direct involvement by the ordinary citizens in the drawing up of the budget enhances transparency and the achievement of social justice, equality and service delivery (Souza, 2001: 171; Wampler, 2000:2).

It is believed that the successful implementation of participatory budgeting and planning procedure was first realized in Brazil's cities of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte (Souza, 2001: 159; & Langa & Jerome, 2004:2; Acioly et al., 2002:6; Wampler, 2000:3; Avritzer, 2000:6; Pinnington et al., 2009:2). Porto Alegre, a city of 1.3 million people then, is situated in the south of Brazil. Belo Horizonte (with a population of about 2.1 million at the time) is on the south eastern border of Brazil (Souza, 2001:165). Both the south and south-eastern areas of Brazil are relatively wealthy, which means that the levels of human development there are higher, and, in economic terms, these are Brazil's most developed regions (Avritzer, 2000; Wampler, 2000:2; Souza, 2001:165).

In 1985, towards the end of a lengthy military domination (1964 to 1988) Brazil began a wave of re-democratization and decentralization of power with the aim of redressing the inequality wrought in by the dictatorship. Unfortunately, the re-democratization process also produced the unintended practices of patronage, social exclusion and corruption (Langa & Jerome, 2004:2; Souza, 2001:159). Porto Alegre, in particular was characterized

by high levels of income inequality, lack of municipal resources and low levels of public participation (Merquetti 2000 in Langa & Jerome, 2004:2). After the end of military dictatorship in 1988, the constitution of Brazil was amended to facilitate the re-democratisation of the country (Avritzer, 2000:2). The amended constitution made provision for, *inter alia*, public participation in Brazil, and wide-ranging powers were allocated to the local government sector (Souza, 2001:160). With the powers derived from the above constitutional amendments, according to Wampler (2000:3), the first two years of re-democratization saw the local government of Brazil experimenting with various mechanisms to tackle financial mismanagement and to carve a meaningful role for citizens to play in governance, culminating in the birth of PB in Brazil. Various participatory mechanisms such as the creation of community councils to oversee education, health and social welfare policies, up to the implementation of PB, were experimented with by the municipalities (Souza, 2001:161). The following box succinctly describes the nature of changes brought about by the processes of decentralization and re-democratisation in Brazil, which resulted in the adoption of PB:

**Table 15: Participatory Planning, Budgeting to Improve Local Governance in Brazil *(Sources: Baiocchi* et al. *(2005), Souza (2001), Raich (2005), WBI (2003); in UN-HABITAT, 2008:28).***

Setting priorities and allocating resources are critical links between governance and local development. An increasing number of local authorities throughout the world have enhanced the responsiveness, transparency and accountability of public investment and public service delivery by introducing participatory planning and budgeting. While specific processes and structures vary across countries, most of these budgetary systems include several key features such as changes in local government planning and budgeting procedures to accommodate greater public input and participation; the organization of sub-municipal (community or multi-community) citizen assemblies, each of which identifies and prioritizes needs and solutions for its respective neighbourhood(s) or village(s); and local government-level discussion, prioritization and eventual integration of these demands into approved municipal investment plans and associated budgets.

In Brazil, participatory planning and budgeting has increased municipalities' responsiveness to many previously neglected problems in poor neighbourhoods. In Porto Alegre access to water increased from 95 percent to 99 percent in 1991-2000, sewerage coverage increased from 75 percent to 98 percent in 1988-98, and participation in municipal schools increased threefold between 1991 and 2000. In addition to improving services, this form of planning and budgeting also enabled greater municipal resource mobilization compared to cities with less participation by citizens: local government revenue collection per person increased on average 24 percent a year in Belo Horizonte and 14 percent a year in Porto Alegre between 1989 and 1994.

Despite the promise of participatory planning and budgeting, its benefits are not instantaneous or inevitable. Studies suggest that the benefits are greater when (a) the size of the capital budget and the flexibility to allocate it are relatively high so as to provide sufficient incentives for meaningful participation; (b) pre-existent levels of social capital are relatively high to enable active civic participation; and (c) local authorities are willing to lead and facilitate these processes and relinquish some of their autonomy to representative bodies.

The potential benefits of participatory planning and budgeting include greater transparency and accountability of public decision-making and management, solutions customized to local priorities and specific local conditions, greater coordination of sectoral investments and integration of public initiatives across sectors, and a fairer distribution of resources to the poor.

By incorporating this form of planning and budgeting system linking communities and local governments, citizens are more empowered to influence governance of local resources and their use in the interest of more effective and equitable service provision.

Various literatures that focus on PB in Brazil, mostly praising its successes, have been published (Pinnington et al., 2009; UN-HABITAT. 2008; Langa & Jerome, 2004; Acioly et al., 2002; Wampler, 2000; Abers, 2000; Avritzer, 1999; de Sousa Santos, 1998; Wampler, 2000; Souza, 2001; Fung& Wright, 2001). However, in this research, the discussion of PB in Brazil will be led by the work of Celina Souza (2001). This is due to the fact that, in her article, Souza is addressing the research questions that are related to those of this research project. The last three questions posed by Souza (2001:161) are as follows:

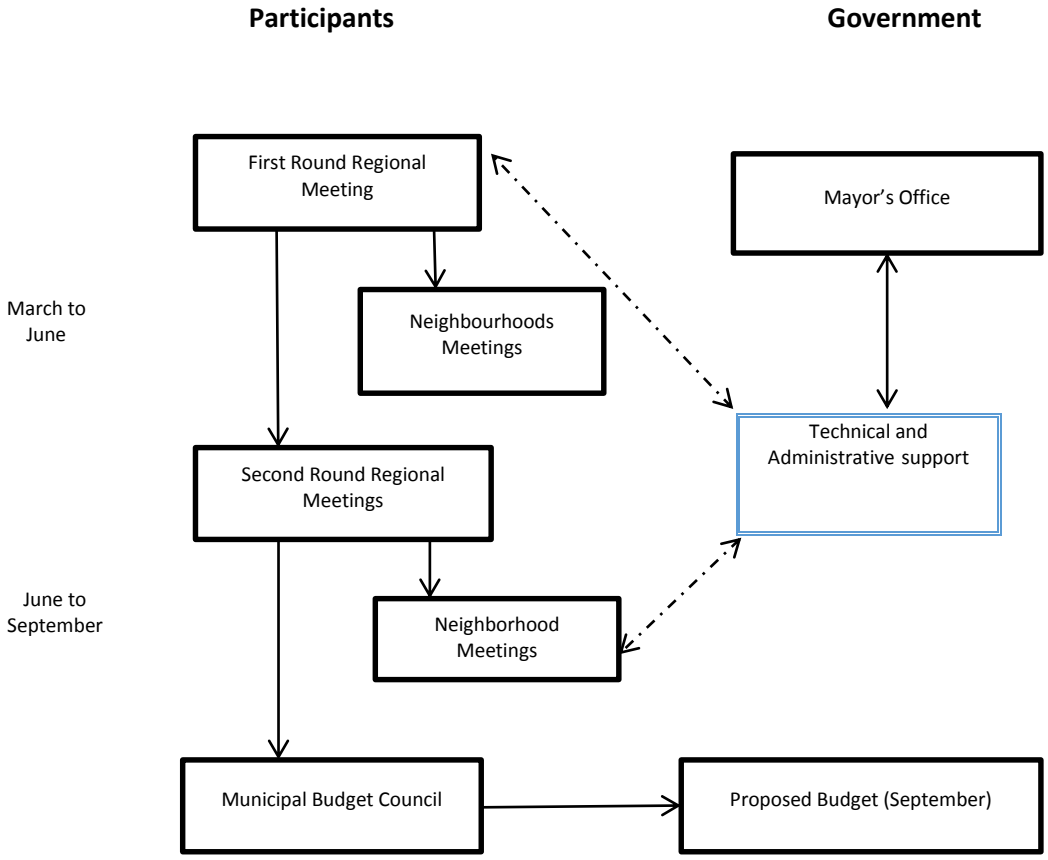
> Does PB increase the capacity of excluded social groups to influence the decision making process regarding the allocation of public resources? Does PB increase the poor's access to basic urban services? Does local expenditure reflect the priorities of the poor?

Experiences of PB in Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte will be discussed in terms of the main features of PB in these cities as well as the indirect effects of PB as espoused by Souza (2001). Accordingly, the main features of PB consists of its peculiar functioning, the investment opportunities it creates, resources and expenditure, the kind of participants in the procedure, the delegates and the manner in which they are chosen, and, the institutional arrangements and the bureaucracy (Souza, 2001:166-170). In Porto Alegre, the central features of the PB programme consisted of the district and thematic plenary assemblies. Porto Alegre was divided into sixteen districts each with five thematic areas wherein participants deliberated on local and district projects (Souza, 2001:168; Langa & Jerome, 2004:4; Avritzer, 2009:4). The first round of assemblies was concerned with the distribution of budgetary information, the agenda-setting and the election of representatives (Langa & Jerome, 2004:4; Souza, 2001:166). During the agenda-setting process, officials and the communities drew up their lists of priorities for investments and infrastructure development (Souza, 2001:166).

In the second round of assemblies, two members and two alternates per district were elected to the city-wide municipal budget council (Souza, 2001:166). With the information that had been acquired during the first round of assemblies, in the second round the elected members defined the policies and infrastructure projects to be implemented in the next financial year (Souza, 2001:166; Langa & Jerome, 2004:4). After the closing of the second assemblies, delegates of the District Municipal Forum (DMF) deliberated amongst themselves to reach a consensus on the district-wide 'priority list' of projects to address the identified infrastructure needs (Souza, 2001:166; Langa & Jerome, 2004:4). It was the responsibility of the Municipal Budget Council (MBC) to decide how much funds should be allocated per district priority (Souza, 2001:166; Langa & Jerome, 2004:4). The DMF and MBC were also responsible to monitor expenditure of the approved budgets and keep on engaging with the relevant municipalities on service delivery issues (Souza, 2001:166; Langa & Jerome: 4). The MBC oversaw the implementation of the plans for each city agency.

Belo Horizonte, on the other hand had been divided into nine administrative sub-districts. As in Porto Alegre, the first assemblies were concerned with the distribution of information on revenue and expenditure situations (Souza, 2001:166). The following meeting was used to deliberate on priorities, to compile the demands for each sub-district and to elect delegates for the PB District Forums (Souza, 2001:166). Thereafter, 'priorities caravans', bus tours (including both officials and community delegates) for the inspection in loco, are organized (Souza, 2001: 166). The tours were a means to ensure that the delegates and the officials are satisfied with the selected priorities before they choose which ones should be implemented first. It is worth noting that even after the priorities have been implemented, the interaction and discussions between the delegates and the local government officials did not stop. Accordingly, the interaction on the implementation and monitoring of progress continued throughout the year until another round of local budgeting and planning took place (Langa & Jerome, 2004:4). Figure 19 depicts the typical yearly budget cycle and the division of responsibilities for governments and citizens of Brazil, in respect of the above discussion.

**Figure 18: Yearly Participatory Budgeting Cycle (*Source: Wampler, 2000:9)***




Just like the unfolding of events that led to participatory budgeting in Brazil, it was the left-wing parties that revived substantive governance in the cities of West Bengal and Kerala, in India (Fung & Wright, 2001:14). Fung and Wright (2001:14) posit that before independence in India, universal suffrage was never heard of. Accordingly, in the period up to 1957 the franchise was accorded in terms of social status in India (Fung & Wright 2001:14). In 1957, the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI (M)) gained state power and immediately introduced radical agrarian reforms (Heller, 2006). According to Heller (2006), the introduced changes were limited by the mounting costs of the welfare model introduced earlier; and by the sluggish economic growth. However, even after the independence, the universal suffrage did not resolve the problem of inequality and poverty. It is reported that traditional elites continued to wield unrestricted power and control on the democratically created local institutions (Fung & Wright, 2001:14). Like in the Brazilian

experience, this resulted in rampant corruption and maladministration. Most notably, service delivery was non-existence in many local governments as the development resources were being looted and squandered by the elite groups (Fung & Wright, 2001:15). Accordingly, significant reforms to deepen democracy and rectify the specified governance malady were introduced in a number of Indian states (Fung & Wright, 2001:15).

As a consequence of the above factors, in the state of Kerala, the city government embarked on a bold initiative to adopt an unknown strategy of decentralised planning in 1996 (Fung & Wright, 2001:15; Vijayanand, 2005:1). The ruling CPI (M) adopted a village-level participatory strategy which was initially known as the People's Planning Campaign (PPC) (later known as Kerala Development Plan (KDP)), an innovative experiment in decentralised planning (Vijayanand, 2005: 1; Fung & Wright, 2001: 15; George & Balan, n.d.: 1; Isaac & Franke (2000); Isaac & Heller (2003). According to Fung & Wright (2001:15), the CPI (M) introduced this new planning strategy in a bid to strengthen its electoral base and administrative effectiveness. The KDP was a response to the 73$^{rd}$ and 74$^{th}$ Constitutional amendments of 1994 that prescribed the devolution of power and resources to the local government and community organisations (George & Balan, n.d.: 1). In terms of the KDP strategy, the state government was to transfer funds, in that about 35% of the state public budget would be taken from the powerful line departments to the individual Panchayat village planning councils (Fung & Wright, 2001:16; George & Balan, n.d.: 1; Vijayanand, 2005:1; Heller, 2006). In essence, allocated funds were only to be spent after each village had produced detailed development plans. These plans were then considered, approved or rejected by direct vote in popular village assemblies (Fung & Wright, 2001: 16). The local planning and budgeting processes would ensure that the final plans and budgets speaks to the real needs of the people on the ground.

Subsequent to the introduction of the KDP, the gram panchayats (rural councils) and municipalities were given more autonomy and responsibilities in development planning and budgeting (George & Balan, n.d.: 1; Heller, 2006). According to George and Balan (n.d., 1), the main objective of the KDP is to promote and ensure the participation of the local bodies and individuals in the preparation and prioritisation of community projects in an integrated and scientifically manner.

In the state of West Bengal, the Left Front Government took power in 1977 and began to implement the processes of popular mobilization and empowerment in the villages of Panchayats (municipalities) (Fung & Wright, 2001:15). The first reform introduced was a program for land reform, which was meant to break the stronghold of land by the traditional leaders at the village level (Fung & Wright, 2001:15). The significant transformation in the West Bengal Panchayats was to attempt to increase the opportunities for the marginalized classes of citizens to engage from empowered positions with the state (Fung &Wright, 2001:15). Between 1988 and 1993, more responsibilities in regard to the formulation and implementation of local development plans were devolved to the Panchayats (Fung & Wright, 2001:15; George & Balan, n.d.:1; Vijayanand, 2005: 1). In 1993/4, a number of Constitutional amendments also increased the opportunities for the expansion of Panchayat democracy (Fung & Wright, 2001:15). Chief among the three changes wrought about by the Constitutional amendments is the stipulation that one-third of the seats in the Panchayats Assemblies and leadership positions shall be given to women and to the lower castes (Fung & Wright, 2001:15).

However, for the purpose of this research, it is worth considering the most important direct deliberative bodies that were established through the 1993/4 Constitutional reforms in India, called the Gram Sabhas (Ward Sabhas/Committees) (George & Balan, n.d.: 1; Vijayanand, 2005:2; Fung & Wright, 2001:15). These bodies were created to increase the popular accountability in the Panchayats. Gram Sabha included all the people within a Panchayat area and meets four times a year (Vijayanand, 2005:3).

The methodology for participatory planning and budgeting in Kerala (India), has been analysed and presented as taking place in the follows six stages by George & Balan (n.d.: 1-3) and Vijayanand (2005:2-3):

Stage 1: Gram Sabha / Ward Committee

Through a special meeting of the Gram Sabha Ward Committee, the voters in an electoral constituency (ward) of a Village Panchayat or a Municipality Member, constitute a Gram Sabha. The felt needs of the community and the potential interventions are identified therein. The meetings are conducted in the semi-structured manner, where group discussions take place in plenary sessions. All suggestions and decisions are added into minutes and forwarded to the local government.

Stage 2: Development Seminar

This one-day seminar of the decentralised planning is concerned with analysis of the situation based on the suggestions and demands that emanated from the Gram Sabha stage. The seminar consists of elected representatives (councillors), officials, experts and representative nominated by Gram Sabhas. Discussions in this stage culminate in the publication of the Panchayat/Municipal Development Report, consisting of both the secondary and primary development data for each local government in Kerala State. These reports provide the status quo in each development sector, analyse data and suggest intervention.

Stage 3: Strategy setting

Following the feedback of the two previous stages in participatory planning, another one-day seminar is held at the local government level for the purpose of formulating development strategy. Attendance of the same stakeholders as in the previous stage is ensured. This strategic seminar proposes broad strategies and general projects to be implemented in a particular year. Specific details of each project, such as the objectives, expected costs, sources of revenue, contribution from beneficiaries, mode of execution, mechanism for monitoring and timeframes are discussed and agreed upon in this seminar.

Stage 4: Plan Finalisation

In this stage of the planning, the local governments finalise their plan document. In essence, this stage is concerned with the periodization of the projects approved from the previous stage, with regard to resource availability and long-term perspective of the people, for the local development. The elected bodies deliberate and decide on priority projects to be included in the finally published Plan Document.

Stage 5: Plan Approval

With the assistance of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the District Planning Committee (DPC) examines each project of the local bodies and approves the plans developed in the previous stage. If the plans are incongruent with the mandatory government guidelines on planning and costing, the TAC may refer them back for the rectification of the inconsistency so identified. It is worth noting that the TAC has no power to amend the priorities or projects in the plan. Furthermore, it is to be noted that DPC also has no authority to make amendments to the plans, but can only ensure compliance.

Stage 6: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

After the approval by the DPC, the plans are implemented by the municipalities concerned. Projects are usually implemented by either of the following: the beneficiary committee, the local body, transferring institutions, accredited agencies or by contracting independent service providers. Monitoring Committees are created wherein Gram Sabhas take part. The Gram Sabha has a right to examine the progress and other details of a project. However, the municipality has unlimited administrative powers to sanction the plans to ensure that all plans are within the limits of its financial resources.

Essentially, in all the above stages of planning and budgeting in Kerala, citizen engagement spaces are created. In the Gram Sabhas /Ward Committees, for example, all voters in the ward can participate (George & Balan, n.d.:3; Fung & Wright, 2001:15). Furthermore, the municipalities are legally required to constitute Working Groups (WG) for the purpose of analysing and processing the felt community needs into implementable ideas (George & Balan, n.d.: 3). The WGs are structured in such a manner that the local, marginalised groups are sufficiently represented. The projects prepared by the WGs are discussed by the Development Seminar, thus ensuring that the participation of the people continues to bear fruits on the final Plan Documents (George & Balan, n.d.: 4).

From the preceding discussion it was evinced that the success of the decentralization and democratization of the planning and budgeting processes in Brazil and India followed the different but closely related paths. Smith (2004:12), cited, *inter alia*, the following enabling conditions for the success of PB in Brazil: - democratization and decentralization of local government; - the local governments were willing to give power away; and - mutual trust and working relationships between government, civil society organizations and media enables the PB process. whereas, Fung & Wright (2001:25) posit that the following institutional properties are necessary for the successful implementation of PB: - devolution of decision and implementation power to local action units; - interdependence of local action units; and - transformation and restructuring of the existing state and corporate institutions in order to infuse deliberative practices to the administrative tasks.

### 3.4.5 Citizen engagement in the budgeting and formulation of the IDPs in the South African local government context.

Like the circumstances leading to the introduction of PB in Brazil and the process of decentralisation in India, South Africa shares a similar history of political oppression, exclusion and inequality that resulted from the era of apartheid regime (Langa & Jerome, 2004:16). As a consequence of the above-mentioned era, economic distribution and public budgetary allocations were skewed in favour of the white minority group (Langa & Jerome, 2004:6). Prior to the introduction of democracy in South Africa, only a small proportion of public budgets were committed towards education, health, housing and basic needs of the black population (Langa & Jerome, 2004:5). Accordingly, the main objective of the new democratic government in South Africa was to "democratize state institutions, redress inequalities and extend services to the broader population…" (Langa & Jerome, 2004:6). Just like the above-mentioned international experiences of PB and decentralisation, the first challenge for the democratic government in South Africa was to re-prioritize the budgetary resources and service delivery in order to benefit the previously disadvantaged black majority of the country (Langa & Jerome, 2004:6).

Addressing this challenge necessitated the restructuring and transformation of the country's local government. The 1996 Constitution elevated the status of the local government as one of the three spheres of government "which are distinct, interdependent and interrelated" (Smith, 2004:13; RSA, 1996:25). Even though the status of the local government was improved from that of the administrative unit of the national government (Mogale in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003:216) to that of an independent sphere of government, the Constitution entrenched the spirit of co-operation amongst the three levels (RSA, 1996). The inclusion of the clause on 'co-operative governance' obliged the newly reconfigured three spheres of government to work together in addressing the political and the budgetary issues (Langa & Jerome, 2004:6).

The roles of the local government were further augmented by the introduction of the White Paper on Local Government (1998) (the White Paper). The White Paper represented a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of the roles of local government in South Africa (Smith, 2004:14). In the White Paper, the vision of the local government shifted from being a mere deliverer of basic goods and services to the people, to the developmental one; hence

the introduction of the concept of DLG. At the core of the DLG is an ideal system of local government

> Committed to working with citizens, groups and communities to create sustainable human settlements, which provide for a decent quality of life and meet the social, economic and material needs of communities in a holistic way (DPLG, 1998).

In pursuit of this ideal, the restructuring of planning and budgeting at the local government level was introduced in South Africa (Smith, 2004:14). It is worth noting that the legislation to be discussed below does not give clear direction as to how participation should be conducted in the local government. In terms of the legislation, citizen participation is only envisaged as in the form of consultation on the already drawn up local budgets and plans (Smith, 2004:17). That, obviously, is against the spirit of participatory budgeting and public deliberation as discussed in the above sections.

Similar to the enabling conditions for the international experiences of PB in Brazil and India, the South African practice of PB and planning experience has been facilitated through the intervention of the state. As such, the new legislative framework was developed in order to create conditions that are conducive for participatory governance in the local government. The legislature was also assigned the role of conducting an oversight over the executive arm, which is responsible for the implementation of policies and plans, and the execution of the budgetary allocations; thus enhancing service delivery in the local government. From the resultant legislation, the new institutional arrangement and the new budget cycle were born. These will be unpacked in the sub-headings that follow.

#### 3.4.5.1 Legal framework for citizen engagement in the IDP and budgeting processes

Reviewing the prevailing legislation on local government in South Africa, it is argued that the provision for participatory budgeting and planning is enabled through, *inter alia*, the following Acts of legislation: The Constitution of 1996; the White Paper of 1998; the Municipal Structures Act, Act 117 of 1998; the Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000, the MFMA of 2003 and the Municipal Property Rates Act, Act 6 of 2004. Some of the above-mentioned legislation will be discussed briefly in the following sections.

**The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)**

The Constitution of 1996 is the supreme law of the country that shapes all other national legislation. Section 40 (1) of the Constitution of 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) made provision for the creation of three "distinct, interdependent and interrelated" spheres of government in South Africa, which are national, provincial and local governments. The emphasis of the Constitution is the unity and collaboration of the three spheres of government (section 41 (1) (a) of the Constitution of 1996). The effect of this provision is that, for the first time in South Africa, the local government tier has been elevated into a status of an independent sphere of government with powers to make own decisions and policies.

In terms of section 153 of the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996:81-82), the local government sphere has an important developmental role to play in the national task of addressing the skewed development patterns that were inherited from the apartheid regime. Accordingly, each municipality is obliged to structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes in such a way that sustainable provision of the basic needs and the promotion of the social and economic development of the community are given first priority (RSA, 1996:81-82; Sabela & Reddy, 1996:12).

Section 152(1)(e) of the Constitution sets a tone for the establishment of the developmental local government that is anchored in the practice of participatory democracy (RSA, 1996:81). To comply with the above constitutional requirement, the Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998; the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 and the MFMA, amongst others, were promulgated (NT, 2011: 74). The mentioned Acts of legislation, which also serve to ensure the alignment of municipalities' priorities, plans, budgets, implementation actions and financial reports, are discussed below.

**The White Paper on Local Government (1998)**

In terms of the White Paper (1998) municipalities need active participation by the local citizenry (DPLG, 2007:9). For this reason, the White Paper adopted the principle of developmental local government (DLG) as the only means by which the decades-long patterns of inequality and underdevelopment would be reversed in South Africa (DPLG, 2007:9; De Visser, 2009:8). In the White Paper, DLG is defined as

> Local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (White Paper, 1998).

In essence, the White Paper effectively advocated for the introduction of participatory governance in the country's local government. The White Paper was the new democratic government's commitment to reverse the inequalities of the past by providing the citizenry with opportunities to participate in the affairs of the local governance (Smith, 2004:17, De Visser, 2009:8). The White Paper also prescribes that the "municipalities should develop mechanisms to ensure citizen participation in policy initiation and formulation, the monitoring and evaluation of decision-making and implementation." (White Paper, 1998). According to the DPLG (2007:9) one of the approaches that can be used to facilitate and achieve the above is the introduction of participatory budgeting initiatives at the local sphere of government. Accordingly, PB will assist in linking the community priorities to the capital investment programmes of the municipalities (DPLG, 2007:9).

Similar to the global experiences with PB, giving the citizens a space in the drawing of the local budget seemed to be a prudent thing to do as it is their infrastructural and developmental needs that had to be satisfied. In other words, their meaningful participation in the development planning and the preparation of the budgets would ensure that the funds are directed to the real needs since the state resources are limited (Smith, 2004:17; Wampler, 2000:2). The White Paper summed the above sentiment thus:

> Given that resources are scarce, community participation in the development of both integrated development plans and municipal budgets is essential. Participation provides an opportunity for community groups to present their needs and concerns. It enables them to be involved in the process of prioritisation, and to understand and accept the trade-offs which need to be made between competing demands for resources.

Thus was the institutionalisation of the notion of public participation in the local government affairs. Following the White Paper three other important legislation, amongst the others, were promulgated in order to provide guidance to the municipalities in fulfilling their new developmental mandate. These will be discussed below.

**The Municipal Structures Act, Act 117 of 1998**

The Municipal Structures Act, No. 117 of 1998 was promulgated mainly to actualize the Constitutional provision for the establishment of municipalities as independent and

distinct spheres of government. In this way, the emphasis was on the creation of fully autonomous municipal councils in which local citizens freely elect their own representatives (Ndima, 2010:27). To this end, the Act provides for the establishment, operation and management of municipalities in accordance with the Constitution of 1996. In terms of the Act, municipalities shall be categorized according to the type of each, and requirements for such categorizing are contained therein. Furthermore, the Act provided the municipalities with guidelines for operation, such as the separation of powers and the relationships between the municipal councils and the local communities. In this vein, the Act regulates the internal systems, structures and office bearers of municipalities. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the main objective of the Act is to establish and regulate the structures of the new developmental local government as espoused by the White Paper.

According to Nyalunga (2006), the participation process was structured and finally institutionalized by the enactment of this Act. This Act, *inter alia,* provided citizens with the right to contribute to the decision-making process of the municipality; be informed of decisions of the municipal council; and the disclosure of the state of affairs of the municipality (DPLG, 1998). To accomplish this, the Act provides for the establishment of the ward committees (WCs) for each ward of the municipality (DPLG, 1998:52). Section 73 (2) stipulates that a ward committee shall consist of the councillor representing that ward in the council and ten members from the community. The ward councillor also serves as a chairperson of the ward committee. In terms of section 72 of the Act, the main role of a WC is to enhance participatory democracy in the local government. One of the key initiatives introduced by this Act to enhance the effectiveness of the ward committee system in the budgeting process is community-based planning (CBP) (DPLG, 2007:10). CBP is a government's initiative aimed at promoting the participation of citizens in the in the ward committees by devolving some control over the planning of development and service delivery (DPLG, 2007:10). Amongst others, CBP is based on the following principles: inclusion of local citizens in the planning process; making plans and planning process realistic and practical; linking local planning to legitimate structures; planning to include implementation, monitoring, evaluation and annual review; plans to be people-centred and empowering; and, ensuring that plans cover all sectors of the community (DPLG, 2007:10).

The effective implementation of CBP is expected to improve the quality of plans and service delivery, to increase citizen control over development and to empower communities in order to be initiative (DPLG, 2007:10). Most of the metropolitan municipalities distribute discretionary funds to the ward committees, which are disbursed using CBP methods (DPLG, 2007:10-13). The CBP initiative in the local public participation process of the ward committee has a potential to introduce and sustain PB and PP in the local government. The CBP process within the ward committees in South Africa resembles the regional/citizens' assemblies of Brazil and the Gram Sabhas of India in that these bodies also empower the ordinary citizens with decision-making autonomy on issues that directly affect them.

According to the Senior Official responsible for Public Participation in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, the CBP process takes the following path:

> (i) Public meetings for the whole ward residents are organised to announce the commencement of the CBP process. (ii) The Community Development Workers (CDWs), the IDP office staff or the Public Participation Co-ordinators facilitate the five-day training-cum-workshop of the community on CBP in different wards. (iii) Such a workshop would culminate into the selection of five top priorities per ward. These priorities are compiled into a document called Ward Business Plan. Just as the IDPs, the Business Plans are reviewed annually. (iv) The Ward Business Plans for all wards of the municipality are submitted to the IDP office for consolidation and alignment of the priorities with IDPs. (v) The IDP office together with the budget office determines the availability of funds for the priorities. However, from the 2013-2014 financial year, each ward is allocated an amount of R1 million for the purpose of addressing the unemployment and poverty problems. This means that, in the future there would be no need to determine the availability of the funds from the municipality budget. Since CBP is a component of the WC system, the monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the process and the feedback to the community are provided through the ward committees' public meetings (Interview, March 20, 2015).

Sadly, it seems that the CBP initiative has not been broadly factored into, and employed effectively in the formulating of the IDP and budgeting processes, and as such an opportunity to gain from the community inputs continues to be missed (Marais et al., 2007: 83-84). This has limited the opportunities to fully experiment with PB as a tool for public deliberation and decision making during the planning of local budgets in South Africa (Shah 2007 in GGLN, 2012:21).

**The Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000**

It is said that the main transformative legislation that gave substance to the concept of DLG in the local government is the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000 (Smith, 2004:15). As a show of commitment to the participatory governance in the South African local government, that is, an emphasis on participation of citizens in the local government affairs, this Act dedicated the whole chapter to this topic (DPLG, 2000:16).

The Act took the responsibility for transparent governance further in its provisions regarding public participation: Section 16 of the Municipal System Act endorsed the development of the culture of community participation in the local government by stating, in subsection (1), that: "A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance." Whereas, sections 18(1) (a) and (b) of the same Act require municipalities to inform their communities of available mechanisms, processes and procedures to encourage and facilitate community participation, and also to take into account language preferences and usage by the locals and the special needs of the people who cannot read or write. To this end, the Act requires municipalities to

> Encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in … the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan and the preparation of its budget." (DPLG, 2000:16).

In this sense, the Act established the important relationship between the IDP and the budget, mostly due to the fact that, in order to address the priorities in the budget, you need resources to be budgeted for, that is, provisions to be made in the budget. The White Paper (1998) ratified this relationship thus:

> Municipal budgets are a critical tool for re-focusing the resources and capacity of the municipality behind developmental goals. To this end, budgets must be developed in relation to the policies and programmes put forward in municipal integrated development plans.

The Act, in the same vein, also established a relationship between the two key tasks of formulating the IDP and budget and the citizen engagement in the processes.

To further entrench the system of participatory governance in the local government, the Act stipulated a number of mechanisms, processes and procedures which would guide the participation of citizens in the local governance (Smith, 2004:15). Amongst other mechanisms for participation that were proposed by the Act are political structures such as councillors and ward committees, receipt and considering of the public complaints, public comments procedures, public meetings and hearings, consultations with local community and report back (DPLG, 2000:15-16).

**The Municipal Finance Management Act, Act 56 of 2003**

The real transformation in the budgeting and the financial management of the local government of South Africa was sealed by the promulgation of the MFMA (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:5; NT, 2011: 73). Apart from introducing new financial management practices in the local government, the significant change that was brought about by the MFMA is the promotion of citizen engagement during the drafting of local budgets and planning (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:5).

In terms of section 23(1) of the MFMA, when tabling the annual budget, the municipal council must consider the views of the local community. Section 27 (1) of the MFMA further stressed that non-compliance with this stipulation shall be immediately reported to the MEC for finance in the relevant province (NT, 2003: 33). Concern that the introduction of this compulsory consultation later in the process deprives citizens the opportunity to influence the final budget outcome are discussed in the following section.

As already alluded above, in order for the budget planning to succeed, it must be aligned with the broader strategic developmental planning of the municipality as a whole (Fourie & Reutener, 2012:5). For this reason, the MFMA also requires that the processes of IDP and budget formulation be closely aligned to ensure that IDP priorities are matched with the available resources (Smith, 2004:15). In this way, the meaningful citizen engagement in the formulation of the IDP would simultaneously provide inputs into the budgets (Smith, 2004:15). Towards this end, the MFMA in section 21(1)(a) stipulates that the mayor of the municipality must

> Coordinate the process for preparing the annual budget and for reviewing the municipality's development plan and budget-related policies to ensure that the

> tabled budget and any revisions of the integrated development plan and budget-related policies are mutually consistent and credible." (NT, 2003:31-32).

In the sections following the above-mentioned one, the MFMA further provides guidelines for the finalising, tabling and approval of the municipal budgets (UN-HABITAT, 2008:43).

#### 3.4.5.2 Institutional framework for citizen engagement in the IDP and Budgeting processes

One of the basic conditions cited for the successful implementation of the PB in Brazil and India was the successful transformation of the political environment and the institutional framework in these countries (Wampler, 2000:6; Souza, 2001: 164-5; Pinnington et al., 2009:457; Langa & Jerome, 2004:2; George & Balan, n.d.; Vijayanand, 2005:1). Likewise, South Africa also underwent the same transformation through the introduction of a democratic government for the first time in the country. In order to redress the inequalities wrought by the segregation policies of the apartheid regime, the new government had to align the bureaucracy in the fashion that would befit the new developmental mandate of the local government. In order to achieve the above alignment, new Acts of legislation, including the above-mentioned, were introduced into the system of local governance by the new democratic government.

The discussed legislative framework made it mandatory for the local sphere of government to promote and encourage community participation in all matters of governance (Hicks & Buccus, 2007: 101; Nyalunga, 2006). For example, in section 152(1) (e) the Constitution provides for one of the objects of local government as follows: "to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government." The LGTA of 1993, outlined three phases of the South African local government transition. The first was a pre-interim phase, a period that lasted from the publication of the LGTA to the date when the elections for transitional councils were held (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006:13). Accordingly, the second phase, which represented interim phase, was defined "as the period lasting from the date of elections of transitional councils until the legislation and implementation of final arrangements for local government." This phase produced a number of transitional local councils in the country, which were later to be disestablished and categorised in terms of the Municipal Structures Act, Act 117 of

1998. The third phase of local government transformation envisaged a period of change as municipal structures were restructured and re-established in terms of the Municipal Structures Act, Act 117 of 1998, the White Paper of 1998, the Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act, Act 27 of 1998, and the Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000.

The local government transformation, which commenced with the promulgation of the White Paper in 1998, is far from over. This is due to the fact that the effects of decades of apartheid system are still deeply imbedded in the local government system. The new developmental local government model, as mandated by the country's 1996 Constitution, aimed to deepen democracy and promotes participation by local communities in all matters pertaining to service delivery and development. The main structure that was developed to further the above mandate is the system of sub-municipal Ward Committees (WCs) (DPLG, 2005:3). In essence the Ward Committee system was intended to serve as a representative structure of the ward residents wherein their needs and aspirations are articulated (DPLG, 2005:3). Even though a number of approaches have been advocated in promoting public participation, Ward Committees always receive prominence over and above other mechanisms. This is because the ward committee system is seen as an independent and effective mechanism that is also believed to be impartial enough to accommodate all members of the community (DPLG, 2005:7). As such, Ward Committees play a key role in facilitating the participation of citizens in the core municipal processes such as the IDPs, municipal budgeting and municipal performance management (DPLG, 2005:12).

In terms of the legislation, ordinary members of the ward that are not politically aligned, shall be elected to serve in the sectors of the Ward Committees (DPLG, 1998, 2005). However, the reality of the situation is the opposite of the one envisaged by the legislation. According to Friedman (2006: 9), it is common that ward committee members are not elected by the residents of the ward, but got chosen by the Ward Councillors. Hemson (2007 in Marais et al., 2007:82) echoed the same sentiment in that some Ward Committees are constituted with the cronies of Ward Councillors or interest groups, instead of the ordinary citizens. Accordingly, this practice has made the Ward Committees ineffective in that they are not functioning as they should be. Notably, the practice has diminished public

confidence on the partiality and integrity of the committees (Marais et al., 2007:83).

It is worth noting that the mistrust towards the ward committees by the residents may have impacted negatively on the processes of participatory planning and budgeting in South Africa. This observation is due to the fact that, soon after the introduction of the ward committee system in the local government level, another structure was established to undertake the function that was original performed by the committees. Due to the escalation of service delivery protests against the non-performance of the country's municipalities, the system of CDWs was introduced in 2003 (DPLG, 2007:11). CDWs were deployed into the communities in order to listen and collate their needs, challenges or priorities and refer them to the relevant municipalities.

As stated elsewhere in this research report, the CDW initiative was created as an endeavour to build a working two-directional and participatory interface between government and citizens for the sake of advancing development and effective governance (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) 2008). However, this researcher is not aware of any empirical research on the effectiveness of the CDWs in addressing the needs of the community to the municipalities.

### 3.4.5.3 The budget cycle at the local government level in South Africa

Tracing the role of citizens in the whole planning and budgeting functions of the municipalities may be facilitated by examining the various guidelines that have been issued by relevant departments. One such guideline is provided through the Local Government Budget and Expenditure Review 2011 as issued by the National Treasury (NT, 2011:77). In terms thereof, the generic municipal budget cycle should involve the following six (6) stages:

1. A planning phase, which commences with the mayor tabling a budget process schedule in the Council by August.

2. A preparation phase, which involves, *inter alia*, the analysis of revenue and expenditure projections, revising budget related policies and considering local, provincial and national priorities.

3. A tabling and public consultation phase, which requires the mayor to table a *proposed* budget, IDP revision and budget policies in Council by end of March. Only thereafter, the municipality is required to conduct public budget consultation during April and May.

4. A revision and debate phase, which gives the mayor an opportunity to revise the tabled budget in response to inputs received, and then to table the budget in Council for consideration before 1 June.

5. Approval of the budget by the Council before 1 July (start of financial year).

6. Publishing the budget, the SDBIP and annual performance agreements of the municipal manager and senior managers on the municipal website.

The above cycle is also summarised in the following table for simplicity and clarity.

**Table 16: Steps in a Municipal Budget Process in South Africa (*Source: National Treasury, Municipal Finance Management Act - Circular No 10 of 2004)***

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Planning** | • Schedule key date<br>• Establish consultation forums<br>• Review previous processes |
| **2. Strategising** | • Review Integrated Development Plan<br>• Set service delivery and objectives for next three years<br>• Consult on tariffs, indigent, credit control, free basic services etc.<br>• Consider local, provincial and national issues, previous year's performance and current economic and demographic trends, etc. |
| **3. Preparing** | • Prepare budget, revenue and expenditure<br>• Draft budget policies<br>• Consult and consider local, provincial and national priorities |
| **4. Tabling** | • Table draft budget IDP and budget related policies before council<br>• Consult and consider formal local, provincial and national inputs or responses<br>• A suggested time frame for the process of tabling would look like this:<br>• March: Table municipal and entity budgets, resolutions, Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan, Integrated Development Plan revisions and budget related policies<br>• April: Call for public submissions, council to have meetings with key stakeholders<br>• April/May: Council hearings and meetings to consider submissions<br>• Council meetings – mayor to submit amended budget |
| **5. Approving** | • Council approves budget and related policies |
| **6. Finalizing** | • Publish and approve Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan and annual performance agreements and indicators |

From the above standard cycle of planning and budgeting in the local government, it can be concluded that only a limited opportunity for meaningful citizen engagement is

provided, which is only in the third phase of planning. It is interesting to note further that, the consultation opportunity that is mentioned in the third phase of planning only appears as an afterthought (Smith, 2004:17; NT, 2003:14). Previous research has revealed that not much influence can be exerted by the citizens after the mayor had revised the IDP and policies, and tabled a proposed Budget in Council (Smith, 2004:17).

This is also supported by the fact that no mention is made, during or after the fourth phase of planning and budgeting, about referring the revised budget to the public for comments. The above sentiment is echoed by the World Bank in that the mandatory popular participation in the IDP process was limited in reality (World Bank, 2011:61). The World Bank also laments the technocratic nature of the IDP processes in that processes are driven by the officials as a legislative requirement compliance (World Bank, 2011:61). Accordingly, participation in the IDP has been reduced to an ineffective "input-gathering exercises", without an opportunity to deliberate on conflicting issues by the citizens (World Bank, 2011:61).

Perhaps that is where calls by various parties for the meaningful engagement of the citizens by the municipalities when crucial decisions on development and service delivery are made, emanate (CoGTA, 2009; Masiko-Kambala, Görgens, & van Donk, 2012: 70-71; Gauteng Provincial Legislature, 2012; Brynard, 2011; Chenwi & Tissington, 2010:6; De Visser, 2009:19; Mac Kay, 2004:5; King et al., 1998: 317).

## 3.5 CONCLUSION

The literature review section of the chapter considered concepts that generally have an impact on the research as a whole, with the following being the most focal points. The significance of governance for the local development planning was considered in this section. The literature revealed a strong nexus between the concept of governance, development planning and public participation. In essence, governance was shown to be multi-dimensional in that it cuts across the relationship of the citizens, the local government and other stakeholders to succeed.

The section also considered the linkage between the concepts of public participation and democracy in the local government. It was revealed that effective public participation was a function of a strong democracy. Literature revealed that the quality of democracy in the

country is best judged by the level of participatory spaces opened for the citizens. In order to establish the much needed nexus, the literature provided a background on the decentralisation of power to the local government by the new SA Constitution of 1996.

The section also saw the unpacking of the concept of public engagement in order to locate the current public participation in the literature. Unpacking this concept resulted in the differentiation amongst three concepts that make it up, namely public consultation, public communication and public participation. Furthermore, the section considered the international experiences and lessons on the PB and PP in the local government. This was later related to the South African experience of implementing PB and PP. Legislative framework that enabled citizen engagement in SA was also discussed briefly in this section of the chapter. The section concluded by critically analysing the current budget cycle at the local government of SA.

## 3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The review of literature is normally presented as the second chapter of the thesis, however, this research necessitated the deviation from that norm. The chapter set out to review the relevant literature in terms of the specific conceptual or theoretical framework and the generic literature review. The main concepts that emanated from this research included development, sustainable development, planning, strategic planning, participatory planning, governance, participatory budgeting, public engagement, deliberative democracy, public participation and meaningful citizen engagement. The conceptual framework of the chapter commenced with the discussion of the integrated development planning (IDP). The historical origin of the concept was traced and discussed in details. The discussion proceeded to unpack the concept, with a result of its elements being discussed separately. As such, the concepts of development and planning were given more focus in the conceptual framework section. The chapter ably differentiated amongst various forms of development and planning, their styles and the socio-economic benefits of implementing these concepts in the local government environment.

In the chapter, under the conceptual framework, a detailed critical analysis of the different concepts of democracy was presented. This section of the conceptual framework not only focused on the two main opposite democratic models, namely, deliberative

democracy and aggregative democracy; but their theoretical bases were also considered in details. The literature revealed that deliberative democracy was the most favoured in the public discourse, replacing the aggregative democracy in the process. However, the critique of deliberative democracy showed that the two models could actually be useful when combined, and they could yield better results. The chapter also expanded on the definition and discussion of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement, based on the deliberative democratic theory. Public deliberation was introduced in this chapter as a potential tool for the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. The chapter also introduced the conditions of deliberative democracy as criteria to assess the success of meaningful citizen engagement. These included political inclusion, political equality and reasonableness and accountability. However, it was noted that the conditions were not limited to the above, more could still be added in the list.

In terms of the literature review section of the chapter, the significance of governance in the local development planning was considered. The review of literature also considered the link between the current public participation and democracy in the local government. This was considered in relation to the nature of democracy that is practiced in the country. Furthermore, the concept of public engagement was unpacked in the literature review section, which resulted in the concept producing three separate elements, namely, public consultation, public communication and public participation.

The chapter also presented the international experiences of implementing PB and PP, and this was indirectly mirrored with the South African experience in the following section. The institutional and legislative frameworks for citizen engagement in South Africa were also discussed in this chapter, with the analysis of the budget cycle closing the chapter.

In essence, the chapter succeeded to present the theoretical and conceptual basis for the study in that the concept of meaningful citizen engagement was located deep in the literature. The chapter attempted to be unbiased in the presentation of the literature, with the argument of this thesis always giving guidance thereto.

# CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the approach of the study in terms of its design and the research methodology employed. According to Babbie et al., (1998:74), research design and research methodology are two distinct dimensions of research, which are always confused by researchers. Whereas a research methodology focuses on the research process, tools and procedures to be employed; a research design is only concerned with the end product of the process (Babbie et al., 1998:74, 75).

The purpose of this research was to explore whether practicing meaningful citizen engagement during the Integrated Development Planning and Budget formulation processes in the South African local government could provide a solution to the current service delivery quandary and backlogs that are experienced by this sector. The study was conducted in five different categories of municipalities in the province of Gauteng, in South Africa during the period between 2013 and 2015. The researcher ensured that the selected municipalities included both those that had experienced 'service delivery' protests due to the poor performance and those that have received clean, unqualified or qualified audit outcomes from the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) during the 2010 – 2011 financial year.

The following primary research question underpinned the study: Will the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms lead to the amelioration of service delivery and developmental backlogs (better service delivery) in the local government? Furthermore, the study was based on the conceptual framework as well as the literature review.

The research design will be discussed in terms of the different approaches or paradigms of social research, in relation to the purpose of the study and its theoretical framework. The research methodology employed will be described in terms of the sampling method, overview of the information needed, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, as well as reliability and validity of the study.

## 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN OVERVIEW

### 4.2.1 Research approaches in social science – the case of positivism and interpretive paradigms

It is worth noting that positivism social science and interpretive (descriptive or phenomenology) social science are amongst the most influential approaches to science (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:16; Babbie et al., 1998:20; Henning et al., 2004:16; Neuman, 1997:62). The aim of this section is to unpack these two approaches of social research partly because they are the most commonly used by researchers, and that they can be clearly linked to the two methodological traditions, namely qualitative research and quantitative research (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001;17).

According to Della Porta and Keating (2008:1 in Neuman, 2014:92), the term 'approaches' in the social science world is an umbrella term that encompasses the epistemology or issues about the theory of knowledge and the purpose of research. Accordingly, the term is wider than a theory or the methodology employed in a particular study as it encompasses the foundation of, and the direction to be pursued during the inquiry in its totality. In other words, alternative approaches can be viewed as wider methodological frameworks or paradigms within which researchers undertake their studies (Neuman, 2014:93).

A paradigm can also be understood as "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, and techniques and so on, shared by the members of a given community" (Thomas Kuhn 1962, 1970). In other words, a paradigm encompasses all the theoretical assumptions that produce methods and techniques within an approach, which the community of scholars had accepted and adopted at a particular time (Mouton, 1996:15). This then dictates the language and terminology that predicts a particular worldview at a specific point in time. In essence, this is what is referred to as a research approach, metatheory or tradition within a specific scientific community. As such, each research approach is defined by a specific philosophical assumption on which it is based (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:15, Bryman, 2001; Neuman, 2014:92; 1997:60).

Furthermore, Denzin & Lincoln (2000:19) view paradigm as a "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises". Paradigms or

interpretive frameworks are also seen as abstract principles that guide all human beings. Accordingly,

> [These] principles combine beliefs about ontology (what kind of being is the human being? what is the nature of reality?), epistemology (what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and methodology (how do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?)" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:19).

Broadly defined, ontology refers to that area of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of what exists, of being. It is the area of philosophy that asks what reality is out there (the real world) and its specific categories (Neuman, 2014:94). The ontology that this study was based upon pertained to understanding the depth and quality (meaningfulness) of the employed citizen engagement initiatives and techniques from the experiences and perspectives of the research participants. The researcher attempted to establish, from the participants' views; what their real and lived world was, in regard to specific citizen engagement activities undertaken during the formulation of the integrated development plans and budgets at the local government level.

On the other hand, epistemology, also referred to as the theory of knowledge, deals with the questions of how we create knowledge of the world around us, that is, how we make meaning of our experiences (Neuman, 2014:95; 1997) The process of knowledge creation also concerns the ways (methods) of knowing that we employ, and ultimately what constitute valid truth (Neuman, 2014:95, Mouton, 1996:17, 28). In the subject study, the focus had been on gleaning the understandings, interpretations and meanings which the participants have allocated to or arrived at in accordance with their experiences of the phenomenon. Based on these, the researcher had been able to interpret the data and construct meaning thereof, in terms of the participants' responses to the interview questions, the focus groups discussions and the direct observations undertaken.

### 4.2.2 Rationale for qualitative approach

The preceding section clearly presented a case for selecting a design that is appropriate for a qualitative data collection and analysis tradition in this study. As such, the section attempted to make a connection between the design approach, the ontological and the epistemological philosophies that underpinned the study. Due to the nature of the problem investigated, a qualitative research approach was employed in this study. According to Merriam (2002:2), qualitative research is characterised, *inter alia,* by the search for meaning and understanding. Furthermore, in qualitative research, understanding the process is more important than looking for an outcome (Merriam, Courtenay & Baumgartner, 2003: 174).

The above description is in stark contrast to the quantitative approach which relies on controlling the phenomena in order to count and/or measure them, producing estimates of averages and differences between groups (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:101; Hancock, 1998). Accordingly, quantitative research is basically inflexible as the methods used to collect data, such as questionnaires and surveys, always contain similar questions, which are asked in the same order (Mack et al., 2005:3). The process of qualitative research is continually changing and unfolding due to the qualitative study design, which is flexible and responsive to changing circumstances as the research progresses (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:148).

This approach has been selected with a belief that it will help in understanding theoretical and policy issues surrounding the notion of meaningful citizen engagement within the local government sector (Merriam, 2002:4; Hancock, 2002:4). In order to gain rich understanding of the phenomenon, that is, whether the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement activities during the IDP and budgeting processes will help lessen service delivery backlogs within the local government, the researcher needed to be immersed in the natural settings of the research process, to familiarise himself with the real world by interacting with the respondents in an active manner (Ospina, 2004; Key, 1997; Merriam, 2002: 5; Hancock, 2002:2). Immersion into the process also allowed the researcher to obtain the holistic nature of the phenomenon in its natural setting, as "the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis" in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002:5; Key, 1997; Ospina, 2004). Qualitative research approach is the only

research design that can enable the researcher to be immersed in the research process since it allows the interaction between the 'variables' of research rather than separating them, as is the case in the quantitative approach (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001: 101; Key, 1997).

Qualitative research approach is often preferred when the research attempts to answer complex questions about the nature of the phenomena, especially when the research problem is concerned with understanding and describing the phenomena (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:101). It was also anticipated that qualitative research approach would be effective in exploring and in revealing whether the current practices of citizen engagement provided sufficient meaningful spaces to enable effective deliberations by the affected parties and to get an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the council officials and the community members with regard to such spaces and activities.

For better understanding of the above discussion of the contrasting features of qualitative and quantitative methodologies as employed in relevant studies, the following table is presented for illustration purposes.

**Table 17: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies** (***Source: Babbie, Mouton, Vorster, Boshoff & Prozensky, 1998:273).***

| | **Quantitative studies** | **Qualitative studies** |
|---|---|---|
| Approach to the setting | Controlled settings<br>Selected sample | Natural settings<br>Whole context |
| Aims of research | Quantitative sampling<br>Explanation and prediction | Thick descriptions<br>Interpretative understanding (Verstehen) |
| Research strategy | Hypothetico-deductive<br>Generalizing (nomothetic) | Inductive<br>Contextualizing (ideographic) |
| Notion of objectivity | Natural science definition: maximum control over extraneous factors | Intersubjectivity: gaining trust and rapport in order to get as close as possible to subjects/trustworthiness and credibility |

On the basis of the above discussion, this study rejected the positivist stance with its quantitative methods of data collection and analysis on the basis of its ignorance of the human factor (neutrality) in the quest for social reality. Furthermore, PSS was also rejected in this study for its quest for total objectivity in research, which is not possible if the aim is to understand the phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln 1989:44 in Patton, 2001:96). Furthermore, the positivist paradigm has been criticised for its insistence that social reality is out there, and for separating it from the individual's perspectives and experiences. For the above-mentioned reasons, the study adopted the Interpretive Social Science (ISS) paradigm instead of the positivist one. The main reason for accepting the ISS approach (qualitative approach) is the idea of *verstehen* in that social science should proceed from understanding personal motives that shape individual's internal feelings in deciding or acting in a certain manner (Neuman, 2014:103). The methodology in the interpretive social science (ISS) approach centres on the way human beings make sense of their subjective reality and on how they attach meaning to it.

Many social researchers have accepted and further developed Kuhn's idea of a "paradigm shift" in social science (Lincoln and Guba, 1990) that is, linking the worldview to a whole new paradigm. In the case of this study, this has been evidenced from the gradual increase of the democratic theorists who are rejecting the positivist stance (aggregative democratic model/rational and social choice theories) in favour of the interpretive or descriptive stance (deliberative democratic theory/public deliberation).

### 4.2.3 Deliberative democratic theory as a form of basic interpretive qualitative framework for the study

The above description of the ISS shows how the reliance on language (communication) in the social discourse has contributed to the development of this approach, which led to the qualitative research moving from its original descriptive format to an interpretive turn (Henning et al., 2001:19). This approach has been appropriate to the researcher's epistemological and theoretical beliefs in the principles of deliberative democratic theory, which is communicative in nature. The deliberative democratic theory advances a need for the description of the problem and for collective reasoning through reason-giving for resolutions of such problems. In this sense, the democratic process moves from the

description to the qualitative interpretation of the reasons for the decisions taken. For example, the phenomenological paradigm adopted in this study took an idealist epistemology in ensuring that the gathering of data does not only relies on observable behaviour, which could be fallible (Henning et al., 2001:19), but that it also included "descriptions of people's intentions, meanings and reasons" (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20).

As one of the epistemological stances that the ISS leans on, the phenomenological stance was adopted as a philosophical tradition in this study because of its recognition that individuals are always involved in making sense of their world (Patton, 2002:104; Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:19). The phenomenological position was taken because the study attempted to understand how the participants make meaning of their world, that is how they define, construct, develop, justify and change their worlds (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:19). Phenomenology also assisted in revealing how research participants arrived at their common sense interpretation about the phenomena. Clearly, the core elements in the phenomenology approach is the role of the human mind (consciousness) and the language used at that particular context (Neuman, 2014:176; Henning et al., 2001: 10, 19; Babbie et al., 2001:28). This implies "understanding human actors in terms of their own interpretations of reality, and understanding society in terms of the meanings which people ascribe to the social practices in that society" (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20). In essence, the researcher attempted to continuously interpret, create, define and understand the phenomenon in relation to the research participants' perspective.

Furthermore, the epistemological dimension adopted in this study rejected the conception of objectivity and emphasised direct engagement and empathy between researcher and research participants (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20). In interpreting the theory of deliberative democracy as a main theory amongst those underpinning the study, a nominalist ontological position was adopted in this study (Neuman 2014:94). This meant that the researcher acknowledged that the meanings and interpretations of the 'real world' by the participants would always be intersubjective (Neuman, 2014:94). In other words, the researcher anticipated that the experiences and

understandings of the phenomenon by the research subjects would always be influenced by their inner subjectivity such as cultural beliefs and linguistic constructs (Patton, 2002:96).

Accordingly, the type of qualitative research that was employed for this study was based on basic interpretative qualitative research design. According to Merriam (2002:6) when conducting the basic interpretative qualitative study, the researcher is concerned mostly with how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, in other words, the researcher seeks "to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspective and worldview of the people involved, or a combination of these."

It was anticipated that, in order to deeply understand the phenomenon, the product of this research would consists of a rich, thick descriptive data in the form of documents, field notes from observations and participants' interviews (Badenhorst, 2008; Merriam, 2002:5). The reasoning that was used in this study is an inductive strategy wherein the gathered data would be sorted and categorised in terms of themes, typologies, and concepts in order to infer the findings of the study, that is, letting the researcher speak through the data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:160; Merriam, 2002:5).

In order to achieve the above inference, the researcher relied on the constructivism approach as explained below. Adoption of the constructivist stance in this study resulted from a premise that in an interpretive social research, there is a close and inevitable relationship between the researcher and the subject. Constructivism proceeds from posing questions such as how have the people in a particular context constructed reality? What are their perceptions in relation to truths, beliefs and worldview? And what are the results of their constructions? Thus social constructivism rejects the objective reality in favour of a notion that realities are social constructions of the human mind (Guba & Lincoln 1989 in Mills, Bonner, Francis, 2006:2). According to Guba and Lincoln (1990:148), constructivism emphasise its unique ontological, epistemological and methodological positions in a social study. Ontologically, constructivism emphasise the theory of ontological relativity in a sense that all the responses and statements from the research subjects about reality relied on their lived worlds (Patton, 2002:97). In terms of its epistemological position, constructivism emphasises the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and the participant, and the co-construction of meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1990:148). Thus, constructivism recognises that as human

beings, researchers cannot be totally detached from the qualitative research process, as researchers are regarded as the core instruments therein (Babbie et al., 2001:273).

Essentially, this means that the basic interpretive qualitative study design was suitable for the proposed inquiry as it enabled the researcher to gain much insight about the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001: 148), that is, the potential of meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP process to enable alleviation of service delivery and developmental backlogs in the local government. It was anticipated that this research design would also assist in understanding how the phenomenon is understood by both the public members and the relevant municipalities' officials, and its current implementation challenges (Merriam, 2002:6).

## 4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Whereas the previous section focused on the design of the study, which is the connection of theoretical paradigms to the strategies of enquiries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:22), the research methodology is concerned with the research process and the set of tools that are required to execute the design (Babbie et al., 2001:75). For the reasons proffered above, this study adopted a phenomenological strategy. In terms of the research methodology, phenomenology is appropriate to the qualitative approach for the following reason: "the insistence on an interpretive (verstehen) understanding of the meanings and self-descriptions of the individual requires a methodology that emphasises the following:

- Unstructured observation and open interviewing (in order to allow the research subjects to "define the agenda");
- Idiographic and "thick" descriptions (detailed in-depth descriptions of small numbers of cases);
- Qualitative analysis; and
- Objectivity defined as the intersubjective and empathic attitude of the 'insider' (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20).

Accordingly, the study relied mostly on the use of data collection methods such as unstructured interviews, direct participants' observation and document analysis, and techniques such as qualitative content analysis and analytic induction to analyse data (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20). The research methodology employed in this

research is defined in terms of the research sample, data collection methods and data analysis and synthesis strategies.

### 4.3.1 Research sample

Typical with all qualitative studies, this research was limited to a relatively small sample, which was selected purposively (Creswell, 2003:185; Patton, 2002:46). Given the qualitative nature of the research project, the non-probability sampling method was used to determine the sample for data collection purposes. Notably, the non-probability sampling approaches are suitable for the studies that use in-depth qualitative research in order to understand complex social phenomena (Marshall 1996; Small 2009). Non-probability sampling methods are most useful where there is no specific list of the sample population from which to draw the participants (Babbie, et al., 2001:166). According to Babbie et al. (2001:166), the following four non-probability sampling methods are frequently used in qualitative research, namely, reliance on available subjects, purposive or judgmental sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling.

The field of participatory planning and budgeting is an area of specialised knowledge, skills and expertise; therefore, purposive sampling was the most suitable in this case (Merriam, 2002:12; Mack et al., 2005:5). This means that, based on the researcher's knowledge of the population and its elements, as well as the research objectives, that is, the purpose of the research and the judgement of the researcher; a specific group of persons were targeted for answering interview questions and for focus groups (Babbie et al., 2001:166). The criteria used in selecting the research participants was purposive in that it focused on their specialised knowledge, skills and experience regarding the issues that pertain to the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government sphere at large, and in participatory budgeting and planning in particular (Mack et al., 2005:5). Sampling did not attempt to represent the population within the research sites, but was concerned with diversity, group perceptions and knowledge (Kritzinger, 1994:105; Rabiee, 2004:655). Amongst the reasons for purposefully selection of participants was to ensure an in-depth study and understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002:46). In essence, purposive sampling of the participant and sites for the research was necessary to enable deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003:185). This was in contrast to the

quantitative inquiries, which often rely on random selection of large samples (Creswell, 2003:185).

The difference in sampling techniques between the two research approaches can be explained in terms of the logic of each (Patton, 2002:230). The different logics derive from the purpose of each approach, which is statistical probability theorizing for confident generalization in the case of the quantitative approach and selecting of information-rich cases for in-depth understanding in the case of the qualitative approach (Patton, 2002:46, 230). According to Flick (1998 in Babbie et al., 2001:287), there are two kinds of sampling within the interpretive paradigm. Accordingly, one may wish to develop criteria that are appropriate to the study prior to taking to the field. These may attempt to address issues of inclusion and / or exclusion of certain members of the population, for example, whether to study the historically disadvantaged or advantaged individuals within a particular race group or groups, or both (Babbie et al., 2001:287). Furthermore, questions of age, race, gender and disability of the participants may also be used to determine the final sample. The researcher may also be influenced by the practicality of conducting the research, such as time to be spent on the project, costs of the project, and labour required to complete data gathering, sampling and writing up process (Babbie et al., 2001:287). I shall refer to this kind of sampling as pragmatic sampling.

Theoretical sampling is another type of sampling available for an interpretive qualitative researcher (Babbie et al., 2001:287). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967:450 in Babbie et al., 2001:287),

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges.

Basically, this type of sampling is dependent on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study, which dictates the categories that are less or more important as the study progresses. For this research, the sample was selected using mostly the pragmatic type of sampling whereby the relevant sample populations were targeted purposively in order to address the research questions. In selecting the sample, the researcher focused on the relevant wards within the municipalities, guided by the purpose and the context of the study. This was necessary to ensure that the appropriate sample that would yield better

understanding of the phenomenon was located. Participants in the study were selected purposively, that is, according to their relevance to the research, based on their knowledge and experiences as well as on the research problem and questions. The logic behind purposive sampling for this research lied in the fact that the researcher needed information-rich sample that would yield in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002:230). As such, the sample consisted mainly of the appropriate sites (municipalities) and designated groups, who would provide relevant data for the research problem.

Accordingly, the following five municipalities from different categories (with different management and legislative structures, and of different sizes), all situated within the Province of Gauteng, SA, were purposively sampled. Two metropolitan municipalities (Category A), Ward 2 of the City of Johannesburg (financially qualified opinion and findings with opinion on PDOs) and Ward 32 of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (financially unqualified opinion with findings and opinion with no findings on PDOs); Ward 2 of the Westonaria Local Municipality (West Rand District Municipality) (Category C), with no findings on PDOs was considered. Furthermore, two local municipalities, Ward 11 of Midvaal (Category B3 - financially unqualified opinion with findings and opinion with findings on PDOs) and Ward 36 of Emfuleni (Category B2 - financially qualified opinion and opinion with findings on PDOs) were also examined.

As elaborated in chapter two (2) of this thesis, the sampled municipalities are characterised by vast differences in terms of population demographics, social and economic development. Furthermore, the selected municipalities have different legislative and administrative structures, as well as different management areas due to their categories and areas of jurisdiction. For example, as a Category B, the West Rand District Municipality (WRDM) is composed of four smaller local municipalities with their own legislative arrangements. Even though the municipalities compile their own IDPs and Budgets, these are to be aligned with, and approved by the District municipality. Furthermore, the district and local municipalities share the management area and functions, hence referred to as a two-tier municipality. Certain functions such as the provision of water are handled at the district level. On the other hand, a Category A municipality, such as the Johannesburg and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipalities, have full jurisdiction over their areas. Category A municipalities are not sharing the functions with any municipality, and are not

composed of smaller municipalities. As such, Metros do not need to have their decisions ratified by another Council, as is the case with the local municipalities that are under a district.

The purpose of sampling different municipalities was to understand the challenges faced by each in terms of citizen engagement during planning and budgeting. As such, the research did not intend to understand the governance structures of each of the municipalities, nor was it an attempt at the generalisation of findings. It should be noted that sampling of the municipalities was also influenced by their performance on PDOs for the period of 2010-2011 financial year, as reported by the AGSA. Such sampling enabled the researcher to consider and understand how citizen engagement was conducted in each of the category as prescribed in the South African legislation. Moreover, the sampling targeted the municipalities that consistently perform well and those that were always receiving bad reports from the AGSA. This was necessary to establish whether there was a nexus between better performance and the manner in which citizen are engaged in those municipalities.

Accordingly, the sample for this research was sourced from amongst the selected municipalities in order to gain deeper understanding of the phenomena, i.e. citizen engagement process (Babbie et al., 2001:84). The semi-structured and unstructured interview instruments were utilised during the interviews with different sample. The following office-bearers from each selected municipality were requested to participate and they all obliged: one (1) Senior Official who is in charge of public participation of each of the five selected municipalities; one (1) Senior Official of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) of each selected municipality; one (1) Senior Official from the budget office of all the selected municipalities; and two (2) Ward Councillors from the different wards of all the selected municipalities were also interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used during the interviews with the above-mentioned participants. It is important to reiterate here that the above-mentioned officials and councillors were preferred more than other local government stakeholders for their proximity to the phenomenon being studied. As Mack et al. (2005:5), and Patton (2002:230) stated, purposively sampling the above office bearers focused mainly on their specialised knowledge, skills and experience regarding the issues around the phenomenon, and was based their relevance to the research,

based on their knowledge and experiences as well as on the research problem and questions. It wouldn't have served the purpose of the research to include all the local government stakeholders in the sample at this stage.

Furthermore, two differently populated focus group interviews were organised in various research sites and the in-depth, unstructured interview method was employed. In order to gain access to the appropriate sample in terms of knowledge and understanding, the researcher relied on the following t select the focus group participants. As observations were mainly conducted earlier than the interviews due to the set dates of meetings, the researcher employed the meetings to scout community member. Contact details of the people were individually requested during the meetings. The researcher later contacted each individual community member telephonically to request their consent to participate in the focus groups. No incidents of refusal were experienced with regard to the participation in the Community Members' focus groups. As such, there was no limitations in the populations and responses of the Community Members' focus groups. In the opposite, more people were willing to participate in the discussions. The following samples were selected from the communities within the specific wards of the relevant municipalities: two groups of five diverse Community Members from Ward 32 of the EMM and Ward 11 of Midvaal Local Municipality were selected purposively. These groups consisted of adult men and women, the youth as well as disabled people residing within the research sites.

Two groups of four Ward Committee members each from Ward 8 of Midvaal Local Municipality and at the Ward 2 of the CoJ Metropolitan Municipality were selected to conduct focus group interviews, using in-depth, unstructured interviews. Even though two focus group interviews were conducted at Midvaal, it should be noted that these were held in different wards. The reason for this is that the Midvaal Local Municipality is considered one of the best performing municipalities in the Province of Gauteng, having repeatedly obtained best audit scores from the AGSA. The researcher anticipated to gather rich, empirical data from this municipality in order to understand its success secrets.

**Initial participant contact**

Shortly after the approval of the research proposal by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), the researcher approached and made contacts with the five municipalities through telephone calls and e-mails. Appointments were scheduled with the municipal managers' and legislature departments of all the municipalities with a view to request permission to conduct research within the particular institutions and to make contacts with the officials and political office bearers.

Despite various challenges, permissions to do research and to interview office bearers (Ward Councillors and Senior Officials) were finally granted within two months of the initial contact. The main challenge, caused by the lack of understanding the purpose of research, was experience from the side of securing Ward Councillors for the interviews, as most of them were wary of exposing what they termed "internal and confidential information." Only after several meetings and phone calls were made by the researcher to provide more explanation, did councillors consent to the interviews. The reason for commencing with the office-bearers was due to the anticipated ease of communication and possible less resistance to participate, and the fact that they were an organized and predictable sample. The strategy was to reserve more time for the contact with Community Members and Ward Committees, who were not much organized. The process was also expedited by the decision of the majority of officials to respond through the electronic mails (e-mails), in order to save their time.

Contact with the Ward Committee members was also not as difficult as has been initially anticipated, as the focus was on those who were more active in the local communities and who were more experienced therein. The initial contact with this sample was made whilst interviews were taking place with the officials and councillors in the various municipal buildings. The researcher, with the help of the same Ward Committee members, Ward Councillors and Senior Officials selected for the study; managed to secure workstations within the various municipalities in order to use during the interviews.

However, initial contact with the Community Members was a bit challenging as most of them had negative attitudes on getting involved with the municipalities, whilst others

were clueless about their local governance issues. The researcher mostly targeted the public meetings where observations were conducted, as sites to purposively select this sample. Another option was to request the Ward Committee members to assist with contacts of appropriate possible individuals to make up the sample. However, the latter option was not exercised as the first one was successful and sufficient on its own. As such, the researcher managed to reach the envisaged amount of participants.

During the process of contacting the possible participants, the researcher opted to use the participant information sheets that were designed for, and approved by the Ethics Committee in order to provide more details to the selected sample. The various consent forms that were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Wits University of were also used to obtain consents of the sampled persons.

**Overview of the data needed**

In qualitative research, researchers usually attempt to obtain various forms of data that would yield sufficient information on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003:185). Furthermore, researchers in this paradigm usually immerse themselves in natural settings gathering first hand data about the problem through observation (Creswell, 2003:185). The semi-structured interviews with all the participants in this research were used to obtain the expert and political perspectives of the participants with regard to the PB and PP in their respective fields. As expected, the interviews with the Senior Officials yielded rich and useful data on the possible meaningful engagement of citizens in the process of IDP and budgeting. The data provided insight on whether citizen engagement was possible and desirable in their administrative perspective, in relation to the legal time-frames for the municipalities to finalise and approve IDPs and budgets. From the Ward Councillors, the researcher strived to establish their perspectives on the potential of PB and PP to improve service delivery. The questions used in this regard were designed in a way that revealed the perspective of the councillors on the concept of meaningful citizen engagement and any potential challenges thereof.

From the Community Members groups, the researcher was looking for the data that would shed light on their understandings of, and experiences with the PB and PP within the CBP in their respective wards. The interview with the Ward Committee members was

designed in a manner that shed light on their understanding and experiences of PB and PP in general and with CBP in particular. The researcher was looking at gleaning their perspectives on the potential of PB and PP to alleviate the service delivery backlogs. The municipalities were sampled and selected according to their different financial and service delivery performance as reported by AGSA for the 2010-2011 financial year. The questions for the above-mentioned interviews were designed and conducted in such a way that the answers revealed the relationship between the two main planning functions of the municipalities.

Furthermore, the non-participant observation method was employed to gather data, and to verify the data obtained through the interviews on the processes of engagement. From the observations, the researcher was looking for the data on the following aspects: - **Inclusion**, i.e. characteristics of participants in terms of gender and age; - **Equality**, i.e. interactions amongst participants in terms of level of participation, power relations, decision-making on current issues, general climate for deliberation and level of cooperation amongst the citizens and between them and the officials/program directors; **Reasonableness and accountability**, i.e. the ability of program leaders/presenters (Councillors or Senior Officials) to communicate clearly, their presentation skills, to encourage participation of all, their flexibility and adaptability, promotion of deliberation amongst participants, use of aids and the flow of the meeting/agenda. Moreover, the observations had to provide more insight on the physical surroundings, i.e. venue- size of the room, comfort and suitability, amenities such as access to the toilets and water; and seating arrangements; and product of the meeting (i.e. brochures, documents, etc.) (Cloutier et al., 1987, in Taylor-Powell & Steele, 1996:2).

Through the observations, the researcher gathered information on the interactions (behaviour and actions) of the participants during the engagement processes. The researcher, as a non-participant observer, recorded field notes of the events in an unstructured manner as no contact or communication with the participants took place during the observation (Creswell, 3003:188). The notes were later transcribed into standard observation guide template in order to enable ease of interpretation and analysis. As such, the researcher managed to determine whether the engagements with the citizens were meaningful or not during the various observations that were conducted.

### 4.3.2 Data collection methods

Both the primary and the secondary methods of collecting data were used in this study (Leedy and Ormrod: 2001:95). Primary data refers to all the data that the researcher collected himself using the interviews, focus group discussions and observations. On the other hand, secondary data is the data that already existed when the study commenced, and which the researcher had no degree of control over it (Babbie et al., 2001:76). For the purpose of this study, data collection process focused on gathering textual data instead of the numeric type as described by Babbie et al. (2001:76). However, it should be noted that textual data from interview data could be transformed into numeric categories (tables) during the post-coding and categorisation in the data presentation chapter.

#### 4.3.2.1 Primary data

As mentioned above, the primary data was gathered through the use of both the semi-structured and the unstructured interviews as well as non-participant observations at the various sites. These two methods of data collection will be discussed in the following sections.

**Individual in-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews**

Prior to the discussion of these methods, it is important to understand what is meant by the interview, and what the process of interviewing entails. Simply put, "the interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening…" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:633). From this definition, it is clear that the interview method is not a neutral method because of the exchange and interactions that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee, that is, listening and giving answers. The above description is echoed by Babbie et al., (2001:289) in that

> A qualitative interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry…A qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent. Ideally, the respondent does most of the talking.

The purpose of using the interview for this study was to gather the information that could not be accessed by observation. Interviewing enabled the researcher to access the inner perspectives, experiences and knowledge of the research subjects through deep, open-ended questions (Patton, 2002:341).

The semi-structured and unstructured interviews exhibit the characteristics of a basic interview in that they are flexible, iterative and continuous, rather than cast in stone (Herbert & Rubin 1995 in Babbie et al., 2001:289). These types of interview methods as used in this study consisted of a number of open-ended questions that focused on certain areas of the research topic (Hancock, 2002:9; Merriam, 2002:13; Leedy and Ormrod: 2001:159; RDSU). These kinds of interviews were preferred for their ability to allow the researcher to ask certain questions in the same way, while also being able to adapt in order to accommodate the respondents or to probe them further where necessary.

As a consequence of the above, the respondents were enabled to speak from their experiences and understanding of the phenomenon (Babbie et al., 2001:289). Unlike the highly structured interview which asks the same question from one interview to another, semi-structured and unstructured interviews allowed the researcher to dig deeper for more information, where necessary (Hancock 2002:9). Furthermore, the semi-structured interview questions in this research provided some sort of a structure or frame to the conversations with individual participants than the unstructured interviews. This ensured that the conversations were conducted within the bounds of the research questions, and that they yielded rich data. (Seidman, 2006).

The unstructured interviews used in this study consisted of open-ended, in-depth interview questions which allowed for wider coverage of data gathering in order to address the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:652). Employing the open-ended questions format further resonated with the strategic, philosophic and methodologic aims of the qualitative design in that it mitigated against bombarding the respondents with predetermined, hypothetic - questions that will premeditate responses when gathering data (Patton, 2002: 353; Babbie et al., 2001:289).

**Focus groups interviews**

It is important to distinguish the difference between the focus group discussion and the focus group interviews, which are often used interchangeably. The focus group is a group discussion organised to explore a specific set of issues such as people's views and experiences on a particular topic (Kritzinger, 1994:103). Conversely, Patton (1987) define the focus group interview as "an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic …The focus group interview is indeed an interview." The confusion on the two concepts has been caused by the shortening of the term to 'focus group' (Kritzinger, 1994).

The proper distinction of the two processes is provided by Morgan (1997:12) in that a group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants. Focus groups, however, rely on interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher (Morgan, 1997:12). From this distinction it is clear that the distinguishing characteristic of the focus group discussion lies on the group dynamics, which is the ability of the group members to interact effectively in a discussion or conversation about the common topic in order to produce quality information (Rabiee, 2004:656). It is for this reason that the focus group discussion requires the services of a skilled facilitator in order to succeed in eliciting quality information from the participants (Kritzinger, 1994:106; Kruegler, 1994; Rabiee, 2004:656).

The focus group interviews for this study possessed the characteristics of the individual interviews, except for the fact that the interviews were conducted with a collective rather than an individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:835-836). In this way, the focus group interview was useful in providing the collective evidence or testimony on the phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:842). Apart from the need to reach multiple individuals with ease, for the purpose of this study, focus group interviews were elected for their ability to provide the environment that is conducive for a well-organised discussion (Babbie et al., 2001:292, 293). As a result, a collective understanding (evidence or testimony) on the practice of meaningful citizen engagement from the perspective of the community members was garnered. Furthermore, focus groups were advantageous in revealing similarities and differences in the perceptions of the participants, which had enabled the researcher the ability to effectively analyse the data (Babbie et al., 2001:292).

Interviews during the focus group interviews were conducted through the use of in-depth, unstructured interview instruments. The unstructured interview was preferred for its ability of allowing the researcher to ask questions in any order, and to go as far as having a conversation with the respondents and probing further on the topic or question (Hancock: 2002:10). Furthermore, the unstructured interview was selected in order to gain rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon (Hancock, 2002:10). To achieve this, the themes emanating from the research and interview questions were used as a list of topics for discussions. These were compiled in the form of questions (**see Appendix 1**) relevant to the problem; and were used for discussion with the participants in the focus groups (Merriam, 2002:14; Patton, 2002).

Even though the process followed in this research share more of the two processes, it leans more on the focus group interview than discussion. Meaningful discussions only took place on the interviews with the Ward Committee members. The reason for this can be attributed to the fact that this group pre-existed prior to the research, and all participants knew each other. The groups for Community Members were new, specifically formed for the purpose of the research; as such members did not know each other well. As a consequence, not much discussion took place without the probing of the researcher

Data from the above-mentioned interviews was recorded by means of taking notes and the use of a voice recorder instrument (Hancock, 2002:13-14). The above-mentioned methods of recording data were used in complementary to each other. For example, when taking notes, the researcher might have been bias and record only the information that closely resonates with his perceptions of the problem. Whereas, recording data with the voice recorder would ensure that all relevant information was captured during the interviews (Hancock, 2002:14.)

In order to ensure openness from the interviewees when using the recorder, the researcher assured them of their anonymity, and of the confidential nature of information shared with the researcher (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001: 108; Merriam, 2002:89). Attached as **Appendixes 2.1, 2.2, 2.3** are the three separate but related interview schedules that were used for both the individual and focus group interviews. Also attached as **Appendix 4.3,** is a consent form that was approved by the university's ethics committee and issued for the interviews.

**Non-participant observation**

Non-participant or simple observation was also utilised as a data collection instrument. This kind of observation was conducted in the form of the onlooker or spectator participant (Babbie, 2001:293; Patton, 2002:265). Due to the time factor and pre-scheduled public meetings of the relevant municipalities, most observations were conducted at the beginning of the data collection, and were repeated again later to address questions raised by the data that was collected through other methods. Observations were very advantageous as they ensured that the researcher understands the interactions amongst the citizen themselves, and between themselves and the public officials and/or the political office bearers. In order to capture what was happening during the engagement, the researcher opted for covert or secret observation wherein the participants were not aware that the researcher was amongst them (Patton, 2002:269; Babbie et al., 2001:293). However, as a precaution and in consideration of the ethical issues that might have arisen due to the choice for covert observation, the researcher had to reveal himself to the organisers of the public meetings. Furthermore, the possible issues with regard to moral and ethical consideration were addressed during the initial application for conducting research in various municipalities and the application addressed to and approved by the university's ethics committee. The ease with which the covert observations were undertaken (with a moral confidence), and granting of the permissions by the municipalities was based on the fact that the meetings within which observations were to be held were open to the general public.

As alluded above, the researcher eventually revealed himself to the official organisers of the particular gatherings when confirming whether they were the correct ones, and in so doing, introduced himself as a researcher that is observing the proceedings. On three of the four observations, the chairpersons of the meetings announced that there was a researcher within the gathering, and the purpose of being there, this was done without pointing at or asking the researcher to stand up and be seen by everyone.

Accordingly, observations were conducted by attending the following: four IDP and Budget public meetings in each of the following municipalities: Midvaal Local Municipality, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Emfuleni Local Municipality and

West Rand District Municipality (Westonaria Local Municipality). In order to capture all the happenings from the beginning to the end of the meetings, the duration of observations equated that of the meetings. The advantage of observation is that it represented a first encounter with the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2002:13). This researcher managed to capture or collect information which was not possible to obtain during the interviews as the process played its reality (naturally). Factors such as the setting of the meetings, the activities that took place within that setting, the participants in those activities and the meanings of what was observed from the understanding of the researcher and the participants, could not be captured through the interviews. Many approaches may be used to record observational data, one of which is taking field notes (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). A notebook with a wide margin on one side, left to facilitate analysis of the text later on, was used to take notes during this research (Taylor-Powell & Steele, 1996:3; Hancock, 2002:17).

#### 4.3.2.2 Secondary data

Moreover, the study was based on the secondary data through the following sources:

The evaluation of the Public Participation policies and other relevant policy documents related to the promotion of participatory governance in each of the municipalities to be studied; the evaluation of the IDPs and budget documents of the participating municipalities that were compiled within the baseline of the proposed research; the evaluation of ward committee minutes, Ward Business Plans, relevant council minutes and IDP forum minutes; studying of other documents that are relevant to the study such as national legislation, AGSA annual reports, documents and reports of the Department Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Budget and Expenditure Reviews of the National Treasury, books, academic journal and internet articles, workshops and conference papers; and reviewing of other relevant materials such as newspaper articles on service delivery protests and reasons thereof, in order to gather more evidence.

## 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

In order to address the problems of dealing with the voluminous qualitative data later in the study, which is often a challenge in qualitative data analysis (Patton, 2002:432), the researcher began data analysis as soon as the first set of data was gathered. This enabled the researcher to focus and adjust the approach as the study proceeds. According to Patton (2002:432) data analysis in the qualitative research entails "reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significance patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what data reveal." The above perfectly sum the process that was followed during the analysis of data for this research.

During the initial analysis, constant comparative analysis technique was used to organise data into themes, categories and case examples (Merriam, 2002:14; Patton, 2002:56). Qualitative constant comparative analysis enabled the researcher to sort and compare data sourced from the interviews with the data from the secondary sources. Together with data and methodology triangulation methods used, constant comparative analysis enabled the successful application of content analysis in this research. Content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a text material such as interview transcripts, diaries, or documents (excluding observation-based data) for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases (Patton, 2002:453; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:155). Using this method enabled the researcher to sort and reduce data by identifying the main themes found during data collection (Patton, 2002:453; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:157).

These data have been coded *manually* (Patton, 2002:442; Tesch, 1990: 142-145) in terms of their patterns of meanings to the researcher (whether they made sense or not), and then themed and sorted into categories (Tesch, 1990, in Ely et al., 1997:162). Tesch (1990: 142-145) provided a useful analysis of the coding process in eight steps, which have been adopted in the categorisation of the data for this research. Furthermore, categorising was also augmented through the use of interview questionnaires. Instead of formulating a list of topics as advised in Tesch's step 3, questionnaires and the interview guide (attached as **Appendix 1**) were employed to identify themes (topics) for organising data and the identification of trends and patterns (Patton, 2002:440). Accordingly, data from all

interviews were analysed using the option of cross-case analysis wherein responses of different participants to similar questions were grouped under one theme (Patton, 2002:439, 440).

Furthermore, all data collected through observations were reviewed in order to determine patterns and trends in the processes of the meetings attended, that is, whether sufficient and meaningful spaces were opened for the citizens to engage within the processes. These patterns and trends were categorised inductively in order to draw an inference (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:160; Head Start Information & Publication Centre (HSIPC), 2002-2006). Inductive reasoning usually relies in "the use of direct observation to confirm ideas and linking together of observed facts to form theories or explanation of how natural phenomenon work" (Bacon 1561-1626 in Bernard, 2000:12). It should be noted that in this research, inductive reasoning was dependent on the non-participant observation rather than the direct, participant observation as referred to above. Just as the use of content analysis in analysing textual data, inductive analysis is useful in discovering patterns, themes and categories in the observational data (Patton, 2002:453). In inductive analysis, the researcher becomes immersed in the data in order to determine embedded meanings and relations between the participants and phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss 1967 in Patton, 2002:454). Inductive analysis was important for this research as, contrary to the deductive analysis, the analysis of data was not done according to an existing framework, developed before data collection (Patton, 2002:56, 453). Furthermore, inductive analysis of observation-derived data was important as induction commences by analysing specific observations and building on these towards developing general patterns (Patton, 2002:56). "As such, categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated." (Patton, 2002:56).

Due to the fact that data was sourced from variety of sources and using multiple methods, it was synthesised by applying data and methodological types of triangulation (Merriam, 2002; Denzin in Patton, 2002:247). According to Patton (2002:56), data triangulation is necessary when data is sourced from people of different status or people with different points of view. Methodological triangulation is useful to synthesise data that has been obtained by using various methods to study a single problem (Creswell and Miller,

2000:126). These processes enabled the researcher to identify relationships, patterns of response and themes that run through the categories (Ely et al., 1997:162).

Pattern recognition (the ability to see patterns in seemingly random information) was done by classifying related data observed or gathered from the interviews into groups to be analysed together (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:161; Hancock, 2002:17). To exemplify, data from the observations, the interviews with Ward Councillors, the Senior Officials dealing with IDPs and public participation, and the focus groups interviews were compared with the data from the documents published by the CoGTA such as the Local Government Turn Around Strategy, 2009 and The State of Local Government, 2009 and DPLG documents, such as the National Policy on Public Participation, 2007. The reason for the data triangulation was to establish whether the prescripts of the government policies were well understood and observed by the participants. This ensured that the response to the interview questions, the data from observations and from documents addressed the research questions. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to eliminate irrelevant data from the three sources and methods. Whereas, data from the interviews with the budget officials was compared with that from the IDP officials, the documents from the National Treasury, the AGSA reports and the Supply Chain Management policies of the relevant municipalities. The reason for using the content and data comparison was that the responses from the budget officials were expected to resonate with the contents of the relevant legislation. As stated by Ely et al., (1997: 162), this method of triangulation enabled the researcher to establish the relationship of the categories of data in terms of the patterns of response and the themes that run through the categories.

The main purpose of employing the above-mentioned methods was to establish whether there was a relationship between the financial and service delivery performance and the meaningfulness of citizen engagement in the relevant municipalities.

## 4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In keeping with the protocol of the University of Witwatersrand, the ethical research norms were complied with throughout the research process. As approved by the university's non-medical ethics committee, formal requests were sought from the different

municipalities to conduct research within their jurisdictions. Having obtained that, participant information sheets and consent forms were sent to the relevant Senior Officials and Ward Councillors that were identified and / or nominated by the municipalities to assist in this research. However, it was concerning that most of the municipalities nominated the officials and councillors to be interviewed as this act had compromised the anonymity of the participants. It was for this reason that the researcher designed own coding system as a way of counteracting any possibility of linking the response to a participant in the final report.

The participant information sheets served as a comprehensive tool in which all the relevant answers that may have arisen from the participants were answered. As such, the participant information sheet contained all the relevant details of the research, including a brief description, the purpose, the reason for including the relevant participant and the facts that the process will be handled with the highest confidentiality. The participants' rights, the risks involved and the benefits were also covered in the participant information sheets. Accordingly, the research participants were informed, through the participant information sheet, that their identities will be protected by assigning codes next to their responses, instead of their personal names in the final reports. For example, the research participants comprised of fifteen officials, ten ward councillors, ten community members and eight ward committee members. The number of the officials was derived from the selection of five IDP official, five budget officers and five public participation officers. The codes for the officials were assigned as follows: IDP officials were numbered from one to five using the following code: IDPO1 [1]. This code means that the response is from the IDPO number 1, and [1] referred to the first interview question for that group. From this code, no one could say whose response has been quoted as only the researcher knew who the first official is. Similar codes were developed in case of other officials, with the budget officer being allocated BO, followed by the number of the official and that of the question, i.e.: BO1 [1]. For the public participation officers, the code was PPO, also followed by the number of the official and that of the question, i.e.: PPO1 [1].

Similarly, anonymous codes were developed and assigned to other participants as follows: for the Ward Councillors, the numbers were allocated chronologically as per the municipality since each municipality has two ward councillors as participants. As such, the

code for Ward Councillors in this research is: WC, followed by the number of the councillor and then the number of the question being answered, i.e.: WC1 [1]. On the other hand, Community Members and Ward Committee members were allocated their numbers chronologically according to the focus groups. For example, numbers from one to four refers to the participants in the first focus group, and from five to eight is for the other group. Accordingly, the code assigned for each group was as follows: for the Community Members – CM1 [1], and for the Ward Committee members – WCM1 [1].

Clearly, the above-mentioned coding system made it possible to keep the participants anonymous from the general public and from whomever will be the reader of this report. However, guaranteeing the participant anonymity in the focus groups was impossible as the interviews were conducted as a group discussion. The researcher, at best, attempted to strip away any identifying connotations from the participants' responses such as the names of the municipality and places they may have mentioned as references or examples.

Furthermore, the participant information sheets emphasised that the participants were not compelled to participate in the study, and could withdraw anytime if they feel like that. Also mentioned therein was the fact that their participation was offered free of charge, meaning that there would be no monetary or material compensation of any nature for their participation. The participants were also assured that there was no risk involved as a result of their participation in this research.

## 4.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The issue of reliability and validity is even more crucial in the interpretive study as opposed to the positivist ones due to the issue of intersubjectivity. Whereas in the positivism approach the emphasis is placed on objectivity of the researcher in that there is a distinct distance between the researcher and the subject (Guba & Lincoln 1989:44 in Patton, 2001:96), the interpretive study recognises that objectivity cannot be maintained in a qualitative study (Mouton 1996 in Coetzee et al., 2001:20). Patton (2002), states that, for the above reasons, validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. To ensure reliability and validity in this study, examination of the

trustworthiness of the data was crucial. Merriam (2002: 25), argues that using multiple data collection methods also helps to double-check the consistency of responses and thus improves the degree of reliability of data.

It has been mentioned above that a triangulation approach, which is the use of more than one source of data so that findings can be cross-checked, was employed in this study Triangulation was also employed as a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings (Creswell and Miller, 2000:126).

Furthermore, the objectivity of the researcher was ensured in order to sustain trustworthiness of the study. In the study that is based on an ISS approach, objectivity is understood as gaining trust, establishing rapport, ensuring trustworthiness of the study findings and unbiased description and interpretation thereof (Babbie et al., 2001:273). Ensuring that the researcher remains objective was crucial as the study also exhibited some heuristic characteristics in that it brought forth the personal experiences and perspectives of the researcher about the phenomenon. In the process of the study, the researcher was continuously confronted by the question of his experience and that of others about the phenomenon (Patton, 2002:107).

The other validity checks and balances that were employed in this study to ensure the credibility of the findings included data and methodological triangulation (multiple sources of data and data collection methods to confirm or disconfirm emerging findings), member validation (conducting of group discussion of general findings) and thick and rich description (Geertz, 1973; Merriam and Associates, 2002). The confirmability strategy as applied by Canham (2014:120), was also used as a validity check of findings in this research. This strategy was applied through the comparison of data obtained from interviews and observations with the data from the documents and written responses.

The validity and reliability of this study was also secured through the careful compliance with the research ethics that were approved by the university's ethics committee prior to the study. As such, the researcher ensured that ethical issues were attended to during the research process (Badenhorst, 2008). The following ethical issues, as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2001:107-108) were considered: protection of the participants from harm, obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring participants' right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues. Attached as **Appendix 4.3** is the copy of the consent

form that was approved and which all the participants signed before the interviews took place.

## 4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the approaches on the basis of which the research design and methodology were decided. The research design clearly provided the different approaches or paradigms available for social research, and presented the rationale for the selected paradigms for this study. A detailed comparative discussion that contrasted the two paradigms, namely the positivism and the interpretive, was presented in this chapter, with the conclusion indicating the reason for selecting a paradigm leaning on the interpretive framework. In selecting the interpretive paradigm, the discussion in this chapter clearly elaborated on the early development of various paradigms in relation to the theoretical basis of this research. As such, a lucid demonstration of differences between the aggregative theory and the deliberative theory of democracy was presented to clarify the nexus therein.

Epistemologically, the section clearly elaborated on the selected stance for this research and provided a detailed discussion thereof. The discussion revealed that the study took phenomenology as the epistemological stance, based on the basic interpretive qualitative framework design. Certain elements in which the basic qualitative design was applied in the study, including constructivism, were also discussed in details.

In terms of the research methodology, the sampling method, the nature of the information to be gathered, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and, reliability and validity of findings were discussed in details. All the methods and techniques were discussed using separate sub-headings for clarity. Furthermore, the chapter detailed the rationale behind the choice of qualitative design for the study. Such was presented in contrast to the quantitative design in order to provide more understanding.

Furthermore, the chapter also provided a detailed discussion of manner in which data was analysed and synthesised, including the discussion of the methods that were employed in the process. Finally, the discussions of ethical issues and reliability and validity were also covered in this chapter. In essence, the chapter succeeded to strike a balance on the above-mentioned elements, and demonstrated their relationship to each other well.

# CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings from gathered empirical data are presented and discussed. The data was obtained through the individual interviews of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors, the focus group interviews with the Ward Councillors and the Community members and the direct non-participant observations. The chapter is ordered and structured in accordance with the research questions as presented in the research questions and interview questions matrix (see interview guide attached as **Appendix 1)**. It is worth noting that the interview questions were also compiled in accordance with the format developed in the interview guide. In all the sections that follow, data presentation has been organized logically in terms of the interview guide, that is, they start with the responses of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors, followed by the Community Members' focus groups (where applicable) and then end with the Ward Committee members' focus groups.

Further to note is a fact that the direct quotations have been used to ensure that the original feelings of the respondents were captured as they were. This was necessary to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Presenting of direct quotes has also been useful in enhancing understanding by the readers of the research report (Ryan and Barnard 2006 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2007).

For clarity and common understanding, a distinction between the councillors and the senior officials is presented below. In terms of the Municipal Systems Act (No.32 of 2000), councillors are elected community representatives on municipal councils. In all the Gauteng municipalities, councillors are divided into two categories, namely those who represent the political party in proportion to the votes gained, also known as Proportional Representatives councillors. There are also those candidates who are elected according to the number of wards in the municipality, known as Ward Councillors (RSA, 1998). The Proportional Representative Councillors, sometimes referred to as part-time councillors, are not involved with local political issues on a full-time basis. They are only required to fulfill the proportional role of their respective political parties during the Council meetings. This role, includes, but not limited to, voting for new policies or any decision taken in the Council of the municipality. They are also required to proportionally represent their

political parties in various oversight committees in order to balance the voting numbers therein.

On the other hand, the Ward Councillors serves as full-time local politicians, nominated and elected directly by the residents of the respective wards as their representatives in the council of a municipality. As such, the Ward Councillors are at the forefront as they serve as the face of the political party in the ward. Ward Councillors are also tasked with a difficult responsibility of ensuring that all required basic services are provided in the ward. Both categories are elected public office-bearers and serve a term of five years in office (RSA, 2000).

Senior officials, on the other hand, refer to the municipal officials who are employed in positions that are graded from Level six (6) upward. Included in this category are the officials in the position of Divisional Heads (Directors at municipality level), Senior Managers (also referred to as Executive Managers) and Managers. The significance of sampling officials from this high level is that they are actively involved in the strategic management of their departments, and they are also decision makers on core functions therein. As such, the researcher anticipated that their responses to the interview questions will carry the much needed weight as they would answer questions with confidence from the knowledge of their respective municipalities' policies.

The main distinction between the Ward Councillor and the Senior Official is that the former is an elected representative of the citizens, who is expected to deliver the goods and services within a specific period of time (officially five years) (RSA, 1998). Thus, the Ward Councillor serves at the mercy of the citizens in that his or her future heavily relies on the citizens' satisfaction with previous performance. As Mansbridge (1980:17) noted, in their quest to satisfy as many interests as possible, whilst alienating fewer, councillors had to act like entrepreneurs and brokers, in finding solutions. In terms of the separation of powers model, all councillors fall within the legislative (political) arm of the municipalities (RSA, 1996, 1998). The Senior Officials, on the other hand, are mostly permanently employed bureaucrats (the term of Divisional Heads is a five-year contract in terms of sections 57 of the Municipal Structures Act, 2000) in the municipalities' administrative arm. As such, their contracts of employment are not dependent on the satisfaction of the local citizenry, but are governed by the relevant labour laws and policies in place.

Furthermore, the chapter presents the findings from the non-participant observations that were conducted in various public meetings involving the officials and the citizens. The meetings targeted were those where the IDPs and budgets of the relevant municipalities were discussed or reviewed. Four such observations were conducted by the researcher. During the observations, the researcher did not participate in the discussions taking place in any manner, except to confirm, prior to the meetings, whether the targeted event was indeed the correct one. Even though the meetings were always open to the general public, for ethical reasons, the researcher often announced his presence and purpose thereof to the organisers (municipal officials and community members in positions of official or unofficial authority). As such, the necessary permissions were obtained prior to the commencement of observations.

## 5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

As elaborated in the introduction above, data from the in-depth interviews and from the focus groups interviews are presented before the findings from the observations. Accordingly, the following sections present the findings from these research instruments.

### 5.2.1 Understanding of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement (MCE) by various stakeholders of the local government

The aim of this section is to address the following question: How is the notion of meaningful citizen engagement understood by the various local government stakeholders? The following sub-headings comprise of the responses from all the sources that were interviewed on this question in each municipality, namely, the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors, the focus group interviews with Community Members and the focus group interviews with Ward Committee members.

**Operational definition and understanding of MCE – interpretation by the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors**

As a starting point, interviews were held with the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors of all the municipalities that were sampled for this study. It should be noted that, of the total officials that were interviewed for this research, five opted to provide their responses electronically via electronic mails (e-mails). The Senior Officials felt that face-to-face interviews would be time consuming, and cited lack of time due to the pressures of work. This was despite the successful efforts of the researcher to meet with each official prior to the submission of interview questionnaires in order to obtain the requisite consents. The option of using e-mails to respond to interview questions had a potential of limiting or compromising the quality and sincerity of the answers provided. One example is that the responses to the questions were mostly of general nature, in some cases going even beyond the frame of the question itself. To restore and maintain the vigor of the interview method, the researcher always submitted follow-up questions where clarity was required. In certain circumstances, telephone calls were made to probe further on the incomplete questions. However, considering that a total of fifteen (15) Senior Officials were interviewed for this research, and ten (10) of them face-to-face, the use of e-mails to respond by the remaining five did not have major limitations and implications to the interview method.

Even though their responses did not satisfy all the elements of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement as employed in this research, most of the officials made efforts to show that they understood the concept, and by implication, that they know what their jobs entail. This is evidenced in the detailed descriptive answers that were given for the subject question. The particular point is clearly indicated by the following, most interesting quotes:

> Meaningful citizen engagement is total participation where all residents of a country, including citizens and non-citizens, participate in the decision-making process of all three spheres of government. Government does not only view community participation as an end in itself. Rather the purpose of participation is the very essence of people-centred approach to development. In this context communities should not be viewed as passive participants but as active agents of change and development. Participation processes should develop people to become more resourceful themselves in as much as it should be aimed at ensuring that service and infrastructure is enhanced through community participation… (IDPO 1[1]).

> All citizens have a Constitutional Right to be informed of any matter that will impact them directly or indirectly… (IDPO 2[1]).

> …The consultation must reach the largest portion of the community as possible, and the method used for feedback to the community must be user-friendly as possible (BO 3[1]).

> I think meaningful citizen engagement refers to a notion of democracy wherein citizens have an opportunity to make inputs to the plans of their municipality. In other words, it is a citizen-oriented engagement in which citizens are able to provide direction to the municipalities about the plans that are relevant for the community (PPO1 [1]).

The above quotes and other responses from officials clearly indicate that municipal officials who are responsible to formulate and implement plans and budgets are conversant and sensitive to the need to engage citizens meaningfully. It was impressive to note that none of them depicted lack of understanding of what the concept of meaningful citizen engagement entail.

It was noted from the responses of the interviewed Ward Councillors that, although some were not clear about the term 'meaningful' in the concept at the beginning, they were well aware that citizens should be afforded sufficient opportunities to deliberate on the proposed plans and that their contributions should be taken into consideration when final plans and budgets are approved. The following two extracts highlight the Ward Councillor's understandings:

> I think meaningful citizen engagement is when the community are afforded an opportunity to take ownership of the projects by the municipalities. In other words, it is the inclusive planning of project by the communities and officials (WC3 [1]).

> In my understanding, the concept refers to the engagement of the public and officials in a working relationship to address the local issue. This is a process of meaningful consultation between the community and the municipality (WC4 [1]).

The researcher also noted that most councillors viewed the concept as synonymous to consultation, which, from the understanding of the reviewed literature and from the perspective of the researcher, is a completely different term. Just as the last quote from the budget officer above shows, most of their responses on the subject question indicated that their understanding is limited to the consultation of the communities prior to finalizing and implementing plans. It was not clear from all the councillors' responses whether

deliberations are allowed during the consultations. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that despite the limited understanding of the concept, all councillors were in agreement in their individual responses that citizens should be engaged as much as possible before the plans were approved and implemented.

**Community perception of MCE**

Experience with the author's previous research that was conducted in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Management few years ago, revealed that uninformed citizens do not yield the rich and meaningful responses to the questions. In the same way, such citizens were not participating effectively in the focus group interviews conducted during the above-mentioned research. As a result of the above experience, attempts were made to select only those members of the community who have some understanding of what local governance entails. This exercise had no major implications on the quality of the interviews as the purpose of the research was not to gauge the knowledge of the participants, but to generate, thick, in-depth data that would answer the research question.

However, in few cases, the researcher had to, explain the differences between the concept of meaningful citizen engagement and that of the passive concept of public participation. It is worth to note, further, that the explanation provided to the participants did not meant to influence their response. It was on cases where the same participants indicated their confusion or lack of understanding the concept of meaningful citizen engagement, and asked for clarification. Only then would they provide some rich responses to the subject question. Apart for some being poorly prepared for the interviews, all the Community Members that were interviewed were unanimous that the 1996 Constitution enshrined the democratic principles. Some of those, they explained, prescribe how citizens should be engaged in all the processes of formulating the IDPs and Budgets by their respective municipalities. One particular quote that caught the researcher's attention is as follows:

> Meaningful citizen engagement means that as citizens we must be involved in all processes of the IDP and Budget in [Municipality name] Local Municipality in order to safeguard against corruption… (CM3 [1]).

Even though few of the community participants in the focus groups were able to articulate themselves properly, it was encouraging to note their passion for taking part in the local governance, if invited to do so. This is from the words of one participant from the smallest local municipality sampled, who put it thus:

> Meaningful citizen engagement means that the municipality should invite us to participate when they are formulating the IDP, and that us, as community members, must be prepared to accept the invitation (CM2 [1]).

Clearly the above response is not the correct representation of the academic meaning of the concept as developed and applied in the entire research, but it did capture some features which may make the understanding of the concept easier in future. What the responses really reveal is that the community members are also aware of their responsibility to cooperate and participate when invited by their local municipalities in order to make meaningful contributions in the proposed plans or policies.

Lastly, the response that nearly came close to the definition of meaningful citizen engagement was finally offered by the participants of the local municipality as follows:

> Meaningful citizen engagement is when there is a beneficial discussion between the members of the community and the council officials and councillors in order to reach qualitative conclusions. It is a purposive discussion with the objective of obtaining sustainable solutions to address local issues with the communities (CMs 5, 6 [1]).

The above response totally covered most of the elements of the concept and indicated that the particular focus group members are more fully conversant with the local governance issues, and that they are experiencing the phenomenon directly.

**Ward Committees' understanding of the concept of MCE**

The responses of the Ward Committees' members were very interesting and more detailed and rich because of their active involvement in the local social and economic affairs. As such, all the interviewed respondents from the various focus groups indicated deeper understanding of the concept of meaningful engagement, albeit in their own acuities. The most notable feature from the many responses during the focus group interviews was the use of practical examples by the Ward Committee member in order to

drive their message home. For example, responding to the question, one respondent provided the following, long response, characterized by practical examples in between:

> Meaningful citizen engagement is about updating, consulting, hearing and providing feedback to the citizens on issues that have been reported a long time such as illegal dumping… It is not about political campaigning and using community needs as a carrot to attract voters… (WCM4 [1]).

The researcher had to guide the participant in his responses on the following questions in order to maintain the order of the focus group interview and discussion. Nevertheless, all the Ward Committee members displayed sufficient understanding of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement, even though much caution had to be applied by the researcher to ensure that the discussion does not breed political conflicts. It was evidence that most of the participants in the ward committee focus groups were displeased about the performance of their Ward Councillors as the language and responses indicated. For example, from the above excerpt, it is clear that the implication or insinuation is that the councillors only engage citizens when they need their votes, and after that they are not available to address the community needs.

### 5.2.2 CONCLUSION

This part of the research sought to determine the participants' level of understanding of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement. In other words, the question attempted to understand how the participants view the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in relation to their practical experiences and understandings. The findings overwhelmingly suggest that the participants did not recognize the concept as defined in this research, and, as such, did not have a working understanding thereof. Where attempts were made in defining the concept, this came short of the full definition in that certain elements of the concept were left out completely.

The patterns that emerged from this are the overwhelming acceptance and support of the concept, and the emphasis by all, of the importance of engaging citizens prior to finalizing local plans or reaching crucial decisions. In terms of the acceptance and support, definitions provided reveal a need for the deeper involvement of the citizens from all the respondents. With regard to the meaningful engagement of all affected citizens before

finalizing plans or decisions, the participants seemed to agree that this was a must in all the IDP and budgeting processes.

## 5.3 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS AND MEANINGFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT NEXUS

This section of the chapter addresses the second research question which reads as follows: Can the citizen engagement mechanisms that are employed during the IDP and budgeting processes be regarded as meaningful? In other words, the question sought to understand, from the perspectives of the participants, whether or not citizen engagement mechanisms that are currently used by the sampled municipalities during the IDP and budgeting processes were regarded as meaningful. Notably, the question was expanded into the following three interview questions: 1) Do you think mechanisms that are currently employed by your municipality in the IDP and Budget processes promote meaningful citizen engagement? 2) If yes, do you consider the mechanisms adequate for the citizens to influence final IDP and Budget? 3) If no, which area(s) do you think needs to be amended or improved?

Having levelled the field with the first question, and ensuring that all participants understand what meaningful citizen engagement is, in the context of this research; the next question sought to establish from the participants whether meaningful citizen engagement was happening or not.

**Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' positions on the nexus between the activity of citizen engagement and the concept of MCE in the local government.**

Interestingly, all the officials who responded were positive that the mechanisms being currently employed by their respective municipalities were meaningful and were adequately offering communities the opportunities to influence the IDP and budget process. Although some of the respondents indicated that more work was still needed to improve the process, the general opinion of all the officials was that their respective municipalities were doing very well in regard to the citizen engagement. As can be seen from the quoted responses below, the deviating officials were concerned that, amongst others, consultations were still done to comply with legislation within the prescribed period:

> …the consultation is done as legislated at the beginning of the budget cycle in September / October of each year to get inputs on projects... (BO3 [2]).
>
> To some extent yes, but improvements are required. A project prioritization process where community members are involved could possibly improve the engagement process (IDPO3 [2]).
>
> Yes, I do agree because as three processes that are prescribed by the legislation are implemented in the [Name] Municipality. However, the challenge is that communities do not get appropriate answers to their question, and this hampers the engagement process (PPO2 [2]).
>
> Yes, our municipality is trying to engage fully with its communities, even though we are still lacking but we are on course (IDPO1 [2]).
>
> Yes, they are adequate in a sense that we do publications such as posters in the library. But they are sometimes not enough as they do not reach people in poor areas like informal settlements, only those in developed areas. We need to consider using mechanisms such as technology, i.e. 'SMSs and What's up', and pamphlets to inform people in such areas where they can access relevant documents before the meetings (PPO4 [2]).

The quoted responses were indicative of the fact that two pictures were being painted by the Senior Officials' responses; with some officials admitting the shortcomings of the engagement processes, whilst others projecting a positive picture. As can be seen from one of similar response below, the response paints a different picture to the above, as it affirms that there is a positive nexus between the mechanism and the citizen engagement in the relevant municipality.

> Yes, the mechanism employed by the municipality do promote citizen engagement, as the municipality has various fora, which are public participation platforms so to engage and involve the community within all the municipal planning processes as well as reporting thereof (IDPO5 [2]).

The implications of this kind of reaction by the Senior Officials are huge, as they have a potential of hindering any improvement in the citizen engagement processes and mechanisms. For example, if a Senior Officials is as convinced that the current mechanisms are sufficient, how can these be revised and improved? The researcher was very concerned that a large number of the officials seemed to be projecting a positive image instead of presenting the real picture of the situation. The researcher's doubts of such responses were based on the picture that was displayed by the literature review, which was completely opposite from what the officials were presenting. It is noteworthy that such positive

projections were also disproved by the results of the non-participant observations that were undertaken by the researcher.

In elaborating on the sub-question two (2), on why the officials thought the mechanisms were adequate for meaningful citizen engagement, the officials managed to provide practical examples and listed reasons, even the mechanisms that are currently being used by various municipalities. The following extracts are relevant to substantiate the main positions of the officials:

> The three processes that are recognized by the government, and which have been in use for years are Ward Committee meetings, Public Meetings and IDP meetings. In all these mechanisms, citizens are invited to submit their needs and concerns. For example, after the approval of the budget in June, the IDP review meetings begin in September, and are conducted quarterly. During the IDP Review meetings, the community is able to check which needs have been addressed in the previous financial year, and replace them with the new needs (PP02 [2]).
>
> I said yes because those who participate in the IDP meetings between September and February are very vocal. They debate the performance of the municipality in respect of addressing their needs, and demand answers (PPO1 [2]).
>
> Community processes do impact on the budget, in [Name] Local Municipality, the following examples can be given: The meetings are characterized by robust discussions and whilst the various areas had different issues, a few main topics emerged…We do not believe in having public meetings for the sake of complying with legislation. We are listening to our people, and as such our response to the issues raised are relevant to the issues (BO2 [2]).
>
> Yes, they do. Amendments are always made particularly on capital projects to accommodate community needs (BO3 [2]).

However, some officials still maintained that the mechanisms were still lacking in promoting meaningful citizen engagement; that they were merely useful for compliance purposes only. Two such responses are quoted below:

> Yes, adequate in so far as legal compliance go, but no, in so far as fully effective and functional public participation goes (IDPO2 [2]).
>
> The mechanisms used by our municipality might not be fully engaging and we are trying to engage everyone by making sure that the IDP planning starts at ward level where all community members are invited to a public meeting, some community members do not attend these meetings, making it difficult for total participation to take place (IDPO1 [2]).

Furthermore, the community members were not spared by the officials in their response, despite the question not addressing that; several public participation officials

expressed their frustration with the lack of commitment and attendance of public meetings by the community. Even though the relevant officials were informed that the response need to address an appropriate question, one official insisted that there cannot be a talk of meaningful citizen engagement if the particular citizens were not attending meetings. The full response relating to this discussion will be presented in the last question dealing with the roles of the community in the formulating, implementation and monitoring of the IDP and budget.

Politically, the responses portrayed some divergences in the experiences of Ward Councillors, with the majority claiming that there was a sufficient link between the practice of citizen engagement and the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in their respective wards. However, two of the ten Ward Councillors in the sample indicated that the exercise was not up to the standards espoused by the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in their municipality. These councillors claimed that officials were not committed to the process and have their own political motives and that they were ignoring them when they raise the communities' issues. In one of the response, one of the councillors had this to say:

> Proper participation in my ward is not taking place due to the non-commitment of the officials of this municipality…In [municipal name] Local Municipality only the wards of the ruling party are properly catered for when it is time for public participation… (WC6 [2]).

This sentiment was shared by another Ward Councillor from the same local municipality, indicating the oppositional political battles that are taking place in this municipality have replaced the urgency to address the needs of the poor people. Furthermore, other councillors, in response to the subject question, laid the blame on the feet of the communities as follows:

> No, the current practice of citizen engagement is far from being meaningful simply because the people don't understand that they need to commit to public participation process. There is a gap between the municipal officials and the community in that the two do not communicate effectively (WC3 [2]).
>
> No, because of the manner we use at the ward level, we don't popularize [citizen engagement activities] so that people can be part of the IDP and budget formulation process. Also, people in the urban areas who can afford to provide for themselves and pay for services, are not interested, only those in the poor areas are participating (WC2 [2]).

This Ward Councillor proceeded to propose the way in which the process of engaging citizen during the formulation of the IDP and budget can be enhanced thus:

> Monthly newsletters at ward-level, explaining the processes and educating the public on the importance of their participation, shall be prepared and distributed to the community (WC2 [2]).

It is worth noting that this response echoed that of the WC1 below, in that the process can be improved by the introduction of outreach programmes in order to educate the communities about policies, legislation and participatory planning. As noted above, other councillors were of the view that citizen engagement was being done meaningfully, even though there were still areas that needed to be addressed in order to make it fully meaningful. The following responses attest to the above:

> Yes, but there are still gaps that needs to be closed. For example, the engagement must reach all stakeholders for it to be meaningful. We must ensure that everyone in the ward, including business people, church leaders and NGOs; attend the meetings and participate fully. In other words, the meetings shall take the form of Imbizo, where everyone in the ward is free to attend and participate. Ward Committee members must stop trying to represent the communities in the meetings, they must ensure that the community members are present to present their cases (WC1 [2]).
>
> Yes, people are participating in all activities of the IDP and Budget in my ward, but it is the implementation part of these two that is frustrating the communities. The people do not understand and they don't want to accept that some of their needs are not the competency of the local municipality. As a result, they withhold payments for services if such issues are not addressed (WC4 [2]).

Apart from citing a need to educate the people as a way of improving the engagement process, WC1 proposed another innovative way of conducting citizen engagement. Accordingly, the particular Ward Councillor was of the opinion that the lack of attendance by senior members of the community may be improved by separating the meetings according to age groups. This Ward Councillor observed that mixing the youth and the elderly in a same meeting is always ineffective, as the youth often dominates; leaving the elderly unable to participate fully during discussions. This may require some form of conducting a sample for meetings, wherein only specific groups of citizens in a ward are approached and engaged separately.

Addressing the follow-up sub-question on the adequacy of the mechanisms that are employed to conduct citizen engagement, most Ward Councillors responded negatively,

with others going as far as indicating that the engagement process is only conducted in other to comply with legislation. The following quotes represent comments from two councillors:

> Not enough opportunities are given to the public, sometimes officials do it as a formality, especially in opposition's wards. Even though language is no longer a barrier as there are interpreters during meetings, the quality of presentations should be improved to avoid errors of cut and paste (WC4 [3]).
>
> As I indicated in the previous question, citizen engagement is affected by the gap caused by lack of understanding from the community. This can be resolved by outreach programs – educate people on policies and community-based planning (WC3 [3]).

The above-quoted responses and many others reverberated with the rest of the responses for the second interview question. Most councillors are in agreement that the mechanisms currently in use are not sufficient to enable communities to engage meaningfully during the IDP and budget formulation processes.

**Community Members' observations and experiences of citizen engagement in relation to the concept of MCE**

Turning to the citizens' observation of whether the current practice of citizen engagement processes during the IDP and budgeting period were meaningful, the picture changed completely from the one painted by the majority of Senior Officials and Ward Councillors. Apart from a few sympathetic members from the focus group (three out of ten community members), the perspectives and experiences of the rest is that citizen engagement as currently conducted by their respective municipalities was not meeting the standard prescribed by the definition of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement. The Community Members interviewed in the focus groups were of the opinion that the municipalities were not doing enough work in preparing the community before the meetings took place, which often result in the community members raising issues that are not on the agenda of the meetings for the approval of the IDPs and Budgets. As such the communities were limited in participating during the proceedings as they are always not sufficiently empowered or well-prepared to do so. The following extract was taken from the response in one of the focus groups' interviews with community members:

> No, the community members are not engaged effectively by the current approaches of engagement. This is mostly because there is no information dissemination from the municipalities, which results in people not being able to contribute during the meetings (CM 5 [2]).

Aggravating the situation was, according to some Community Members, the poor manner in which the organisation of meetings were done, including the notification or announcements thereof. The communities still believed that the advertisement of meetings was still not done effectively as most of the local people were often in the dark about the public meetings taking place in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, all the community members felt that there was no sufficient opportunity afforded to them prior to the drafting of the two important documents, namely IDP and budget. Accordingly, this was discouraging others from attending the meetings even if they were invited on time as they felt that they were being used to rubber stamp the pre-determined plans and budgets. This has been captured well by the following comments from two community members (from different focus groups) thus:

> No, discussions take place elsewhere far from the people; there is no proper involvement of the people at all. This is shown by the fact that issues raised many years ago are still not addressed (CM7 [2]).
>
> …on top of leaving everything to attend the meetings one always find the finalised local plans and budgets that only need our approval. One wondered who decided what the needs of the community were, and when was that decision taken… (CM3 [2]).

Probing further on which areas of the engagement processes need to be improved, the community members have the following to say:

> Our municipalities do not take the poor communities serious. Municipalities should treat its citizens equally, not discriminate according to their affordability to pay rates, which leads to resentment from these communities towards the municipality. The result of the resentment is that people sometimes choose not to cooperate and not to attend the meetings called by the municipality (CM6 [2]).
>
> The municipality must improve working relationships amongst its opposition political parties as this is hampering the communication and consultation with the communities. Also, to improve communication between the municipality and the communities (CM5 [2]).

The above quote captures the general perception of the community members that were interviewed for this research in regard to the second research question asked.

**Ward Committees' perception of the operationalized version of MCE in relation to the current citizen engagement mechanisms**

Naturally, Ward Committee members would side with their chairpersons, that is, Ward Councillors, on their responses on any service delivery-related question. However, this researcher saw some of the members providing divergent responses to those of the councillors on many interview questions for this research, including the subject one. All the eight Ward Committee members interviewed maintained that the current practice of citizen engagement mechanisms fell short of the ideals espoused by the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in this research. According to most of the members, it seemed that Ward Councillors were no longer committed to their wards since their terms were coming to an end. The members believed that whereas some councillors has fallen out of favour with their principals; others were now looking for future placement positions within their respective political parties instead of concentrating on their current responsibilities. This was best articulated by one response thus:

> My Ward Councillor is no longer available even for public meetings, she only avails herself when she thought there would be opportunities for her own advancement, how can then she be concerned about whether public participation is effective or not …? (WCM7 [2]).

Apart from the lack of citizen engagement knowledge on the part of councillors, other reasons cited by the Ward Committee members in their responses include in-fighting within the ruling parties in the two respective municipalities where the focus groups were held, and scramble to depose others from higher positions before the end of the term, or when the new term of the Councils begins in 2016. Even though the focus of this research question was not to establish the reasons for lack of commitment by councillors, it was beneficial to obtain such an insight from the people closest to the ward councillors. Another important feature from the responses of the Ward Committee members related to their response on the possibility of improving the practice of citizen engagement to the level of the meaningful citizen engagement. To most of them, they felt that a lot of training was needed to empower the councillors, communities and the relevant officials on the ideals and principles of meaningful citizen engagement as understood in this study. This was clearly stated in the following quote:

> Your explanation and question are well and good, but it will be impossible for any of the councillors, especially new ones and the officials to understand this new model well without being trained first. Also, we as members of the Ward Committees and the community will also need to be educated on this… (WCM 2 [2]).

In essence, the above quote indicated that for the citizen engagement to be meaningful and for every stakeholder to come on board education was required, a point that may not resonate well with some of the officials and the councillors.

### 5.3.1 CONCLUSION

This section of the research has revealed that the current approaches to engage the citizens are not sufficient to promote meaningful citizen engagement. The findings in this section of the research also concurred with the literature and various studies that the mechanisms that are employed in the South African local government to engage citizens during the formulation and approval of the IDPs and budgets were limiting. From the responses of various participants, it became apparent that the opportunities provided by the current mechanisms were very limited in so far as providing the citizens with spaces to influence the final plans and budgets. It was revealed that the mechanisms were mainly concerned with meeting the requirements of the legislation, and were not meant to offer such influential spaces.

The conclusion to be drawn from the patterns that emerged in the responses and observations that were conducted is that there was no adequate nexus between the current mechanisms and the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government of South Africa.

## 5.4 THE POTENTIAL OF MCE TO PROMOTE BETTER PLANNING IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The assumption of this research is that effective participatory planning in the local governance would lead to better service delivery. As such, this section addresses the following research question: In what way will meaningful citizen engagement help in the alleviation of service delivery and developmental backlogs in the local government? The question was subsequently divided into three interview questions, namely: 1) What do you

understand by community-based planning (CBP)? Have you ever organized / facilitated / been involved in such an initiative? If yes, do you think citizens are engaged meaningfully during the CBP process? 2) (for officials and councillors) Do you think implementing meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the IDP, budgeting and CBP processes may help **to address and alleviate service delivery backlogs?** If yes or no, why do you think that is the case? 2) (for community members and ward committee members) Do you think meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP, Budget and CBP processes may **lead to better planning** in the local government? How so? 3) What do you think are the major challenges to meaningful citizen engagement?

A difference can be noticed on the conceptualization of question two (2) as posed to the officials and councillors and for the community members and ward committee members. The intention for the difference was to ensure that specific experiences and understanding of these groups was collected as best as possible. The questions were posed in an opposite direction in order to ensure that the responses are not predetermined. For example, if the community and ward committee members were to be asked the same question, using the words 'service delivery' and the officials were to be asked the same, using the words 'better planning'; the responses would appear as premeditated and the obvious answers would have been obtained. As a practice in this report, key responses from some interview participants are presented below.

### 5.4.1 Understanding of community-based planning (CBP) as a means to achieve MCE

The question that is addressed by this section is: What do you understand by community-based planning (CBP)? Have you ever organized or facilitated or been involved in such an initiative? If yes, do you think citizens are engaged meaningfully during the CBP process? In addressing any concerns that may arise due to the focus on the CBP concept in this study, which is unfortunately no longer a regular feature in the local government planning anymore, the brief motivation is provided hereunder.

The concept of CBP is one of the key initiatives that were introduced by the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 in a bid to enhance the effectiveness of the ward committee system in the budgeting process (DPLG, 2007:10). In effect, CBP is a government's initiative aimed at promoting the participation of citizens in the ward committees by devolving some

control over the planning of development and service delivery (DPLG, 2007:10). Amongst others, CBP is based on the following principles: inclusion of the poor in planning process; making plans and planning process realistic and practical; linking local planning to legitimate structures; planning to include implementation, monitoring, evaluation and annual review; plans to be people-centred and empowering; and ensuring that plans cover all sectors of the community (DPLG, 2007:10).

The above description of the CBP concept sums up the reason for its introduction in the study, and subsequently raising questions around same. Furthermore, the above clearly shows the close resemblance between the concept of CBP and the notion of meaningful citizen engagement as understood in this research. As such, it made perfect sense to employ something that comes closer to the concept of meaningful citizen engagement in order to gather rich and detailed data to address the research questions. Responses from the participants are sequentially presented in the following sections.

**Responses from the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors on their knowledge of the CBP process of planning.**

About half of the interviewed Senior Officials showed that they understood the principles of the community-based planning (CBP) much better than the others and, it can be concluded that all the councillors had a slight understanding of what the concept imply. The question was posed in multiple facets as it sought to establish the Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' understanding of the CBP concept, whether they have participated in a CBP or similar initiative before, and finally if they thought citizens were being engaged meaningfully during the CBP or similar process that they have attended or been involved in. The various insights of the officials will be discussed below.

Starting with the Senior Officials' responses as usual, the responses were separated and included in this section for more emphasis. It is important to note that the officials who demonstrated better understanding of the concept were those who had had an opportunity to take part in the process in the past. In terms of their understanding of the concept, only four officials would provide definitions, and even principles that are embodied by the concept, as indicated below.

> Community Based Planning has been developed in order to enhance public participation in the IDP, and at the same time meet wishes of people and government for a deepened democracy.
>
> There are 4 objectives for the CBP:
>
> - To improve quality of plans of government and especially the municipalities' IDP;
> - To improve quality of services of government and especially the municipality;
> - To increase community control over their lives; and
> - To stimulate community action and reduce dependency on government, especially the municipality (IDPO1 [4]).

The above response was more indicative that the official had a deeper understanding of the concept than others; it was actually the only attempt at describing the concept. As an example, the following response seems to be defining the concept, albeit implicitly:

> The IDP and Budget of the following year are informed by stakeholder engagements [CBP] which are part of the IDP/Budget process plan submitted to Council ten months before the start of the year.
>
> Community engagements are part of the larger engagements and the community is informed and even assisted with travel to relevant venues of meetings.
>
> Communities are engaged on relevant issues and respond to these issues. The following are examples of issues raised at these meetings:
>
> 1. Needs per ward;
> 2. Progress on projects per ward;
> 3. Budgets for the year; and
> 4. Tariffs for the year (IDPO2 [4]).

The following response went as far as presenting a plethora of principles of the concept, and only a few were quoted here:

> - We need to ensure that all groups in the community, including the disadvantaged, can participate in the planning process;
> - Planning must be of the ward, and supported by the Ward Councillor and ward committee;
> - Planning should not be once off, but should be part of a longer process, with implementation, monitoring and annual evaluations and reviews;
> - The plan must focus on the people in the ward, so the plan is based around the livelihoods of different groups;
> - The planning process must build the capacity within the community to understand their situation, plan how to improve it, and then implement this. In this process the community produces their own plans with support from ward and municipality;
> - We must build on strengths and opportunities in the area and not problems, which makes us more likely to succeed and not paralyzed by problems;
> - Plans must cover all aspects of people's lives;

- Planning should promote mutual accountability between the community and officials; and
- There must be commitment by Councillors and officials to both plan and implement the plan (IDPO2 [4]).

In total, this official provided the researcher with about sixteen principles for the CBP concept, and only the above were found relevant for this research. The researcher did not verify whether these were indeed the accepted principles of the concept, but was satisfied that the official in question understood the concept well. Furthermore, the Senior Officials who have practical experience with the CBP process also responded positively on the meaningful engagement of citizens within the process. From the responses, the researcher concluded that this concept is the only one closest to the ideals of meaningful citizen engagement currently available to the municipalities. This can be detected from the response of one IDP official below:

> Yes, there is a meaningful engagement during CBP process. The process assists to improve the quality of plans of government and especially the municipalities' IDP, it also assists to improve the quality of services of government and especially the municipality and it increases community control over their lives and it stimulate community action and reduce dependency on government, especially the municipality (IDPO1 [4]).
>
> The CBP process allows people to debate what I call 'soft issues' of the ward. These are pressing issues that require immediate attention – issues such as poverty alleviation and unemployment are included in the process. These issues cannot wait for the approval of the budget and the IDP to be addressed. During the CBP process, people are able to debate/deliberate on what issues are more pressing and reach agreements accordingly (PPO1 [4]).
>
> Yes, the CBP process provides opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement because it takes place in a period of a week or two. A workshop would be organized for that period with all sectors of the community of the ward, who will deliberate until they come up with five ward priorities. A business plan would be developed per ward, detailing such priorities and how they would be addressed (PPO2 [4]).

The Ward Councillors also voiced their insight on the understanding of the concept, and only few of them were much clearer on what the CBP concept entails. Nevertheless, most of them showed basic understandings of what most referred to as a 'ward-based planning'. As much as their responses were not as clearer as the officials' ones, the researcher managed to glean their understanding of the concept from same. For example, the following extracts from the councillors' responses were very clear:

> I believe that this is when ward-based planning takes place, in which residents of the ward come together and deliberate on what priorities should be addressed first by the municipality (WC1 [4]).
>
> Community-based planning is when the community is pulled into the planning process and given ownership of the implementation of the plans (WC6 [4]).
>
> I can say, it is the process that pulls the community into the planning activities of the municipalities by providing them with guidance and ownership of the projects. The community then are able to monitor the implementation of the plans and to hold the municipality accountable (WC3 [4]).
>
> CBP refers to the alternative or continuation of the IDP, after the departments have committed the budget, it should happen at the word-level where communities will decide how best the projects can be implemented (WC5 [4]).
>
> I believe it is when the communities are allowed to come up with their own initiatives or plans, it is more like taking a bottom-up approach to planning (WC7 [4]).
>
> Community-based planning means that policies shouldn't be done elsewhere without involving the community, councillors and officials should involve the people broadly at the ward-level before finalizing the plans for the wards (WC8 [4]).

Furthermore, all interviewed councillors were adamant that citizens could be engaged meaningfully during the CBP processes than when the IDP and Budgets are presented to them. The researcher learned from the ward councillors of the two local municipalities that the reason for not implementing the CBP in their municipalities was due to the delay in the workshops that are to be provided by the Provincial Government. The anticipated workshops would educate the councillors and ward committee members on how to conduct CBP in their wards. This is captured well by the following extract:

> Not happening in our municipality as we are still waiting for the workshops from the Province. We also do not have ward discretionary funds, we are still dependent on the District and the Province (WC9 [4]).

It is worth noting that all the ward councillors indicated that the CBP process was not happening in their municipalities. It was noted from those (from the two metropolitan municipalities) who were familiar with the process that it has been stopped in their respective municipalities in favour of other politically relevant projects. In one such municipality the process was replaced by the local versions of expanded public works programmes named after the late councillor. The decisions to replace the CBP process with more politically relevant programmes, and naming them after late local political leaders appeared to serve political motives rather than being driven by altruism. The politicians

seem to be oblivious of the implications of canning the only process that comes closer to opening deliberative spaces in the South African local government sphere. This effectively meant that the little chance of initiating public deliberation in the local government has been dashed by such decisions.

**Communities' understanding of the CBP process**

The researcher noted that the challenge of the majority of respondents from the Community Members' focus groups, and understood where the difficulty was stemming from. The concept of community-based planning has not been in use by the local government for a long time now, as such a number of Community Members were either lost when the question was posed or faintly remembered it. It was not until the researcher provided some clues that everybody was able to contribute effectively during the focus group discussions. The above sums a general response of the community members on the question of their understanding and participation in the community-based planning process, which was a big negative.

The reason for including a question about CBP in the interview questionnaires is because CBP sort of possess the principles embodied in the proposed meaningful citizen engagement process. As a result, the researcher expected that, if CBP was still practiced in the municipalities, the understanding thereof would make it easier to introduce MCE in future.

**Ward Committees' understanding of the CBP process**

It was disappointing also to note that the majority of the Ward Committee members were not aware of the CBP and what it entails. Only two members had an understanding of another version of the process, which they termed ward-based planning. One such response is quoted below:

> I think community-based planning refers to the programme when the municipality goes to the communities and ask every one of them to contribute on the proposed plans. The programme requires the involvement of every affected member of the community to be involved in solving the problems (WCM5 [3]).

The above excerpt was the only one that came closer to the understanding of CBP, in the context of this research. Even though the CBP process was understood differently by this participant, it nevertheless met the definition of the researcher. The researcher explained to the rest of the participants what the process of community-based planning entails, and all the members indicated that they have never been involved with such. The above challenge highlighted the significant consequence of curtailing the crucial role meant to be played by the CBP process. In other words, it is the end-product of not giving the process its pivotal place in the local engagement discourse. As such, it affected the manner in which citizens play their oversight roles over the elected representatives.

It should be noted also that, despite not being conversant with the CBP process, all the participating Ward Committee members expressed their enthusiasm in seeing the process being undertaken in their respective wards and municipalities.

### 5.4.2 MCE as a tool to address service delivery backlogs in the local government

This section address the two pronged interview question stated below; to the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors the question was posed as follows: Do you think implementing meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the IDP, Budgeting and CBP processes may help **to alleviate service delivery backlogs?** If yes or if no, why do you think that is the case? To the Community Members and Ward Committee members, the question was worded in the following manner: Do you think meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP, Budget and CBP processes may **lead to better planning** in the local government? How so?

**Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' perspectives on the possibility of MCE to alleviate the service delivery backlogs in the local government**

In response to this question, the officials were divided, with the others intimating that, in order to address the service delivery backlogs; one needs sufficient funding, which the municipalities don't have. Of the fifteen officials interviewed, ten believed that if only the communities could pay their rates and taxes, and more funding channeled to the

municipalities; service delivery would be speeded. Two particular budget officials articulated this response well as indicative in the following quotes:

> I understand the importance of meaningful citizen engagement, but I don't see how it would help with service delivery if not enough funds are available… (BO2 [5]).
>
> Service delivery is not dependent on citizen engagement but on funding, we know what the community needs and we don't need to listen to them repeating the same demands all the time (BO5 [5]).

Such were the sentiments of the Senior Officials dealing with budgets in their respective municipalities, clearly indicating their disapproval that the concept of meaningful citizen engagement as espoused in this study, would contribute in the alleviation of backlogs.

The other Senior Officials dealing with public participation and the formulation of IDPs were all unanimous that engaging citizens effectively (*reads meaningfully*) in the planning and budgeting processes would lead to the progress in delivering correct services to the communities. This was well presented by one Senior Official dealing with the public participation in one of the two metropolitan municipalities in the following manner:

> Effective engagement of the citizens in the early stages of the IDP and budgets and the revival of the CBP processes would definitely help in obtaining the support of the citizens for the proposed projects. This will also make it easier to help the community understand our budgetary constraints, and maybe see the importance of paying for services (PPO1 [5]).
>
> Yes, if the process begins with the CBP process at the ward level, meaningful citizen engagement would help address service delivery backlogs. This is because, unlike the IDP, which addresses the major development and infrastructure for the whole municipality, the CBP is narrowed in focus, only dealing with issues of the ward. In other words, the IDP is more generalized in its approach and cannot be wielded effectively. On the other hand, the CBP process is narrow, and focuses on specific issues that are identified by the citizens of the ward (PPO5 [5]).

Although all the officials were in agreement with the above, none of them articulated themselves as best on the question as the above quoted. The above quotes and discussion summed the perspectives of the officials on this question well.

With regard to the Ward Councillors, most of the respondents were positive that the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms would help to address the

service delivery backlogs. Some of the reasons proffered to substantiate their response are quoted below:

> Yes, it can unlock the impasse, and ensure that correct goods and services are provided as the communities would have been afforded the opportunity to indicate their priorities (WC4 [5]).
>
> Yes, I think programmes would be realised when the community is involved as they would monitor the progress in the implementation (WC1 [5]).
>
> I think yes, as this kind of engagement can also address a communication problem as I stated earlier. It can then be used as a communication tool in order to reduce community frustrations that are caused by the lack of feedback from the municipality and councillors (WC3 [5]).

One councillor emphasized the above-mentioned fact well in the following response:

> …it means that involving the people early in the planning process would make our work as Ward Councillors easy and will get us the full support of the communities from our wards (WC5 [5]).

However, other Ward Councillors were not fully convinced that implementing meaningful citizen engagement would help alleviate service delivery backlogs. These councillors voiced their suspicion of the process in the following manner:

> Due to the fact that only few citizens attend and participate in the meetings, it would be difficult for the outcomes to be wholly accepted by the community at large (WC2 [5])
>
> I agree that implementing meaningful citizen engagement may help in addressing backlogs, but I doubt that it can work at the moment because of all the political tensions and motives (WC10 [5]).

**Community members' observation on the possibility of improved planning as a result of implementing MCE in the formulation of local plans and budgets**

All the members of the community that were interviewed in the focus groups indicated their agreement that if the municipalities would communicate with them on their plans and obtain their views, the plans will address the real needs. One particular respondent went as far as explaining how the planning would be improved by the implementation of the meaningful citizen engagement, as indicated in the following extract:

> Yes, if people are involved, they [officials] will know what the people need and plan accordingly. This will also improve communication between the municipal officials and the communities, thus enhancing the delivery of correct services to the people (CM8 [6]).

The researcher noted the hesitation on some when asked how the above would come about, which later appeared to be linked to the lack of technical expertise. From the responses of the majority of Community Members interviewed, it transpired that the community accepts the technical roles of the officials in drafting the plans as they are the ones with expertise. However, the Community Members were quick to indicate that this does not include the right to decide on their behalf. The following quotes are self-explanatory:

> It is important that the officials do what they are paid for, that is drafting the plans as professionally as possible…but this does not mean that the officials must decide for us… (CM5 [6]).
>
> …In fact, the officials are there for us, they must listen to what we say, the councillors must ensure that what goes to the plans is what their wards want, not another way round [sic] (CM9 [6]).

The encouraging point from the above responses is that the communities are now getting an understanding that officials have skills that the communities do not have. On the other hand, this means that the communities are anticipating a highest level of performance and professional conduct from the relevant officials. This expectation includes the important one of being consulted before major decisions are taken by the officials. Supporting this statement is one response from the community members on the subject in a shortened quote below:

> …Batho Pele [principles] clearly states that the officials must talk to us before taking any decision, and that they must provide quality services to us…It would really help if one understand what happens when the planning start, and how the plans are executed (CM3 [6])

Even though the communities are not well equipped to undertake strategic planning, the researcher noted from their responses to the subject question that they would like to be involved at the initiation and the finalization of the plans by the municipalities concerned.

**Ward Committee members' reflection on the possibility of improved planning as a result of implementing MCE in the formulation of local plans and budgets**

The Ward Committees' members shared the sentiment of the Community Members in their responses that the local government's IDP and Budgets can be enhanced by the

involvement of the communities at the earlier stages and in the implementation thereof. Another emphasis from the Ward Committee members is that the local government should revive the community-based planning in order to reach all the affected citizens, and to educate them on the planning processes that are followed.

It was also remarkable to notice the majority of the Ward Committee members concurring with the Community Members in that the responsibilities of the officials and the councillors shall not be taken away by the involvement of the communities in the planning process. In essence, the Committee Members believe that the work of the officials will be made easier by the initiation of regular communication and involvement of the communities at certain stages of the plans not in all planning. The following three quotes summed the above sentiment adequately:

> Although it is a good thing, my fear is that the officials would abdicate their responsibilities now that the communities are involved in planning. It is important that communities be involved at some stages [of planning] and not on others (WCM1 [5]).
>
> As communities, we only need to know that the plans speak to our needs and how they would be implemented. We don't have to be involved in every stage of the process… (WCM8 [5]).
>
> Yes, Batho Pele specify that the community must be consulted in every decision of the local government, but I think that the municipality will not be able to finalise things if it has to consult on all stages of the planning work. What is important is that the plans address the needs that the communities raised and they get implemented accordingly (WCM7 [5]).

From the above responses, the total perspectives of the ward committee members have been deduced and will enable the researcher to successfully analyses the data.

### 5.4.3 CONCLUSION

This section introduced the long-forgotten concept of CBP into the research. The elements of the CBP concept closely resemble those of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. As such, the CBP concept was the best model to use in order to generate rich and detailed data for the research.

The data revealed a striking disparity in the understanding of the concept by the participants. Most of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors demonstrated better understanding when compared to the Ward Committee members and Community Members. This finding was understandable given the fact that CBP was no longer a

regular feature in the local governance. As such, some participants had never heard of the concept prior to their involvement in this research. Furthermore, the concept was well received by the participants, with all expressing willingness to have it re-introduced within the citizen engagement mechanisms.

### 5.4.4 Perceived and real major challenges to MCE

This section contains the interview responses to the following interview question: What do you think are the major challenges to meaningful citizen engagement?

**Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' perceptions of the hindrances to meaningful citizen engagement**

As can be expected, the responses of the Senior Officials to this question ranged from various aspects of human understanding, with few of them providing much similar answers as if they were in the same room during the interviews. Of the fifteen officials interviewed, about eleven provided the responses with similar connotations in their contents as listed below. The researcher gathered that these responses represented the officials' perceived challenges to the process of engaging the communities meaningfully:

- Lack of funding: most of these officials believe that implementing meaningful citizen engagement would stretch their current budgets and would require more funds in order to be successful;
- Level of illiteracy: officials believed that the level of illiteracy in the areas that required much government services is another factor that hinder meaningful engagement of the citizens in these areas. This was also cited as one of the reason the citizens do not understand the importance of attending the meetings and of their responsibilities to pay for services rendered; and
- Language barrier: this was mentioned by a lot of officials dealing with budgets, in that it is always impossible to explain the budget in languages other than English.

The rest of the officials believed that the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement would not be possible because the majority of citizens were not committed in participating in the local governance affairs. One particular official puts it this way:

> Communities are no longer interested in public affairs like in the past, which will make this meaningful citizen engagement to fail… (PPO5 [6]).

Another contentious issue shared by the Senior Officials, which they deem as a challenge to the meaningful citizen engagement is the lack of knowledge of the roles of the municipalities by the communities. This is aptly resented by the following quote from one budget officer:

> Community understanding (as an example they do not know the difference between the various spheres of government and their responsibilities), expectations that all projects raised in the engagement meetings would be implemented in the budget year…the community loses faith in the process as they don't see all their requested projects being undertaken (BO2 [6]).
>
> People are not well-knowledgeable of how the local government works, and of the different roles between the three spheres of government. Public awareness is needed to educate the citizens about how the three spheres works and differ from each other (PPO7 [6]).

Most of the officials believed that when the communities do not get the services that they demand, which are not offered at the local level, they chose to boycott the local government. In other words, the community would then perceive the municipalities as failing to heed their applications, and decide not to support them anymore. Another important note that was made by one official dealing with public participation was the question of trust between the communities and the councillors. The following response highlighted the fraught relationship of the councillors and their constituencies, particularly when they are perceived as failures:

> The always tense relationship between the ward councillors and the residents of the wards is a major challenge to the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement. This is caused by the proportional representation electoral system that is used in South Africa. According to this system, the citizens don't independently get to choose their councillors as they thought. The councillors are accountable to their political parties more than the electorate. As such, councillors do not have power to influence the decisions of the municipality as they have to talk with one voice (PPO3 [6]).

Finally, the issue of frequency of engagement was also mentioned as a stumbling block in achieving effective and meaningful citizen engagement. Accordingly, the period of time-lapse before the other IDP meeting means that different participants and different issues

will have to be dealt with when another meeting is held, affecting the continuity in engagement.

> Public consultations on IDP comes only three months apart – so it created a gap and affects the process of engagement because of new audience with new issues (PPO5 [6].

On the other hand, Ward Councillors were unanimous on their identification of challenges to the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. The most issues they raised relate to the lack of effective communication channels amongst the three most important stakeholders in the process, namely, the officials, councillors and communities. The researcher noted that this challenge affected local municipalities more than the metropolitan municipalities. The following responses from the councillors of the local municipalities are evident of this:

> There is no effective communication between the municipalities and the communities with regard to the formulation of the IDP and budget. This has resulted in the lack of confidence or trust by the community (WC3 [6]).
>
> Communication between wards and the municipality is not happening as it should. When the municipalities communicate, it [communication] is done in a general manner instead of addressing specific wards directly (WC4 [6]).
>
> Communication is not effective enough, posters do not make impact at all as they bear the images of the local mayor instead of the local councillor (WC10 [6]).

Councillors also concur with the officials that the commitment of the citizens in attending public meetings is also a cause for concern. Finally, the councillors emphasized the issue of public education to educate the communities on the importance of participation in the issues of local government, as well the training of officials.

> There is a need to conduct educational outreach with the ward residents as lack of understanding of legislation and by-laws also pose a problem to meaningfully engaging them (WC5 [6]).

This sentiment was echoed by another ward councillor in that lack of education puts them under pressure during the engagement as they spent more time making the citizens understand processes.

> People cannot separate where we are in terms of the process, whether we are still planning or implementing. Those who understand take the advantage of those

> who do not, and push for their selfish projects. We always waste a lot of time trying to make people understand the processes… (WC1 [6]).

Another challenge that kept on cropping up in the responses is the politicization of the engagement process. Many Ward Councillors alleged that sometime people would come with a motive of destabilizing the meetings and 'marketing' themselves politically. One such response was well-crafted in the following manner:

> With everyone vying for political office, and new parties mushrooming in the run-up to the elections, some individuals come to the meetings with a sole purpose of gaining political support. Infighting within the party does not help also, as some comrades are now positioning themselves for positions in the coming local government elections. Such people will always cause chaos and disturbance when important issues are discussed (WC6 [6]).

The long-standing issue regarding the venues of the meetings also came up as a challenge to the meaningful engagement of the community in one response. The particular councillor lamented that, in a bid to achieve maximum participation, the opposite often occurs. This happens when attempts are made to engage large, diverse groups of people in a single IDP and Budget meeting. This is clearly articulated in the response below:

> The main challenge is neglecting the ward in favour of the CCC-wide venue. In a bid to involve everyone in one meeting and to finalise the public participation process quickly, a central venue at a CCC level is often used where more than five wards are combined in a meeting. In most cases, the citizens in these meetings are from different areas with different needs. This makes the meetings challenging to manage as issues raised are always very diverse. It is important to target citizens per ward, as they always face similar issues and speak the same language, rather than mixing people from different wards (WC2 [6]).

**Major challenges to meaningful citizen engagement in the eyes of the Community Members.**

In their response to this question, all Community Members who were interviewed in the focus groups were vociferous. The Community Members were in agreement that the major challenge in the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms or lack thereof was deliberately caused by the officials. Accordingly, the responses mainly pointed to the Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' unwillingness to engage with communities effectively from the setting of the meetings' logistics, processes and outcomes.

It was sad to notice that most respondents in these focus groups were convinced that the officials were in cahoots with the councillors in trying and keeping the citizens' participation to the minimum in order to further their own ulterior agenda. Following are two responses from each focus group discussion alleging that the lack of meaningful engagement was caused by the officials acting on the instruction of the councillors:

> It has become clear that the minimal attendance of meetings and participation in the meetings were benefiting the councillors and officials as they are now able to pass policies without any disturbance from communities… (CM6 [4]).

Probed to explain further what they mean by the benefits of minimal attendance to councillors and officials, the participants made various allegations, some due to their seriousness, could not be captured here. Suffice to add in this section is that the Community Members are of the opinion that there was a corrupt relationship amongst the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors. Furthermore, an opinion is held by the Community Members, as indicated in the below extract, that lack of maximum attendance was benefitting the non-performing Ward Councillors. The citizens believed that the fewer the number of the attendees, the disempowered they are in holding the Ward Councillors to account.

> It appears that keeping the people in the dark by the officials when organizing meetings is used to protect councillors who are not performing and who don't have answers for the community (CM4 [4]).

Apart from the sentiment identified from the above-quoted response, it was remarkable to note that other Community Members held divergent views in regard to the question of hindrances to meaningful citizen engagement. As such, other respondents hinted on the lack of information dissemination prior to the public meetings on the IDPs and budgets. Three out of the ten community members interviewed in the focus groups believed that even though some citizens do attend the meetings as invited, they are always not empowered to participate meaningfully to the discussions. In the following extract, the respondents basically referred to the public education about issues to be discussed before the meetings are even organized:

> We have always told the officials that sometimes it seems useless to attend a meeting in which you are not going to contribute anything because you do not understand the issues (CM2 [3]).

> I think some people do not feel like attending the meetings because they think they are not going to be to contribute meaningfully. This is because the people don't know or understand the issues and language used during the discussions. I think is a challenge for the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement… (CM1 [3]).
>
> Lack of information sharing before the meetings, on what is to be discussed and how it will impact on us is what make the community's contributions poor. As a result, they can't engage meaningfully on issues at hand (CM7 [3]).

Further to the above and to my surprise, one of the Community Members just nailed it with her response, by stating emphatically that her challenge was a lack of meaningful engagement during meetings. This was clearly articulated in her short and direct response as follows:

> To me it is more challenging to attend meetings where there is no meaningful engagement taking place, only consultation on what has already been decided upon (CM6 [4]).

Other challenges raised by the Community Members were concerned with the logistics such as the time, venue and dates of the meetings. The Community Members felt that there is always no right time to engage everyone as people are occupied in all available times. This, according to the Community Members was a hindrance to achieving meaningful citizen engagement.

**Ward Committee members' perspective on the key challenges to meaningful citizen engagement**

The researcher noted that the responses of the Ward Committee members in this question were influenced by both their inherent experiences and their perspectives. Inevitably, the above reason means that the responses were as different as the experiences and perspectives of each respondent.

In one of the local municipalities sampled for this research, the Ward Committee members believed the following points sum up the challenges faced in implementing meaningful citizen engagement:

- Political attitude towards their communities: from the discussions, it appeared that the Ward Committee members in one such municipality believed that the

ruling political party was not really interested in the upliftment of its poor communities in their ward. As such, this was viewed as a negative attitude by the political structure towards the relevant communities as they are not involved when major decisions are taken; and they are not receiving the services they asked for;

- Engagement used as a political weapon: some respondents felt that effective or meaningful engagement is being used as strategies to garner more political support by some political groupings within these municipalities. In elaborated discussions, the responded all agree that the challenge to implementing meaningful citizen engagement in the two small municipalities was mainly due to the political infighting and fiction, which saw the use of public meetings to get support by factions; and
- Discrimination between rate payers and non-payers: Ward Committee members indicated that citizen engagement was taken serious when conducted in the affluent sections of their municipalities, and less seriously on the poor side. In addition, some of the respondents believed that it was conducted more often in the affluent areas than in the poor areas. They believed that it was because the former groups were paying their rates and the latter were unable or unwilling to pay as there were no services to pay for.

However, further to the above sentiments, the respondents from the metropolitan municipality held other divergent views. According to the respondents, the following points are the key challenges to the meaningful citizen engagement:

- The communities believed that most of the wards were too large to reach every citizen on time and to engage same meaningfully;
- Adding to the above point, the respondents pointed to the fact that their municipalities contained big cities and towns, and were bigger; meaning that the pace in which life was moving was very fast. As a consequence, most citizens were involved with other things and were not always available to spend long hours in meetings; and
- Lack of political activism was also cited by the respondents in the metropolitan focus group: that meant being the big city polarized the political engagement

and activism as people held different views. This implies that the sense of citizenship and communalism was diminishing in the bigger metropolitan municipalities. As a result, people were seen as not prepared to engage with each other and with their municipalities, and were attempting to address their needs in alternative ways. That, according to the respondents, was a challenge on the effective implementation of meaningful citizen engagement.

The above discussion covered the perspectives of the ward committee members that were interviewed in the two focus groups on the question of key challenges to the meaningful citizen engagement.

### 5.4.5 CONCLUSION

The research, through this section, showed that there are some perceived and real challenges to the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government of South Africa. The participants expressed different perspectives of challenges, which, in most parts, differ from each other's. It appeared that what the Senior Officials perceive as a challenge, the citizens thought otherwise.

Accordingly, Senior Officials listed in their real and perceived challenges issues that relate to the logistical and monetary feasibility of conducting successful meaningful citizen engagement. Issues raised by this group, amongst others, included lack of funding to conduct quality engagements, low levels of citizen literacy, lack of understanding by citizens of the different government competencies, and lack of citizen commitment to participate in the local governance. In respect of the Ward Councillors, the section revealed similar but a bit divergent views than the officials'. The common feature from the Ward Councillors' responses was around their political careers in that they repeatedly blamed political instability, mistrusts and ulterior motives from the politically ambitious members.

The citizens and the ward committee members, concurred, amongst others, that the main challenge was a lack of knowledge and commitment on the part of the officials and the need to comply with legislation. Furthermore, cynicism of the community members towards the officials and councillors played itself in the responses, such as the allegations about the collaboration of the two groups to keep the citizens in the dark, thus avoiding opposition and criticisms.

## 5.5 LEGISLATIVE IMPERATIVES TO MAXIMIZE THE ROLES OF CITIZENS IN THE PROCESSES OF FORMULATING, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE IDPS AND BUDGETS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

This section addresses the last question of the research, namely: What are the roles of local citizens in the process of IDP and Budget formulation, implementation and monitoring in terms of the legislation? This question has been divided into various interview questions for each category of participants. For Senior Officials, Ward Councillors and Ward Committee members the interview questions were as follows: 1) Are you aware of any legislation, policies or directives other than the Council's policy that promote citizen engagement in the formulation of IDPs and budgeting in the local government? 2) Do you think the community members in your area of jurisdiction are aware of such legislation and the Council policy that promote citizen engagement? 3) In your opinion, do you think such legislation or policies are observed during the IDP and budgeting consultations? 4) In your understanding, what are the roles of the citizens in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the IDP and budgeting? And 5) Do you consider it possible to engage citizens meaningfully, considering prescribed timeframes and other legislative constraints?

The interview questions for the Community Members were as follows: 1) As members of the community, do you think you have a role to play during the formulation of the IDP and Budget for your municipality? If yes, what are your roles, and why do you think you should be involved? 2) Is there any legislation that compel the municipalities to engage you before and during the finalization of the local plans and budgets and monitoring thereof? 3) In your experience / opinion do you think communities are engaged meaningfully during the IDP and Budget processes? If yes, or no, why so?

The responses of all those who participated in the interviews are presented in the following sections.

### 5.5.1 Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' perspectives on the citizens' roles in the IDP and budgeting processes

**Awareness of legislation, policies and directives that promote citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation by the officials and councillors and their perspective on community awareness of the same.**

It was noted that all the Senior Officials that formed part of the sample were aware of the relevant legislation that requires public participation in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the IDP and budgets in the local government of South Africa. In most of the responses, the officials even went as far as to list some of the legislation that prescribes the importance of public participation in the public affairs; two such responses are quoted below:

> The Constitution lists public participation as one of the objectives of local government. Both the Municipal Systems Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act require public participation relating to the IDP and the budget (BO3 [7]).
>
> Yes, Constitution, Municipal Structures Act, Municipal Systems Act, MFMA (BO2 [7]).
>
> Yes, for example section 152 of the Constitution lists the objects of the local government and public participation… (PPO4 [7]).
>
> The Constitution is the major legislation that paved the way for the participation of citizens in the local government. However, it is important to note that all policies and legislation that govern the local government have a component that requires public participation before the implementation of them (PPO1 [7]).

It is clear from the above extracts and other responses that the Senior Officials are well-versed on the legislation that promotes the engagement of the citizens in the affairs of local government, particularly in regard to the formulation of the IDPs and local Budgets.

In the case of the Ward Councillors who were interviewed, the main legislation quoted in their responses is the Constitution and the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003. Even though some councillors had trouble quoting relevant provisions per se, the researcher found that all were generally aware that public participation was a legislative imperative to comply with at the local government level. The following quote captured the above sentiment clearly:

> Legislation such as Public Participation Handbook, Batho Pele, MFMA and the Constitution requires that local citizens are consulted during the formulation of the IDP… irrespective of the law requirement, it is important to talk to the people

> before the final decisions are made as the services are to be consumed and paid for by them (WC1 [7]).

In addressing the subjective question of whether the community was aware of the legislation, the responses of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors were mixed. It is accepted that the question was subjective, meaning that the respondents were purely influenced by their own opinions in their answers. The following extracts are a testimony to the various opinions held by the respondents to this question. As such, a brief discussion of the findings on this question is presented within this section, in the following paragraphs:

> It is difficult to say how many know the legislation and how many don't. It comes down to public education as in the meetings one always observe the discrepancy in the understanding of the community (PPO5 [9]).
>
> It depends, those who interacts with ward committees and their councillors may have some understanding of the legislation. But they may not know the exact provisions in the legislation that compel the municipalities to engage them (PPO3 [9]).

On the other hand, Ward Councillors' responses to the question of community awareness of legislation yielded a big no, with a select few indicating that members of the community may be aware. The following responses shed a light on the councillors' perspectives:

> No, it is not enough, others seemed to have a general understanding; but judging from the lack of commitment to attend meetings, the majority are not aware that the municipalities are required by the legislation to engage them in everything they do (WC3 [9).
>
> No, they don't understand due mostly to their background, the majority of our people are from the rural background and are illiterate. The people in my ward don't even know basic policies such as the indigent policy, which is there to help them (WC4 [9]).
>
> To show that legislation is observed for compliance [purposes] only, the invitees often don't know why they have to attend the meetings in the first place (WC5 [9]).

The above concludes the perspectives of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors on the question of legislative awareness, and has presented the researcher with important insights.

**Compliance with the citizen engagement legislation during the processes of IDPs and Budgets**

The researcher noted that all the officials and councillors were in agreement that they were doing everything required by the legislation during the public participation processes for the approval of the IDP and budgets. Furthermore, it was noted that most of the respondents were concerned with the procedural part of the processes, and not with the substantive one.

The Senior Officials in particular, were mostly referring to the logistical processes that they usually undertake in order to ensure that all the relevant citizens in the wards are aware of the meetings, and that they are able to attend at the prescribed times. This included the provision of transportation to the meeting venues and the manner in which invitations to the meetings were disseminated. One such response from the public participation official of a local municipality provided the following answer to the question:

> Yes, legislation is always quoted in the invitations and mayoral introduction (PPO5 [8]).

Clearly, the above response did not address the question because merely quoting the legislation does not equate to observance of same. Furthermore, the question was concerned about what actually happens when the officials and citizens come together during the meetings, in terms of legislation. Most of the legislation dealing with public participation, as discussed in the literature review, emphasize that opportunities be afforded to the citizens in order for them to be able to influence the final outcomes of the meetings. It was unfortunate that only one Senior Official admitted that the legislation was observed only for the purpose of compliance. According to this official, this was due to certain constraints on the part of the officials, which required that the processes be completed at specific times for the approval of the budget:

> Yes, Council approves logistics, i.e. dates, advertisements, venues and transport in terms of the legislation. The problem in my municipality is that we always go for quantity other than quality, that is, we try and fill the halls by bringing people from different wards into the same meeting in order to meet the tight deadlines. As a consequence of this, no proper engagement on pressing issues ensues as people from various areas will always have conflicting needs (PPO1 [8]).
>
> In order to meet deadlines and to comply with the legislation, we end up ticking the boxes instead of engaging meaningfully with the citizens (PPO2 [8]).

On the other hand, most Ward Councillors interviewed felt that legislation was only observed for compliance purposes only, not to give the citizens a chance to deliberate on local issues. Following are few extracts from the responses of the councillors on the subject question:

> Yes, legislation is complied with as the framework within which the IDP and budget should be formulated and approved, but it is not enough (WC3 [8]).
>
> Not in the formulation of the IDPs, maybe in the budgeting process. In the IDP formulation communities are only involved as a formality, sometimes priorities are changed without consulting the relevant wards (WC4 [8]).
>
> Yes, this is done for compliance only, but the invitees don't always know the legislation on which the formulation of IDPs and Budgets is based (WC2 [8]).
>
> No, there is no progress – officials do not discuss or explain legislation, they only generalize. As such, people cannot know whether the law is observed (WC1 [8]).

The above summed the general response of the Ward Councillors to the subject question, and indicated a lot of dissatisfaction with how things are done. As can be noted from the above extracts, the responses also covered the subsequent interview question on whether the community was aware of the relevant legislation.

Eight out of ten Ward Councillors that were interviewed individually were adamant that the communities were aware of the legislation as they often quote them during the meetings. However, of the remaining two councillors, one claimed that the community was too ignorant of the political and legal issues in the municipalities, and as such, were not interested in knowing the legislation. Whereas, the other councillor indicated that not all members of the community were aware of the legislation, meaning that some knew it and others did not.

**Understanding of the roles of citizens in the IDP and Budget formulation processes**

Notably, all the interviewed Senior Officials and Ward Councillors were in agreement in their responses that the community members have certain rights in regard to the need for engagement by the local government. The officials particularly elaborated on the need and the importance of involving the community in all the stages of the formulation process as required by the law. This was well captured by the following two responses thus:

> The community members should be involved in all stages of the IDP/Budget cycle. During planning they must clearly identify their needs and during implementation they will be able to protects whatever is being built to upgrade and improve their lives (IDPO1 [10]).
>
> The community has a right to know. They have a right to express their needs. They have a right to be heard. They have a right to be informed about the implementation of projects that will affect them albeit positively or negatively (IDPO2 [10]).

The following response from one budget officer clearly points out what is expected out of the citizen engagement processes from the community, and as short as is; it plainly captured the gist of this research. The other response from the public participation official addresses the monitoring and evaluation roles of the citizens:

> The roles of the citizens are to ensure that **relevant** projects and programmes are **approved** by Council (via the IDP and Budget) and that these projects are completed (*emphasis added*) (BO3 [10]).
>
> The main role of the citizens is to exercise oversight over the executive and the administration. In other words, the citizens must be able to monitor and evaluate the performance of the municipality in relation to the SDBIP and IDP (PPO2 [10]).

In essence, the above responses were concerned with the substance of the discussions and deliberations that take place during the engagements, and also covered the question of what the approved plans contain and how they will be implemented. Furthermore, some respondents went as far as emphasizing the fact that the above-mentioned rights of the citizens shall be coupled with the responsibilities on their part. One particular response reads as follows:

> Roles and responsibilities go together. Key role of citizens is to identify priority development – this will inform both the IDP and the Budget. Responsibility of paying for services goes with this (BO3 [10]).

However, some Senior Officials believed that the citizens are not clearly aware of their roles in the formulation and implementation of the IDP and Budget in terms of the legislation, as they were not really given the relevant information. This, according to this official, effectively means that the relevant citizens are not aware of the legislation:

> No, in the absence of the CBP process, people don't really know their roles in the formulation of the IDP and Budget processes. The problem is the introduction of the Ward Committees that tend to represent the communities in meetings. As a result, people relax and expect the committees to assume their roles (PPO1 [10]).

It was noted further that all the Ward Councillors' responses concurred with the officials' in that citizens had a duty to ensure that their issues were adequately addressed by the final IDPs and Budgets. This was nicely captured by the following response:

> The main role of the citizens is to participate in the meetings and have a say in how we plan our IDP, they must contribute to the discussion and take ownership of the final plans (WC2 [10]).
>
> I think citizens' main role is to ensure that the projected budget contains their priorities, especially the capital budget, revenue collection and indigent policy (WC3 [10]).

Ward Councillors also emphasized the contentious role of the citizens that was raised by various officials, which is the issue of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of plans. In essence, the councillors emphasized the oversight role of the citizens, and lamented the current lack thereof. The following extracts from the responses express the above sentiment well:

> It is important for the citizens to exercise their oversight roles over the implementation of projects. People must understand that the projects are not for the officials but for them. In order to do this, the citizens must understand the monitoring process (WC5 [10]).
>
> Citizens have a role to monitor our overall performance and to call us to account. They themselves should be accountable, not just to burn things (WC4 [10]).

Clearly, the general response from the councillors was that, citizens were needed to ensure that plans were appropriately addressing the communities' felt needs.

**Consideration of potential meaningful citizen engagement within the legislative constraints**

The majority of Senior Officials and Ward Councillors interviewed for this study were positive that the citizens can be engaged meaningfully despite the legislative constraints and the prescribed timeframes. Only one out of fifteen officials was pessimistic on the possible meaningful engagement within the current legislative prescriptions. The particular official was concerned that doing something to the contrary of what the legislation prescribes would be tantamount to breaking the law.

The rest of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors were optimistic that engaging people effectively and meaningfully was possible if the process can be allowed to deviate

from the legislative prescripts. Following are three of the officials' responses that are self-evident of the proposed new way of conducting citizen engagement:

> Yes, consultation on projects should not be done only during the IDP or Budget compilation. Engagement in the form of Ward Public Meetings should be held throughout the financial year as well. The media should be used to reach the rest of the community (BO3 [4]).
>
> If community engagement is undertaken with circumspect and properly implemented throughout the year, and if all structures of [local] government including ward councillors and ward committees, function properly, and for the correct reasons, throughout the year, public participation could be done effectively as part of the IDP processes… (IDPO2 [11]).
>
> Yes, we need to start engaging community early if we want to receive meaningful contribution without being rushed to comply, even if we consult outside the required timeframes (IDPO1 [11]).
>
> Yes, it is possible if the monthly public meetings can be used effectively. Currently, councillors are abusing these spaces for their political motives instead of capitalizing on them for meaningful citizen engagement on the IDP related issues. There shall be no timeframes for citizen engagement (PPO2 [11).

As stated above, the Ward Councillors also echoed the officials' points of view in that the only way to achieve meaningful engagement with citizens is through deviation from the norm. As evidenced in the following extracts, the Ward Councillors were convinced that meaningful citizen engagement is possible:

> It is possible if we can change the manner of engaging with people, we must reach or accommodate all people within the ward. It is important to make everyone feel important by calling special meetings to accommodate different categories of citizens, if needs be (WC8 [11]).
>
> The achievement of meaningful citizen engagement is possible if we can engage outside the legislative timeframes and exhaust all avenues, not only the normal ones. This entails investigating and using other avenues such as social media and workplace to engage with citizens (WC1 [11]).
>
> Yes, we must move along with people and times, using all the media available to us today. This means that we can engage the people throughout the year, not only on prescribed times (WC4 [11]).

The above summed the responses of the Senior Officials and the councillors on the subject question.

### 5.5.2 Community perceptions and awareness (understanding) of their legal roles in terms of the applicable legislation in regard to the formulation of IDPs and Budgets

**Awareness of the applicable legislation that require citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget processes and communities' roles during these processes**

For the purpose of clarity, this section addresses the first two interview questions posed to the Community Members during the focus groups interviews. As the sub-heading indicates, the discussion that follows will cover both the community's awareness of their legal roles as well as their knowledge of the relevant legislation that compel the local government to engage them prior to making major decisions.

Most of the Community Members interviewed understood that they have certain duties to participate in the formulation of the IDPs and budgets. However, they were not so sure what the duties were that they were expected to perform. At the most, the Community Members were aware that they need to contribute somehow to the above-mentioned processes, and to have an influence in the final outcomes thereof. Even though the majority could not quote relevant legislation that authorize them to be involved in the local government affairs, the researcher noted that the arguments were in sync with the elements of public deliberation as encompassed within the principles of meaningful citizen engagement. This can be clearly evidenced by the following responses:

> As citizens we are supposed to be given a chance to participate and contribute whenever the municipalities are taking decisions about service delivery. We must attend meetings and guide them on what is required in our communities so that they can provide the correct services… (CM5 [4]).
>
> Although I don't know exactly what are the roles word by word in terms of legislation, but I understand that as citizens we must be involved and participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the community projects that are approved in IDP and Budget (CM2 [4]).

Even though the above quotes may seem too ambiguous or general, they served to reveal the expectations of the communities during the IDP and budget processes. As such it showed that the communities were aware of their legal roles towards the finalisation, implementation and monitoring of the local plans.

**Community perception and experience of meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation processes**

Having understood the ideals of meaningful citizen engagement at the beginning of the interviews, all the Community Members interviewed were adamant that the current processes were not offering meaningful engagement of citizens. Accordingly, the communities felt that they have never experienced meaningful engagement as discussed with them.

In their response, most of the communities indicated that public participation was only done as a legislative requirement in which they are only consulted once the plans have been pre-drawn by the municipalities:

> In my opinion, the current public participation is not accommodating the community's views as the plans are presented to us without our contribution. It seems that the municipalities are only concerned about their compliance with law rather than doing the right thing (CM2 [4]).

The researcher noted the emotional sentiments in most of the Community Members' responses, which was a mixture of anger and frustration in not being able to influence the final service delivery decisions of the municipalities. The feeling from the below-quoted responses is that the municipalities were taking them for granted and were respecting their rights as citizens as they are not being given meaningful opportunities to deliberate on the proposed projects:

> No, I think communities are not consulted effectively and their opinions do not count to our municipality as … This was because the plans are finalised somewhere and brought to the communities to rubber-stamp them for approval (CM2 [4]).
>
> I fully agree with [name withheld] that our municipality was not really concerned about hearing what we have to say as we never get what we asked for in the meetings. It is clear from the community now that the municipality is taking us for granted and does not take our opinions serious… (CM3 [4]).
>
> That is why you see all these protests, the communities know that their municipalities will not listen to them and they draw their attention by protesting and destroying property…the communities are tired of being ignored and only called to approve plans that they did not draw-up (CM5 [4]).

The above comments cover the perspectives of the communities in regard to their experiences on the current citizen engagement processes of the municipalities.

### 5.5.3 Ward Committees' perspectives on the roles of citizens in the IDP and budgeting processes

**Awareness of legislation, policies and directives that promote citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation by the Ward Committee members and their perspectives on community awareness of the same.**

The responses from the Ward Committee focus groups revealed that the majority of the members were not aware of the relevant policies and legislation that guide citizen engagement in the local government. The few that claimed to know some, and even quoted them, were also found lacking in understanding of same. Out of the eight (8) Ward Committee members that participated in the focus groups interviews and discussions, only three (3) were able to name few of the legislation, with the Constitution being the favorite one. However, what the relevant sections and clauses are and their implications to the citizen engagement activities was not known. The following quote is the evidence that the particular respondents were aware of the legislation that promotes citizen engagement:

> The Constitution and the Systems Act are the main legislation that require public participation in South Africa… (WCM4 [4]).
>
> South Africa has a number of laws, that require the municipalities to involve the public in the formulation of the IDPs and Budgets…one can think of Municipal Structures Act and the White Paper [on Local Government] as the main focus… (WCM2 [4]).

As the research was not a fault finding exercise, the researcher was satisfied that, apart from the noticeable lack of clear knowledge of the legislation, some of the Ward Committee members showed some understanding of the importance of citizen engagement in the local governance affairs. Responses like the following one were sufficient for the researcher to determine that the Ward Committee members had some level of understanding of the legal requirements:

> The law requires that communities be consulted and involved in all processes of the IDP and Budget before they are finalised (WCM3 [4]).

On the question of whether the community itself was aware of the legislation, again the responses were different. A substantial number of the respondents claimed that the community was aware that the law requires of them to participate in the local government affairs, but they (citizens) chose not to.

However, a few Ward Committee members admitted that, since most of them were not aware of the legislation, it cannot be expected of the communities to be better than them as they are not actively involved with the community issues on a daily basis.

**Compliance with the citizen engagement legislation during the formulation process of IDPs and Budgets**

Contrary to the responses given by the Community Members on the above question, all the Ward Committee members believed that the municipalities were complying with the legislation when public consultations for IDPs and Budgets were conducted. The researcher noted that the positive response emanated from the consideration of all the organizing and logistics that are always undertaken to ensure successes of the meetings. As the legislation requires that communities be invited to the meetings and be assisted in understanding of the proceedings in the language that they understand, which the officials and councillors were doing well, the answers were all affirmative.

However, when the researcher probed further on the substance of the meetings, whether the attendants were afforded sufficient opportunities that may lead to influencing the final outcomes, the responses change. This question was included in the focus groups discussions because it is the requirement of the legislation that the affected citizens should be afforded sufficient opportunity to contribute to the final IDP and Budget of the local government. In their various responses to this discussion, the following extracts were relevant, and were chosen to indicate the general findings:

> In that case, I would say the legislation is not fulfilled as the plans and budget are always pre-determined by officials and presented to the communities as drafts for approval. In my experience, the community's questions and contributions in such presentation meetings are never incorporated in the final drafts (WCM2 [4]).
>
> Even though in some cases we invite communities during the pre-planning and determination of priorities and needs per ward, only a handful of people would attend these meetings. Unfortunately, we had to continue with the few that turn up, meaning that the legislation is not fulfilled in that only a few residents participate in the pre-planning stage (WCM3 [4]).
>
> In the past we used to have workshops with the communities where the communities were involved in determining the main priorities of their wards, but currently we no longer have that kind of engagement because of the introduction of [name withheld to hide identity of the municipality] Programme. Only a few meetings are organized once the departments have drawn their budgets, which means that the Council does not comply with the requirement of involving the citizens in the early stages of the IDP and budgets (WCM1 [4]).

Clearly, the above-quoted responses, amongst others, indicated that the legislative requirements were not really being addressed fully by the municipalities, thus limiting the citizens from contributing meaningfully to the two most important documents in the local government.

**Understanding of the roles of citizens in the IDP and Budget formulation processes**

The researcher observed that all members of the Ward Committees that were interviewed were in agreement that the citizens have a role to play in the formulation of the IDPs and Budgets of their respective municipalities. The following responses clearly indicated that the Ward Committee members understood what roles citizens shall play in the two processes:

> The citizens are required to raise their needs with the municipalities; they must tell the municipalities what developments they need in their communities. If the communities are not coming forward, the municipalities will not know what services to provide as a priority (WCM2 [4]).
>
> The citizens have an important role to play in assessing the performance of their representatives, the councillors that they elected, and the municipalities that they are paying to provide services (WCM1 [4]).
>
> Communities are expected to participate and contribute in the meetings in order for their needs to be known… (WCM5 [4]).

The above quotes are sufficient evidence that the Ward Committee members are aware that they need the citizens in order to succeed in their work.

**Consideration of potential meaningful citizen engagement within the legislative constraints**

Once more, the Ward Committee members were all positive that the processes can be enhanced to make them meaningful if the following points can be addressed or added therein:

- That the processes are started earlier in order to enable all the citizens to participate, instead of rushing the processes in order to meet timeframes;
- The meetings should be accommodative of the citizens of all walks of life in terms of time, date and venues;

- The processes should be relaxed, meaning that people should be free to contribute and that their contributions must be welcomed and incorporated into the final plans; and
- The communities must be educated of the importance of their participation and on their legal responsibilities to do so.

The researcher gleaned the above points from the flurry of contributions to the focus group discussions on the subject question, and summarized same for this section. The above and many other contributions indicate that the Ward Committees are receptive to the idea of meaningful citizen engagement and would support its introduction into the IDP and budgeting processes.

### 5.5.4 CONCLUSION

This section of the thesis has provided a picture into the understanding of the legislation by all stakeholders in the local government. In particular, the section focused more on the part of citizens in as far as the legislative imperatives were concerned. On this point, the discussion indicated the discrepancy in the level of understanding amongst all the participants, with the Community Members being the worse off in the process.

The discussion of the research findings also displayed sharp divergences in the response to the question of compliance with legislation, with the Senior Officials agreeing completely, whereas the Ward Councillors were divided on their response. The Ward Committee members partly agreed that the legislation was observed, but noted the areas that still need to be improved. The Community Members on the other hand, were in complete disagreement with the view that legislation was being observed fully during the citizen engagement on the IDPs and Budgets. Finally, all but one participant expressed optimisms that meaningful citizen engagement was possible under the current circumstances.

## 5.6 FINDINGS FROM THE NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS IN RELATION TO THE CONDITIONS FOR MEANINGFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

### 5.6.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the data verification process, four non-participant observations were conducted during the research. Observation of the deliberative processes during the public meetings in the relevant municipalities served the purpose of verifying the data that has been obtain though other methods (Hancock, 1998; 2002:12). For example, during the interviews, participants were asked about their opinions of the citizen engagement process, whether it was meaningful or not. In order to confirm or nullify what the participants said in response to the interview questions, the researcher conducted observations on the natural settings. Field notes with total descriptions of the settings, including the venues, dates, attendance and the observed activities in accordance with the criteria to measure meaningful citizen engagement (developed in this research); were compiled.

Non-participant observation, also referred to as passive participant, refers to the process of observing the phenomena without active interacting therein (Key, 1997). This is contrary to the process of active or direct participation, known as participant observation; wherein the researcher generally does what others in that setting do (Key, 1997).

The observation sites comprised of four IDP and budget public meetings that were held at the West Rand District Municipality (Westonaria Local Municipality), Emfuleni Local Municipality, Midvaal Local Municipality and Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), respectively.

The findings from the observations have been analysed and presented in relation to the conditions for meaningful citizen engagement discussed in this thesis.

### 5.6.2 IDP and Budget meetings at the West Rand District Municipality (Westonaria Local Municipality), Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Midvaal and Emfuleni Local Municipalities

The IDP and Budget public meeting on the above-mentioned municipalities were held as follows:

- At the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), the meeting was held at Ward 32, Boksburg on Thursday, 16 April 2015 from 18h00 until 21h15 in the evening;
- The meetings at Midvaal and Emfuleni Local Municipalities were held on the same date, on Thursday, 30 April 2015. At Emfuleni Local Municipality the meeting commenced earlier, at 15h30 until 17h30 whereas, at Midvaal it was scheduled for 18h30 until 20h30 in the evening. The two municipalities are both part of the Sedibeng District Municipality and they are not very far apart. As such, it was possible for the researcher to attend to both meetings on the same day; and
- At West Rand District Municipality (WRDM), the meeting was held at Ward 2 of the Westonaria Locality Municipality, which is part of the WRDM. The meeting was on Wednesday, 25 May2016 17h00 until 19h30 in the evening. It should be noted that this was a second observation in the WRDM, with the first being attended at Randfontein during April 2015. However, the researcher was not satisfied with the results of that observation and decided to conduct another one at Westonaria.

**(a) Observation of the inclusiveness of the public meetings (Inclusion)**

The first official observation was conducted at the EMM, the meeting comprising of six wards was held at Ward 32, Boksburg as alluded above. Even though a combination of six wards were invited and transported to the venue, the attendance could qualify for a single ward. In terms of the gender and age mix, the attendance was satisfactorily, but in regard to the numbers, the attendance was poor. The need for the inclusion of all the affected members of the citizenry implies that all citizens of the particular locale should be afforded equal opportunities to attend and participate in the meeting. Considering the gender and age mix, it could be argued that the condition of attendance was satisfied as the researcher could not establish the reasons for the poor attendance. It was observed that all those in attendance were free to ask questions at the end of the meeting, which made the process fair and equally inclusive.

As mentioned in the introduction, the next observations were conducted on the same date, at both the Midvaal and the Emfuleni Local Municipalities. Both municipalities are part of the Sedibeng District Municipality, and, with a car, they are a short distance apart. Due the different times of the meetings, the researcher was able to visit both venues of the meetings with ease. At Emfuleni Local Municipality the meeting commenced earlier, at 15h30 and was closed at 17h30, whereas, at Midvaal it started at 18h30 and ran until 20h30 in the evening. The meeting of the Emfuleni Local Municipality was held at Saul Tsotetsi Sports Centre, at Sebokeng. Even though 11 wards were invited in the same meeting, attendance was not indicative of that. The **small** local hall was full to its capacity; in fact, the hall could not handle all the citizens of the 11 wards in terms of its capacity, so that attendance seemed to be well. However, the maximum filling of the hall was due to its size, not because of the satisfactorily attendance, considering the number of wards invited. Nevertheless, the observation revealed compliance with the condition of inclusion in that all genders and age groups, that is, adults and youth, were fairly represented in the meeting. Furthermore, all the invitees were later allowed to ask questions without limitations, which made the process inclusive.

The situation was rather different with the next observation of the day, which was a similar meeting held at the De Deur Primary School, Midvaal Local Municipality's Ward 11 region. Even though only one ward was invited in this meeting, the attendance was very poor for the ward. This could be attributed to the fact that the ward comprised mainly of the semi-rural farming area of small holdings, which is different from a dense populated urban township. Despite the poor attendance, the researcher observed that the meeting process was inclusive as all invitees were allowed to participate freely and equally.

The last official observation of the IDP and Budget public meeting was conducted at the WRDM, at Ward 2, Glenharvie, Westonaria. The meeting was hosted by the Westonaria Local Municipality to report back on the achievements of the previous financial year, and to present the plans and budget for the next financial year. Only one ward was invited to the meeting, which made it easier to understand the issues discussed. Due to the fact that Glenharvie is mainly a mining area, the community around are mainly mine employees and their families. As such, attendance was minimal, just over hundred people, were in attendance of the meeting. As a result of the above, the age groups of the attendees

were mainly young and middle age adults, with a conspicuous absence of the elderly. In terms of the gender mix, both men and women were fairly represented in the meeting. Accordingly, it is safe to conclude that the condition of inclusion was satisfied, given the mixture of the gender and age groups in attendance.

**(b) Observation of the equality of the participants during the public meetings (Political equality)**

In all the observations, the equality amongst the participants was observed and the following findings were made. Firstly, in all instances, the setup of the venue in terms of seating arrangements distinguished the power relations of the attendees. The politicians' and senior officials' entourage are often treated with much veneration, a commendable act that honours the leaders. However, it was observed that this act often impacts on the effective participation of the citizens as it demonstrates unequal power relations in the meetings. In this setting, the office-bearers approach the meeting from a position of power in comparison with the weaker position of the citizens. The above was evidenced when observing the seating arrangement in all the public meetings, which the office-office bearers seating areas often well-decorated and in front of the rest of the attendees. It is a case of speakers and audience, in that, the relevant officials and councillors chair the meeting and do the talking. In these settings, the citizens are always regarded as the audience, with only a right to ask questions. This observation revealed a thin line between political power and political equality between the two groups, with the most powerful being honoured and given much reverence than the less powerful. This, inevitably, impacted on the interaction between the two, as the citizens are made to always recognize that they are addressing the people of power when raising issues. This scenario indirectly limits their ability to engage freely and meaningfully with powers that be.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned setup was not conducive for meaningful public deliberations to take place as the participants only got a chance of asking questions once the main officials and councillors have presented the IDPs and Budgets. The meetings were organised as some sort of feedback forums, assuming that all the attendees had participated in the drafting and compiling of the documents previously. This was bothersome as, in some interviews; it was revealed that no IDP review meetings ever take place until the final

draft is ready for adoption. Considering the time constraints, the power relations of the attendees mean that the questions raised or the inputs made are only noted, without the guarantee that they will be considered and included in the final plans. The observation revealed that not every participant has an opportunity to put issues on the agenda, propose solutions and offer reasons in support of or in criticism of proposal (Webler & Tuler, 2002:182). In other words, the distribution of power made it impossible for all the citizens to contribute to deliberation, and it played an "authoritative role in their deliberation" (Cohen (1989:23) in Hamlin & Pettit, 1989).

**(c) Observation of the reasoned rule, transparency and accountability of all participants in the final decision-making (Reasonableness and accountability)**

As part of the conditions to measure the meaningfulness of the citizen engagement, reasonableness and accountability were observed during the processes of the meetings. Simply put, these conditions put emphasis on the reasoned rule, transparency of the process and accountability of all the participants in the decision (Fung, 2007:449). This statement links reasonableness to the notion of public accountability because when the deliberators offers and accepts reasons, they, in turn, take responsibility for those reasons and the resultant decisions.

However, the findings of the observations in all cases indicated a conspicuous lack of reasonableness and accountability in the processes. As a point of departure, the IDP and Budget documents for discussion were drafted elsewhere and presented in a PowerPoint format during the meetings. These full documents were not distributed to the audience, only copies of presentations were made available in some cases. The manner in which decisions were made in selecting the key service delivery issues to be addressed was not made public in the meetings. For example, during the observation at Midvaal Local Municipality, several citizens raised concerns with the habit of the municipality to change or remove the previously agreed service delivery issues from the budget without being consulted. This confirmed the findings from the focus group interview at Ward 8 of the same municipality, wherein members of the Ward Committee mentioned a problem caused by the lack of Emergency Service (Medical & Fire Station) in the area due to the funds for

same being reallocated to another project in another ward. This, according to the focus group, was never discussed with the community concerned.

Secondly, the agenda for the meetings were set by the office-bearers and brought to the citizens as final, no opportunity to suggest changes or to add on the agenda, are provided. The reasons for the inclusion and/or exclusion of certain issues from the drafts were never debated or deliberated upon during the meetings, thus disqualifying the process from reasonableness. No method of accountability or of how the accountability of officials to implement the IDP will be monitored, ever took place during the meetings.

The key finding on the final observation is that the citizen engagement processes were characterized by a lack of transparency and accountability. This seemed to confirm that meetings were mainly conducted as a compliance requirement of the legislation, not to offer the citizens an opportunity to influence the final IDPs and budgets of the respective municipalities. This strengthened the argument that, for the citizens to be engaged meaningfully, public institutions should be structured in a way that all political decision making processes are subjected to reason. As Cohen (1989) puts it, "… public institutions should 'mirror' an ideal deliberative process of collective decision making in which equal citizens govern themselves by making decisions that are backed by reasons that all others can accept."

### 5.6.3 CONCLUSION

The findings of the non-participant observations that were conducted during the IDP and budget meetings in various municipalities cohere with the findings of the in-depth individual and focus groups interviews. The observations revealed the glaring lack of meaningful citizen engagement during the meetings, and also pointed to the need for institutional re-arrangements. The findings points to the weaknesses of the arrangements for the public engagement in that it was limited by unequal power distribution amongst the attendees.

Furthermore, findings of the observations revealed the lack of transparency and accountability from the sponsors of the processes as decisions on the agenda and the drafts are taken without the inclusion of the citizens. This finding also pointed to the partial

satisfaction of the inclusion condition in that the deliberative process was not fully inclusive. The inclusion dimension was only complied as far as the free attendance was concerned, but citizens were excluded from participating in the final decision-making process.

### 5.6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter of the research played a crucial role of presenting the findings from all the sources that were employed to address the research questions. In this chapter, all the data gathered through the qualitative methods employed in this study, namely, in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and non-participant observations were presented. As such, the chapter occupies a fundamental place in the research as it addresses and displays the empirical level that the research process had adopted. From this chapter, one can make an assessment on whether all the requirements of qualitative research method were met during the data collection process or not.

Attempts were made to avoid interpreting and analysing data in this chapter in order to present findings as raw as they emanated from the sources. For this reason, excerpts from the original responses were used to represent the participant's feelings, in their own words. Using the coding system, identities of the respondents were always protected. The following points can be made from the results of the entire chapter:

All respondents were eager to participate in the research and to provide detailed answers to the interview questions. Despite a conspicuous lack of knowledge and understanding of the concepts of meaningful citizen engagement and CBP, all participants made efforts to provide their insights on the questions. As such, the findings showed more understanding and knowledge on most technical questions from the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors. Participating Community Members and Ward Committee members were struggling with most of such questions. However, the latter groups were more vocal and insightful on the questions pertaining to their experiences of citizen engagement. This augured well for the research as the main point of sampling and interviews was to understand the perspectives of the participants in regard to the stated research problem.

It can be safely concluded that the research managed to fulfil its intent of gathering rich

and thick data in order to address the research questions.

# CHAPTER SIX: INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section brings us to the final destination of the journey that has been travelled during the research. The interpretation and analysis of data seeks to recount and bring closure the story of meaningful citizen engagement as it has been unfolding in the entire research process. Accordingly, the chapter presents the interpretations and analyses of the findings from the interviews and focus groups with the aim of addressing the research questions.

The chapter concludes with a summary that sought to establish whether the research succeeded to address its problem statement, to fulfill its purpose and to answer the research questions as intended. To be able to convey the message from the analyses of the data effectively, the summary is presented sequentially to adhere to the themes that emerged from the research questions.

## 6.2 UNDERSTANDING THE NOTION OF MEANINGFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

The notion of meaningful citizen engagement is a fairly new concept in the local government sphere, and as such, understanding it in its entirety was a challenge. This was evidenced by the variety in the responses to the subject question, whereby all participants attempted to provide detailed definitions and descriptions of the concept. The challenge has been anticipated as the local government is currently familiar with the concept of passive public participation and consultations (Smith, 2004:15). Apart from being repeatedly mentioned during some political rhetoric, most of the participants were introduced for the first time to the concept by this research.

In most of the responses to the question and the discussions held with the focus groups, the majority of participants often used the concept of meaningful citizen engagement synonymously with the concept of consultation. This can be exemplified by the following response from IDPO3:

> Consultation on issues in good time to allow consideration / integration of input made. The audience or the matter consulted upon must be relevant and the input made must be considered. The consultation must reach the largest portion of the

> community as possible and the method used for feedback by the community must be as user-friendly as possible.

It was clear that all the participants were familiar only with the current passive processes of consultation and public participation during the IDP and Budget formulation. It is for this reason that distinctions in meanings and definitions of these concepts were provided in the beginning of this thesis, and the participants were later referred to that. These definitions demonstrated clearly that the concept of meaningful citizen engagement leans more on the notion of deliberative democracy. Even though some of the respondents did use the term 'deliberation' in their responses, few seemed to apply the term broadly to encompass the deliberation of the citizens to reach consensus on conflicting issues. Only when the question pertaining to the community-based planning (CBP) was posed, did few Senior Officials articulate the issue of deliberation amongst citizens, and officials.

Furthermore, looking at our working definition of the concept and the quoted officials' responses, it was observed that, to the participants, there was no emphasis placed on differences between the concepts of 'the public' and 'the citizen'. For example, in his response, IDPO1 stated that,

> Meaningful citizen engagement is the total participation where all residents of a country, including *citizens and non-citizens*, participate in the decision-making process… (emphasis added).

It is important to note that this research was limited to the citizens rather than the general public, which may also comprise non-citizens of the country. The main reason for excluding the non-citizens limiting the study to the citizens is the fact that citizens are not only customers of the local government, that is, consumers or rate-payers. The citizens of any country have certain rights such as the suffrage rights, which the non-citizens do not have. In terms of the Reader's Digest Universal Dictionary, the term citizen refers to "A person owing loyalty to and entitled by birth or naturalization to the protection of a given state." (Reader's Digest Association Limited, 1987: 296). This definition also includes those residents of a town or a city that are entitled to vote and enjoy other privileges therein (Reader's Digest Association Limited, 1987:296). This framing of the concept is meant to eliminate those who have no interest in the relevant municipality and ward from participating and influencing the discourse about local issues. Maintaining this frame is

important because the focus of the concept should be on the specific issues per sphere of government, in this instance, the municipality or ward. This means that only the voting residents of a ward shall be eligible to deliberate on the felt issues.

As alluded in other sections of this thesis, only the citizens participate in local government elections and, as such, are the only ones who can hold the councilors they elected to account. Furthermore, it has been mentioned in the thesis that public deliberation relies heavily on the active citizenry to succeed, as some sacrifices may be needed. For example, it is not sure whether the non-citizens may be as committed as citizen of a particular country to ensure that public deliberation flourish. However, the study does not in any way suggest that non-citizens have to be barred from public meetings, especially if same are legal rate-payers within the same locale.

However, some Senior Officials, apart from failing to provide full definition of the concept, managed to highlight certain key points that could be useful in the future application of the model. As an example, PPO1 emphasised the fact that meaningful citizen engagement process is a democratic notion that offers all citizens an opportunity to make inputs to the plans of their municipality. He stressed the fact that this process is "a citizen-oriented engagement in which citizens are able to provide direction to the municipalities about the plans that are relevant for the community." A similar response is provided by the IDPO3 thus:

> Citizen engagement refers to a process which affords the citizens and/or community members [opportunities] to influence and participate in government policy making. This notion of citizen engagement is also commonly known as public participation...

One can tease some valuable lessons out of these definitions, particularly the fact that the process requires public deliberation of issues by and between the citizens and the officials. The public, in this context, refers to the need to promote unhindered or free deliberation, and not the inclusion of the general public. This also relate to the *inclusion* and *political equality* conditions for measuring the meaningfulness of citizen engagement as identified and adopted in this research (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006:590; Young, 2000:23; Cohen, 1998:194 in Elster, 1998). As the significance of this study revealed in chapter two (2), the unpacking of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement throughout this thesis

may be better understood when discussed in the context of deliberative democratic theory. It is noteworthy that this researcher did not come across any empirical evidence in which a municipality in South Africa experimented with the model as described in this research. The concept leans more on the ideals of deliberative democracy in that deliberation amongst all the affected stakeholders takes a centre stage in resolving issues and reaching decisions (Young, 2000; Cohen, 1989). Accordingly, this ideal concept contrasts sharply with the well familiar approach of public participation, in that the latter is passive and does not always call for deliberation.

Due to the above-stated differences in the two concepts, and the understanding and experiences of the participants, it was a challenge for most officials to provide a full definition of meaningful citizen engagement without being compromised. Being compromised in this case refers to the inability to evade including elements of the well-known and accepted notion of the passive public participation model in their responses. This has been even more challenging to the Senior Officials that are responsible for public participation in their respective municipalities. It seems that these public participation practitioners would need more convincing about the stated limitations of the current public participation system, which they have been using for a long time. Eventually, every participant, including the public participation practitioners, had to provide a response to the question, indicating what they understood to fit the description of meaningful citizen engagement.

Notably, there was a great contradiction in the findings on the question of understanding the concept of meaningful citizen engagement due to the different positions that are occupied by the participants in the local governance discourse. Most of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors appeared to be in a better position of understanding what the concept entails, albeit their use of different terminology. The terms that surfaced repeatedly from their description and definition of the concept are ‘consultation’, ‘involvement’ and ‘full participation’ of the citizens. According to this category of participants, full participation meant that the citizens are involved from the beginning of the planning process up to the end, that is, the implementation and monitoring of the plans. It should be noted that, in their responses, the officials failed to or avoided to deal with the

main element of the concept, that is, deliberation amongst all the parties. Referring to the concept with such words as ‘full participation’ ‘involvement’ and ‘consultation’ appeared to be a veiled definition of the current public participation approach that is being undertaken by the local government.

On the other hand, the findings from the group discussions with the Ward Committee members and the Communities Members were a bit difference from those of the officials and councillors. The Community Members displayed a very limited understanding of the concept, but much understanding of a need to be engaged effectively. The research found that, despite the obvious lack of understanding, some of the Community Members knew that the country’s Constitution was safeguarding their interests, and requires the municipalities to engage with them. However, the understanding of a majority of participants from this group was also limited to the ‘involvement’. In other words, they believe that the municipalities should involve them in all the planning stages of the IDP and budget. However, talking about being involved is very vague as it does not specify the precise extent of such involvement. This provides an opportunity of treating the activity as tokenism, as there are no checks and balances in place to determine whether the involvement has indeed been conducted accordingly. An interesting finding from the responses of the other members of the focus group discussions indicated that, with more public education, the communities have a potential to understand how the local government works. Such responses hinted on the beneficial discussion between the officials, councillors and the communities in order to reach qualitative decisions. The major finding here is that this definition comes closer to the definition of the concept as adopted in this research.

Due to the fact that the Ward Committee members are actively involved within the local governance, and they are also responsible for ensuring that public participation takes place in their respective wards, their responses were very rich on the concept of meaningful citizen engagement. The research found that the group’s understanding of the concept was better than that of the Community Members, even though their understanding also fell short of the definition of the concept in this thesis.

The above analyses of the findings are summarised in Table 15 below:

**Table 18: Summary of Analyses: Understanding of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement**

| **Summary of Analyses: Understanding of the notion of Meaningful Citizen Engagement** | |
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| **Operational definition and understanding of MCE – interpretation by Senior Officials and Ward Councillors** | Most of the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors understood the concept of meaningful citizen engagement to mean total participation, consultation or involvement of the citizens in the formulation of IDPs and Budgets. The research found certain dominant patterns in the responses, such as repeated references to the words consultation, full participation and involvement. It appears that these terms or words were used strategically to suggest the expansion of the current public participation approaches. Their definitions and descriptions of the concept was more general and bordered on window dressing and tokenism. The descriptions consisted of more elements of co-opting the citizens than giving them a platform and voice in the entire processes of the IDP and Budget formulation, implementation and monitoring. |
| **Community perception of meaningful citizen engagement** | For some community members, the concept meant that they should be invited to make contributions to the plans before they are finalised. For others, it meant more of the current processes, that is, involvement in the processes of the IDP and Budgets; which is already happening to a certain extent. Throughout the research, none of the respondents, including the community members, ably clarify the meaning and the extent of the alleged involvement. To the researcher, the only understanding that was garnered from the responses is that of the current public participation processes. |

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|---|---|
| **Ward Committees' understanding of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement** | Even though the definitions and descriptions of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement by the Ward Committee members were also not sufficient, they were much better than those of the Community Members. The patterns that emerged from the group discussions displayed better understandings of the concept, and were also accompanied by the relevant examples of cases. |

## 6.3 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS AND MEANINGFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT NEXUS

This section of the research report provides the interpretation and analysis of research findings on the second research question for this study. The second research question sought to establish whether there could be a link between the mechanisms that were currently used by the municipalities and the model of meaningful citizen engagement as proposed in this thesis. A sub-question that proceeded from this question required the participants to suggest areas of improvements or amendments, should the link not be found. In other words, the aim of the subject research question was to explore whether the current public participation processes and their mechanisms did not already possess some aspects of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. From the research process, it emerged that the main citizen engagement mechanisms that are popular in all the municipalities included the quarterly IDP review meetings, the monthly ward committee meetings, and the monthly public meetings that are held by ward councillors with the residents of their respective wards.

Furthermore, the research revealed that the officially recognized IDP review process takes place within the first two quarters of the local government financial year, that is, between the months of August and February of every year (NT, 2011:77). In terms of the legislated minimum compliance requirements for tabling and approving budgets, the budget must be tabled for consultation at least 90 days (between the month of April to the end of June) before the start of the financial year (1 July). Furthermore, the budget must be considered for approval at least 30 days (1 June) before the start of that financial year, and it must be approved before the start of the financial year (1 July) (NT, 2011:78). As such, the review process is usually followed by the tabling and public consultation phase in which

the mayor tables a proposed budget, IDP and Budget policies to the municipal council. Thereafter, the municipality is required to conduct public budget consultations during the months of April and May (NT, 2011:78). The latter period is concerned with the finalisation and approval of the IDP and Budget by the respective municipal councils. It is during this final quarter of the budget cycle that the IDP is presented to the citizens for them to make their final inputs.

In order to comply with the above-mentioned legislative requirement, the IDP and Budget documents are presented to the communities mostly during the month of April, sometimes through May. Notably, the communities are expected to provide their informed inputs during this short period, so that their inputs will be considered and incorporated in the final documents before the submission to the municipal councils for final approval. This is arguably the shortest time for the citizens to provide meaningful inputs to the IDPs and Budgets, and as such; it can be concluded that only a limited opportunity for meaningful citizen engagement is provided, which is only in the third phase of planning. It is worth noting further that, the consultation opportunity that is mentioned in the third phase of planning only appears as an afterthought (Smith, 2004:17; NT, 2003:14). Previous research has revealed that not much influence can be exerted by the citizens after the mayor had revised the IDP and policies, and tabled a proposed Budget in Council (Smith, 2004:17).

The above sentiments are also echoed by the World Bank in that the mandatory popular participation in the IDP process was limited in reality (World Bank, 2011:61). The World Bank also laments the technocratic nature of the IDP processes in that these are driven by the officials as legislative requirement (World Bank, 2011:61). As a result of the limited time to consider issues, participation in the IDP has been reduced to the ineffective "input-gathering exercises", without an opportunity to deliberate on conflicting issues by the citizens (World Bank, 2011:61).

During the observation of the meetings' processes, the researcher found that the period allocated for the public scrutiny of the documents had an impact in the meaningful participation of the citizens. This was evidenced in the citizens' inability to engage in discussions with the presenters, and in the quality of questions that were raised by the citizens. Also this was raised by various participants in this research, and it confirmed the

assertion that the majority of citizens may not have been able to study or understand the proposed IDPs and Budgets properly in order to make meaningful inputs to the discussions later. For example, the IDP review process meetings are often dominated by the technical presentation of achievements made during the previous financial year, and by the proposed plans and targets. The researcher noticed a conspicuous lack of spaces for deliberation since the proposals and achievements were presented as final to the communities. The processes often took various forms of questions-and-answers sessions not that of democratic deliberations amongst equals.

Furthermore, the fact that the crucial IDP review meetings only take place three months apart, made it impossible to sustain continuous discussions and deliberations by the citizens. It was discovered that the lapse of time before another meeting is held had negative effects on the achievement of meaningful citizen engagements for the following reasons: - often new issues are raised by the citizens who were not part of the previous meeting, attendance always changes per meeting, with others having more attendees than the others, and continuity is not maintained.

Further to the above, the research found that the ward committee meetings were not as effective as they are supposed to be. It was discovered that members of these committees were always guilty of the following: - trying to represent the views of the community without a mandate; always not familiar with the community issues, and not familiar with the manner in which local government works. Apart from the above, the research found that the ward committee meetings are not only concerned with the IDP and Budget issues, but that the majority of their time is taken by other community issues. This means that the ward committee meetings were not sufficient for the meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget. Another contentious factor that is limiting the ward committee meetings is the fact that they operate under the chair of the Ward Councillors. Allegations were raised by the Community Members who participated in this research that Ward Committee members are often influenced by the Ward Councillors as they are mostly appointed by them. Further to the above is the common narrative that ward committees are the preserve of the ruling party in the respective ward, or the supporters of the ward councillors. Markedly, these negative connotations have eroded the value of the ward committees as

possible local spaces for democratic deliberation. Accordingly, the ward committee meetings are rendered inefficient for creating meaningful citizen engagement spaces.

Other mechanisms that are currently favoured for conducting engagement with the citizens are the monthly public meetings that are held by the Ward Councillors and the citizens. Once more, the research found that these meetings, just like the ward committee meetings, were not entirely used for the IDP and Budget deliberations. Most notably, during the pre-study observations conducted on same, it was noted that no deliberation ever took place in respect of the IDP and Budget issues. In all observations, the IDPs or Budgets were only mentioned in passing as either reference, or notification of the upcoming meetings for them. These observations were strengthened by the comments from PPO1 that most ward councillors use the public meetings for their ulterior political motives or personal gains, instead of service delivery-related issues. Other participants went on to suggest that using such meetings to consider the IDP and Budget related issues would enhance the engagement of citizens on these crucial documents (Interviews with the PPO1 and the CM7, respectively). The general pattern that emerged on this analysis is that this mechanism is currently not being fully utilized for the achievement of the meaningful engagement with citizens.

On the contrary, it is noteworthy that the majority of the Senior Officials found the mechanisms to be sufficiently meaningful for engaging the citizens on the IDP and Budgets. This is evidenced by the following extract, amongst others, from the response of IDPO3:

> Yes, the mechanism employed by the municipality do promote citizen engagement, as the municipality has various fora, which are public participation platforms to engage and involve the community with all the municipal planning processes as well as the reporting thereof.

Apart from few respondents in this category who emphasized that there is a room for improvement, most of the officials were adamant that the mechanisms were sufficient. This can be attributed to the heavy emphasis on complying with the procedural requirements of the relevant legislation. In this instance, more focus is given to issues such as logistical arrangements for the engagement events as compliance. The inference that can be drawn from this relates to the officials' seemingly confusing the concept of meaningful citizen

engagement as applied in this research and that of public participation system. This inference is based on the fact that the main element of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement is deliberation amongst all those who would be affected by the decision to be made (Gibson (2006) & Roberts (2008) in Svara & Denhardt, 2012:5). The particular participants are still to realize that the concept leans heavily on the opportunity to deliberate issues before the resolutions are adopted (Young, 2000: 21; Mendelberg, 2002:153; Cohen, 1989). As such, it can be concluded that there could be no meaningful citizen engagement without the citizens being afforded an opportunity to deliberate and be part of the final resolutions taken.

Nonetheless, it was remarkable to note the admission by other participants in this category that the current mechanisms could not be regarded as meaningful. This dissenting view showed that, even though the concept was unknown, some Senior Officials and Ward Councillors were aware of the shortcomings of the current public participation system. The Ward Councillors, in particular, indicated that the mechanisms were only there in order to comply with the legislation on public participation. One particular Senior Official (PPO4) echoed the same sentiment in that the whole process was only used to tick the boxes to show that the municipalities have complied. Further to the above, a number of Ward Councillors decried the manner in which access to the mechanisms by the community was being handled. The main concern related to the publicity of the meetings, the venues and the time of the meetings, and the distribution of key information. The councillors claimed that the above were very challenging to the citizens in the sense that most citizens are not made aware in time for the meetings. The councillors also questioned the use of loud hailers in this age and time, suggesting that other communication media should be explored in order to reach the wider audience. Most councillors also lamented the manner in which the relevant documents were packaged with information, and distributed in libraries; which not everyone visits. Some councillors also raised the issue of illiteracy, and indicated that the language used was still too technical for the man in the street to understand. The suggestion was that efforts should be made to summarise the key contents of the IDP and Budget documents in pamphlets, in a language that every citizen could understand.

The research found that the Community Members were not really familiar with all the mechanisms for citizen engagement during the IDP and Budget formulation processes. Few

Community Members knew of the IDP review meetings that take place during the month of August, but were not aware that such meetings are held every quarter of the financial year. Subsequent to this understanding, all the community members who participated in the research revealed that whenever they do attend some of the meetings, the processes are always rushed to meet timeframes. As a result, they never get the opportunity to engage and deliberate on their felt issues relating to what should be in the IDPs and Budgets.

Furthermore, the research revealed that, the Ward Committee members were not very impressed with all the mentioned mechanisms. The majority of the Ward Committee members reiterated the Community Members' sentiment that the monthly public meetings could be useful for the IDP and Budget engagement, but that they are often used for some other purposes. However, some participants in this category did confirm that limited deliberations do take place in the IDP review meetings, but these are hampered by the fact that the processes are not always running smooth due to the large number of attendees. The research found that the large numbers were resulting from the combination of more than one ward in a single meeting in order to save time. It has been noted above that in one of the observations by the researcher; eleven (11) large wards were fitted into a single IDP meeting by the municipality. This needlessly led to the meeting being unmanageable at the end. The implication of this is that the issues raised are often not the same as the attendees are from different walks of life and locales. In effect, the Ward Committee members were not convinced that the currently utilized mechanisms can be regarded as meaningful as they were not presenting the citizens with sufficient opportunities to influence the final decisions.

The general pattern that emerged from the responses of the Ward Councillors, the Community Members and the Ward Committee members was that the citizens were often not empowered to participate effectively in these meetings. From this finding, a call for the institution of outreach or educational programmes became a main theme. All were in agreement that it is not of any use to have a hall full of people who cannot participate effectively in the discussions because they have no relevant information to do so, or are not capable to. In sum, the research found that there was no positive relationship between the current mechanisms for citizen engagement and the idealized concept of meaningful citizen engagement.

The discussed interpretations and analyses of data are summarised in the below table:

**Table 19: Summary of Analyses: Citizen Engagement mechanisms and Meaningful Citizen Engagement nexus**

| **Summary of Analyses: Citizen Engagement mechanisms and Meaningful Citizen Engagement nexus** | |
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| **Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' positions on the nexus between the activity of citizen engagement and the concept of MCE in the local government.** | Apart from few dissenting views, most of the Senior Officials indicated that the mechanisms were sufficient for meaningful citizen engagement. In essence, the Senior Officials were referring to the compliance with legislation, in that, all created spaces were opened and utilised to engage the citizens. In agreement, a few number of Ward Councillors also regarded the mechanisms as sufficient to afford citizens with meaningful spaces. However, some Senior Officials and Ward Councillors were adamant that the mechanisms were not doing meaningful citizen engagement any justice. Some of the main reasons cited were: the technical nature of the processes, the limited time given to the citizens to consider the IDP and Budget documents before the meetings, and the fact that some of the meetings, as mechanisms for citizen engagement, were not actually used as such. |
| **Community members' observations and experiences of citizen engagement in relation to the concept of MCE** | The research found that, for some local municipalities, only one meeting took place in August to review the IDP. Such members were not aware that the IDP review meetings were held every quarter of the financial year. Nevertheless, those community members who had opportunities to attend such meetings emphasized that there is always no space given to them to engage in deliberations (except for questions and answers sessions) before the meetings ends. They claim that the meetings are always rushed in order to meet the deadlines. This means that, such community members do not |

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| | agree that the current mechanisms can be regarded as meaningful. |
| **Ward Committee members' perception of the operationalized version of MCE in relation to the current citizen engagement mechanisms** | The pattern that emerged from the Ward Committee members' responses is that the IDP and budget deliberations were not taking place due to the lack of time. The general point raised by this category of participants is that the monthly public meetings should also be employed for the IDP and budget related discussions. With regard to the meaningfulness of the current mechanisms, the Ward Committee members' pattern of responses revealed cynicism from these participants. According to most of them, the mechanisms were only utilized for legislative compliance purposes only. |

## 6.4 THE POTENTIAL OF MEANINGFUL CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TO PROMOTE BETTER PLANNING IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It has been alluded elsewhere in this thesis that this research emanated from, amongst others, the assumption that effective participatory planning in the local governance would lead to better service delivery. To address this assumption, the third research question attempted to explore whether the notion of meaningful citizen engagement had a potential to promote better planning and service delivery in the local government. The question was subsequently sub-divided into three interview questions, in order to probe the participants further. Furthermore, it has been noted elsewhere in this research that the perceived non-delivery of services had already pitted the municipalities against their citizens in what has been termed service delivery protests and other actions by the residents' associations (NT, 2011).

As such, the relevant research question that was addressed in this section is: In what way will meaningful citizen engagement help in the alleviation of service delivery and developmental backlogs in the local government? As stated above, the question was spread into three multifaceted sub-questions, which strived to gather data on the following aspects: the collective understanding of the concept of community-based planning (CBP); whether

the implementation of the meaningful citizen engagement model would lead to the alleviation of service delivery backlogs and to better planning; and to establish the perceived and, or real challenges to the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. Apart from its core intents, this section also saw the introduction of the model of CBP into the research discussion.

The effective implementation of the CBP was expected to improve the quality of plans and service delivery, to increase citizen control over the local socio-economic developments, and to empower communities in order to be initiative (DPLG, 2007:10). The CBP initiative in the local public participation process of the ward committee has a potential to introduce and sustain participatory budgeting (PB) and participatory planning (PP) in the local government. The CBP process within the ward committees in South Africa resembles the regional/citizens' assemblies of Brazil and the Gram Sabhas of India in that these bodies also empowered the ordinary citizens with decision-making autonomy on issues that directly affect them.

According to the PPO1, the CBP process used to follow this format: (i) Public meetings for the whole ward residents were organised to announce the commencement of the CBP process. (ii) The community development workers (CDWs), the IDP office staff or the Public Participation Coordinators facilitated the five-day training-cum-workshop of the community on CBP in different wards. (iii) Such a workshop would culminate into the selection of five top priorities per ward. These priorities were compiled into a document called Ward Business Plan. Just as the IDPs, the Business Plans were reviewed annually. (iv) The Ward Business Plans for all wards of the municipality were submitted to the IDP office for the consolidation and the alignment of the priorities with IDPs. (v) The IDP office together with the budget office determined the availability of funds for the priorities. However, for the 2013-2014 financial year, each ward of the EMM were allocated an amount of R1 million for the purpose of addressing the unemployment and poverty problems. This meant that, in the future there would have been no need to determine the availability of funds from the municipality budget. Since the CBP was a component of the WC, the monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the process and the feedback to the community were provided through the ward committees' public meetings (Interview with PPO1, March 20, 2015).

Sadly, the research revealed that the CBP initiative has not been broadly factored into, and employed effectively in the formulation of the IDPs and budgeting processes, and as such, an opportunity to gain from the community inputs continues to be missed (Marais et al., 2007: 83-84). It appeared from the research findings that the significance of the CBP process in bringing about a deliberative culture within the local government has not been fully grasped. This was evidenced by the move of the larger metropolitan municipalities to replace this important initiative with some or other politically motivated events. Whereas, many of the sampled smaller local municipalities and their mother bodies, the district municipalities, never got to experiment with the model at all for some political and financial reasons. The implication of such canning of the CBP is reflected by the limited opportunities available to fully experiment with participatory budgeting (PB) and participatory planning (PP) as tools for public deliberation and decision making during the planning of local budgets in South Africa (Shah (2007) in GGLN, 2012:23).

The first interview question in this section attempted to explore the participants' understanding of the concept of community-based planning (CBP), resulting in the emergence of the following accounts from their responses. To the most of Senior Officials, defining or explaining the concept of CBP was rather an easy task as most of them had once participated in its processes, or have heard of it. Accordingly, the research revealed deeper understandings of the concept by the Senior Officials, with others providing detailed academic definitions of same. The same pattern appeared also with regard to the response on the question of whether the citizens would be engaged meaningfully through the CBP process. All the officials expressed their conviction that the citizens would be given more time to deliberate on issues of common concerns as the CBP process normally run for a longer period of time. Unlike the IDP and budget meetings, the research found that the CBP process was normally conducted for a period of not less than a week. It was mentioned by the officials that the process was organised in the format resembling that of a workshop, whereby the communities review the previous priorities, identify new ones, deliberate on them; and finally agree on the pressing five priorities per ward (Interview with PPO2, 20 April 2015). The above summed a deliberative process at its best, as all its elements are captured by the above.

The Ward Councillors also concurred with the officials on the potential of the CBP process to reach all the citizens and to open meaningful spaces for them to deliberate. However, some of the councillors did not immediately understand the concept as most have never participated nor organised same. However, being involved with the community all the time, most councillors quickly linked the CBP process to what they termed 'ward-based planning'. Even though, the ward-based planning is not an official concept, its definition by the councillors displayed certain attributes of the CBP concept (NB: the CBP process is a government's initiative that aimed at promoting the participation of citizens in the ward committees by devolving some control over the planning of development and service delivery (DPLG, 2007:10). The most remarkable feature from the Ward Councillors' responses was displayed by a desire of this group to see CBP happening in their respective wards. Most of the councillors also believed that implementing the CBP process would not only improve citizen engagement, but would also enhance communication with the citizens in their wards.

The main findings from the responses of the Community Members and Ward Committee members revealed that the majority of the two categories of participants were not aware of the CBP process prior to the encounter with the researcher. Only few of the Ward Committee members had some idea of the concept, also referred to it as the ward-based or ward-level planning. This curtailed the discussion of the concept in a meaningful manner as most of the participants' contributions to the discussions were off the mark. However, during the discussions after the concept has been explained to the participants, they believed that it is what was missing within the current public participation processes. The participants often offered a number of reasons as to why the concept would lead to the meaningful citizen engagement if it is reintroduced.

The second interview question in this section sought to understand the participants' experience or views in regard to having participated or initiated the CBP process within their respective wards. In particular, the question sought to establish, from the perspectives of the participants, whether the meaningful engagement of citizens in the IDP, Budget and CBP has a potential to facilitate better planning and alleviation of service delivery backlogs in the local government.

The important finding of the research in this question is that all the participants were convinced that the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the IDP, Budget and the CBP process would definitely lead to the amelioration of service delivery in the local government. This was based on the number of reasons proffered by the participants, which, *inter alia*, included the following: that the citizens would provide 'guidance and direction' to the municipalities on which needs are to be prioritized, citizens would be able to discuss (deliberate) on which needs are pressing; citizens would take ownership of the projects and protect them; the citizens would gain trust in their municipalities, and this would minimize the conflict and thereby limit the incidents of violent protests as they would feel that their voice is heard and heeded by the authorities; the communication between the communities and the municipalities would be improved; and that the citizens would be able to exercise the oversight on the performance of municipalities as they would have been privy to the plans and targets to be achieved.

The emerging trend from the above finding of the research was that, apart from few officials who had divergent views, the participants expressed their faith in the potential of meaningful citizen engagement to enhance the local governance. From the above trend, a pattern that emerged is that all the participants believed that the CBP concept was the only available vehicle that can be utilized to introduce the model of meaningful citizen engagement into the processes of local planning and budgeting. Most notable was the willingness and commitment of the majority of participants in the research to attain a level of meaningful engagement with each other in order to address pressing local needs.

On the question of the perceived and real challenges to the attainment of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government sphere, an anticipated plethora of the divergent views were proffered by the participants. The various patterns observed from the responses were divided by a certain margin, that of the category of participants. These can be summarized as follow, amongst others: The Senior Officials listed the following as challenges: - legislative constraints; - lack of funding; - illiteracy levels of the citizens; - language barrier; - lack of citizen commitment; - citizens' lack of understanding of the competencies of various spheres of government and their operations; lack of continuity in engagement; lack of trust in the municipal system; and - tense relationships between ward councillors and citizens. Of these patterns of responses, one can infer that they appear as

though the officials were pointing fingers away from themselves. For example, none of the officials pointed towards their level of understanding the meaningful citizen engagement concept. All of them appeared to understand the concept very well, and even ignored the definition and explanation offered after their attempt at answering the first question.

However, a different version of challenges emerged from the responses of the Ward Councillors, the Community Members and the Ward Committee members. Again, most of the responses from these categories of participants appeared to be pointing fingers at the officials as the culprits. The following patterns were identified from the responses of the these groups: - insufficient publicizing of engagement events; - lack of information dissemination; - incompetence / lack of commitment by the officials; ulterior political motives; political instability; ineffective communication; unhealthy working relationships between officials and councillors; lack of continuity in engagement; broadening/generalizing citizen engagement; lack of public education / outreach on legislation pertaining citizen engagement; lack of trust in the municipal leadership; and lack of attendance of meetings.

Of significance from these findings is the repeated mention of lack of public political education, as mentioned by all the participants. This narrative highlighted an important aspect of the local government planning limitations. Proper planning at the local government consists of the triumvirate of officials, councillors and citizens. A response from one Ward Councillor that the major challenges faced during the citizen engagements initiative is the citizens' lack of understanding the planning process, indicated a major defect in the planning process as a whole. Put another way, the above assertion means that non-involvement of one part of the triangle (the citizens) renders the whole process as flawed. As such, this compromises the whole process and renders it susceptible to disputes from the disgruntled citizens.

Furthermore, allegations of ulterior political motives by the would-be ward candidates trying to unseat the incumbent ward councillor were seen as hindrances for the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement by most participants. As the political term of office spans a mere five-year period, it has become a norm in the local polity for the ambitious individuals to begin positioning themselves before the end of the term. Raised by the majority of Ward Councillors on the question of challenges to meaningful citizen engagement, this resembled

a case of political in-fighting, and has a negative effect on the successful engagement of citizens. The above-mentioned research analyses are summarised in the table below:

**Table 20: Summary of Analyses: The Potential of Meaningful Citizen Engagement to promote better planning in the local government**

| **Summary of Analyses: The Potential of Meaningful Citizen Engagement to promote better planning in the local government** | |
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| **Understanding of community-based planning (CBP) as a means to achieve meaningful citizen engagement (MCE)** | The analysis of findings revealed different understandings of the CBP concept amongst the participants, with the Senior Officials and few Ward Councillors displaying better understanding. Most of the Ward Committee members and all Community Members had never heard of the CBP concept prior to this research. The individual responses are summarised in the following boxes.<br>Senior Officials' summary of responses:<br>For the officials, defining and describing the process of CBP was not difficult, particularly to those who had participated in the process before. Apart from few Senior Officials who had different views on the potential of meaningful citizen engagement to enhance service delivery, most of the officials were adamant that, for various reasons, citizens would be engaged meaningfully in a CBP process than any other process. |
| | Ward Councillors' summary of responses:<br>At first, most of the Ward Councillors struggled to define and explain the concept the CBP process. Only few were able to give their version of the concept, which they termed ward-based panning. However, they concurred with the Senior Officials' viewpoint that the process of CBP would assist in reaching all the citizens. The emerging pattern from the councillors' responses were that the CBP process seemed |

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| | to be the only viable forum that could enrich meaningful engagement of the citizens. |
| | Community Members' and Ward Committee members' summary of findings:<br>The research found that most participants in these categories were unaware of the CBP process prior to the encounter with the researcher. Only few Ward Committee members had some recollection of the process. However, with the confidence gained during discussions, the members in both focus groups came to the conclusion that the CBP process could greatly enhance the engagement of the citizens. |
| **MCE as a tool to address service delivery backlogs in the local government** | Most Senior Officials, with the exception of only two, attested to the fact that meaningful citizen engagement could be a tool to address service delivery issues in the local government. This assertion was based on various reasons that were offered. Some of the reasons offered included: the enhancement of citizen accountability; the improved relationship and trust towards the local government leadership; and that citizen choices and felt needs will be known by the municipalities. This, according to the findings, would ensure that the municipalities deliver what the citizens are in need of, and that the citizens will take control and protect the goods so delivered. Ultimately, this action would lead to the reduction, if not prevention, of the violent service delivery protests towards the municipalities. The most important patterns that emerged from the responses were concerned with a contentious issue of communication and trust amongst all the stakeholders. Furthermore, |

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| | the Ward Councillors and Ward Committee members were convinced that implementing the CBP process would also improve communication between the citizens and the councillors. In sum, the research revealed that the majority of the participants were convinced that implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the local government had a potential of enhancing planning. In other words, the findings showed that all participants were convinced that a CBP process was the only vehicle available to the municipalities for the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement. |
| **Perceived and real major challenges to MCE** | It was anticipated that this question would result in the most divergent opinions from the participants, as each would be talking from own context. As such, the pattern that was observed with responses indicated a fine fissure between the officials and the other participants collectively. It appeared as though the Senior Officials were shifting the blame towards the other parties, as none of the challenges they raised were pointed at them. For example, they cited the citizens' lack of understanding, illiteracy and lack of commitment amongst the challenges that hinder the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. On the other hand, the other participants also seemed to point their fingers to the officials in their response. Issues such as incompetence or lack of understanding meaningful citizen engagement, were the main features in the responses of the three categories of participants. Apart from these, the issues of political instability /ulterior motives; mistrust by the citizens and lack of |

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| | public education was also raised by the participants. In essence, the research found that challenges to the achievement of meaningful citizen engagement, whether perceived or real, were wide-ranging. |

## 6.5 LEGISLATIVE IMPERATIVES TO MAXIMIZE THE ROLES OF CITIZENS IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE IDP AND BUDGETS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The last question of the research sought to address the empirical dimension of the research problem in terms of whether it was practical to implement meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the local government or it was not. As the concern of the research was whether engaging citizens in a meaningful way would yield different results to the current approaches of public participation, it seemed judicious to interrogate the legislative imperatives on which the roles of the citizens in the local governance are enshrined. The question was expanded beyond the formulation of the IDP and Budget processes to include implementation and monitoring as well. As such, the question explored the legislative imperatives to maximize the roles of citizens in the processes of formulating, implementation and monitoring of the IDPs and Budgets in the local government.

Emanating from this research question were five interview questions for the Senior Officials, Ward Councillors and the Ward Committee members, respectively. For the Community Members, only three interview questions were compiled to address the last research question. Even though the research question concerned the roles of citizens in the processes of formulation, implementation and monitoring in terms of the legislation; the interview questions also sought to understand the perspectives of the other participants with regard to the public participation legislative framework.

As such, the interview questions ranged from seeking to understand whether the participants were aware of the relevant legislation; whether they thought citizens within their jurisdiction were aware of such; whether the particular legislation was being complied with during the IDP and Budget formulation processes; their understanding of the roles of citizens in the formulation, implementation and monitoring; and whether the participants

thought it possible to engage citizens meaningfully in the face of legislative constraints. The findings thereof are interpreted and analysed below.

The first interview question was concerned with the participants' awareness of any legislation, policies or directives other than the policies of the relevant municipalities that promote citizen engagement in the formulation of IDPs and Budgets. As would be expected, all the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors were familiar with most of the legislation that enable the process of citizen engagement in the local government. This response strengthened the belief that most of the officials were technocrats, always concerned with procedures than the substance of their actions. From the research findings on other questions, it seems that the extensive knowledge of the legislation by the officials was not yielding the positive results as the citizens were not satisfied with their performance. In fact, it seemed that this technocratic nature was hindering the expansion of the public participation system from opening more spaces as the processes remained shallow and limiting (Marais et al., 2007). The only plausible explanation for this is that the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors were more concerned with legislative compliance, than the opening of meaningful spaces for citizen engagement (Smith, 2004). The above attitude, if true, is defeating the principles of the developmental local government (DLG), which emphasise the recognition of primary linkage between development, service delivery and local public participation (Stiefel & Wolfe (1994) cited by Mogale in Mhone & Edigheji, 2003:220). The research revealed that the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors were in agreement that there was sufficient compliance with legislation during the formulation of IDPs and Budgets. Even though, both the Senior Officials and the majority of Ward Councillors thought that citizens do know the legislation that governs public participation, some Ward Councillors indicated that other citizens were still in the dark when it comes to the legislation. The Senior Officials countered by stating that those who were still in the dark were just ignorant and lacked citizen activism.

Both these groups of participants stated that, as far as compliance is concerned, the municipalities were observing the legislation in organizing the meetings, consulting the residents and approving the plans and budgets before the commencement of the new financial year. Further to this, the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors listed a number of roles that the communities were expected to play in the process. These included,

amongst others, the responsibility to attend meetings and make inputs; the need to guide the municipalities on the pressing needs of the wards; the oversight and monitoring roles; and the responsibility to protect the infrastructure that has been delivered by the municipalities. The aim of the last interview question to the Senior Officials, Ward Councillors and Ward Committee members was to understand, from their experiences, whether it was possible to engage with communities meaningfully given the tight legislative constraints. The majority of the respondents were optimistic that it can be done, with only few Senior Officials being negative. Those who did not agree claimed that doing things differently would be tantamount to breaking the law.

Some of the responses from the subject participants on the subject question were imbued with innovative measures. The suggested new measures, *inter alia*, included the following: the use of all public meetings for the discussions of the IDP and Budgets; the use of social media to reach the wider community, especially the youth; the separation of meetings according to age groups in order to encourage all participants the freedom of expression (especially the elder); re-introduction of the CBP process; engaging on the IDP and Budget outside of the prescribed timeframes; that the processes are started earlier than the prescribed commencement dates in order to enable sufficient time for engagement with citizens;- that logistics for the meetings be done in such a way that all ward stakeholders are accommodated;- the encouragement of deliberative culture in the meetings, and avoiding to present pre-determined plans and budgets;- provision of summary of the documents to be discussed in order to enable the citizens to understand the discussions and to contribute therein; and exhausting all alternative avenues for the purpose of engagement.

On the other hand, the Community Members and the Ward Committee members were found lacking in their understanding of legislation. Apart from vague mentioning of the country's Constitution and the *Batho Pele* principles, these participants could not say much about other legislation that oblige municipalities to engage them on service delivery matters. This lack of awareness of legislation impacted on the responses to the next interview question by the two groups. The participants could not provide sufficient responses on the question of whether the legislation was being observed during the IDP and Budget processes. This also raised a question on the effectiveness of engagement activities if one party is not conversant with the rules of the game. Yet, it was noted that,

despite the above-mentioned shortcoming, the Community Members knew that they had certain roles to play during the formulation of the IDPs and Budgets. Some of the roles and rights that were identified were: a right to be consulted before the key decisions are made; a right to be heard by the municipalities, the role of making inputs into the plans and budget; and the need to exercise the oversight role, that is monitoring and evaluation of the performance and on the completed projects.

However, it is concerning that this group was not exactly sure of their roles in the engagement spectrum. The research highlighted the dearth of implementation in that appropriate engagement systems and structures that were created were not properly utilised. As such, the structures and mechanisms, if not used properly, they collapse into chaos. Table 18 below represents a summary of the above-mentioned analyses and interpretations.

**Table 21: Summary of Analyses: Legislative Imperatives to maximize the roles of citizens in the process of Formulating, Implementation and Monitoring of the IDP and Budgets in the local government**

| **Summary of Analyses: Legislative Imperatives to maximize the roles of citizens in the process of Formulating, Implementation and Monitoring of the IDP and Budgets in the local government** | |
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| **Senior Officials' and Ward Councillors' perspectives on the roles of citizens in the IDP and budgeting processes** | Awareness of legislation, policies and directives that promote citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation by the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors, and their perspectives on community awareness of the same: The majority of Senior Officials and Ward Councillors displayed vast understanding and knowledge of the legislation that governs the process of citizen engagement in the local government. However, the research noted that this knowledge of the law did not transfer to the successful implementation of the citizen engagement systems. Furthermore, the research found a discrepancy in the responses of the Senior Officials and the Ward Councillors with regard to whether the citizens were aware of the legislation or not. The Senior Officials were adamant in their |

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| | responses that the citizens were aware of the legislation, claiming ignorance and lack of activism as a problem. On the other hand, the Ward Councillors believed that some citizens were aware of the legislation whilst the majority were still in the dark. It is for this reason that most Ward Councillors called for the public education of citizens on the legislation and other governance-related issues. |
| | Compliance with the citizen engagement legislation during the processes of IDPs and Budgets:<br>According to the Senior Officials, the legislation was observed completely during the processes of IDPs and Budgets in that the meetings were held in time, citizens were consulted and the council approvals were obtained within the prescribed timeframes. However, the issue at hand was whether the legislation that demands meaningful engagement of citizens was complied with or not. The research found that in most cases, processes and meetings were rushed in order to meet deadlines. This, unfortunately, deprived the citizens the opportunity to deliberate on issues of concern. |
| | Understanding of the roles of citizens in the IDP and Budget formulation processes:<br>The trend that emerged from the responses on this question was that all Senior Officials and Ward Councillors agreed that citizens have a role to play in the local government system. The two groups of participants were convinced that should citizens play their role well, there would be peace and trust again in the local government environment. The important findings here are that the office-bearers were aware that, should citizens play their roles accordingly, chances of getting local governance right were high. The particular officials even suggested a list of roles that the |

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| | citizens had to play during and after the implementation of the plans and budgets. |
| | <u>Consideration of potential meaningful citizen engagement within the legislative constraints:</u><br>Even though some of the Senior Officials were pessimistic on this question, the majority of them and some Ward Councillors were in agreement that meaningful citizen engagement can be achieved within the current context of the legislation. On this point, an innovative trend emerged in that most participants suggested new, innovative ways of engaging the citizens. The suggestions even considered the possibility of conducting citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget outside of the legislated timeframes in order to give the citizens a sufficient time to engage on this key documents. |
| **Community Members' perceptions and awareness (understanding) of their legal roles in terms of the applicable legislation on the formulation of IDPs and Budgets** | <u>Awareness of the applicable legislation that require citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget processes and communities' roles during these processes:</u><br>The shocking finding on this question was that the majority of community members were not aware of the legislation. Only a few vaguely mentioned the Constitution of the country, but nothing concrete came about. This implied that the citizens may not be fully conversant with their roles within the local government. Accordingly, this impacted negatively on the citizens' responses on whether the legislation was being observed or not, as they were not aware of the relevant provisions per se.<br>Out of the above-mentioned shortcoming, the research found that the community members were aware that they have roles to play within the local government affairs, although they were not sure which. This was an interesting trend because the participants were not aware of the legislation that endorse their participation. The main finding is that the |

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| | community knew that they have a right to be consulted and involved in all the decisions of the municipality. |
| | <u>Community perception and experience of meaningful citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation processes:</u><br>Pursuant to the findings on the above question, it transpired that the community members had no practical experience of meaningful citizen engagement. As such, the finding on this question was a big NO. The community members were convinced that no meaningful engagement was taking place during the process of IDP and Budget. |
| **Ward Committee members' perspectives on the roles of citizens in the IDP and budgeting processes** | <u>Awareness of legislation, policies and directives that promote citizen engagement in the IDP and Budget formulation by the ward committee members and their perspectives on community awareness of the same:</u><br>As in the case of the Community Members, the Ward Committee members were also in the dark when asked about the legislation that governs public participation in the local government. Apart from few mention of the Constitution and *Batho Pele* principles, the rest of the participants could not answer the question. This raised a question of competence as the ward committee's main task is to enhance engagement between the municipality and its citizens. |
| | <u>Compliance with the citizen engagement legislation during the formulation process of IDPs and Budgets:</u><br>For the Ward Committee members, it was a challenge to respond to this question with confidence, as they were also struggling with the understanding of the legislation. However, few attempted to respond, citing a lack of compliance as the processes were sometimes started and finalised without being consulted. This pattern of responses claimed that their respective municipality would even divert funds for specific projects without engaging citizens first. |

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| | Other participants could not say much on the subject question. |
| | Understanding of the roles of citizens in the IDP and Budget formulation processes:<br>For the Ward Committee members, citizens have important roles to play in the processes in order to ensure that their needs are addressed. As in the case of Community Members, the Ward Committee members listed a number of rights and roles that the Constitution has given to the citizens of the country. Amongst others, the right to be consulted, the right to be heard and the role to participate and question the municipality were identified by the Ward Committee members. |
| | Consideration of potential meaningful citizen engagement within the legislative constraints:<br>The key finding in this question is the display of belief and the willingness by all participants to see the citizens being engaged meaningfully. As such, the Ward Committee members were also vocal in that the processes could be enhanced by the introduction of new ways of engagement. The members even committed to working hard if needed to do so, in order to ensure that meaningful citizen engagement becomes a reality. |

## 6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In order to establish whether the research questions were adequately addressed by the data gathered and analysed in this chapter, it is important to revisit the purpose of the research. In brief, the purpose of this study was to explore whether implementing the meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the Integrated Development Planning and budgeting processes would address service delivery challenges faced by the local government in South African. Based on the above purpose statement, research questions were identified, with the main question being the embodiment of the purpose. Out of the four research questions proceeded the themes that guided the study from data collection to

the interpretation and analysis of same. The aim of the summary is to examine whether the research problem and purpose, as well as the research questions were addressed or not.

In measuring the understanding of the meaningful citizen engagement concept by the participants, the chapter shows that there was a disparity in understanding, with the Senior Officials and Ward Councillors being better off than the Community Members and Ward Committee members. The second theme considered the link between the current mechanisms of citizen engagement and the notion of meaningful citizen engagement. From the findings of the study, it appeared that there was no nexus between the two, and this exposed the weakness of the former. With the exception of few Senior Officials and Ward Councillors, the majority of the participants confirmed the assertion of the problem statement, that the current mechanisms were passive, lacked depth, and thus not offering meaningful spaces to the citizens.

The next theme considered the potential of meaningful citizen engagement to promote better planning in the local government. This theme proved to be the core of the entire research as it confronted the research purpose and the main research question directly. The various interview questions under this theme sought to validate the assumption of the study and the main research question, which posit that meaningful citizen engagement would lead to better planning and the amelioration of service delivery. In introducing the discarded concept of community-based planning (CBP) into the research, the theme managed to draw real insights from the participants. Emerging from these was a common perception from all participants that the current public participation mechanisms would be enriched by the introduction of the CBP, which closely resembles the ideal meaningful citizen engagement. This implied that the current mechanisms of citizen engagement were short of being meaningful, and thus not offering sufficient deliberative spaces to the citizens.

Furthermore, the research acknowledged the limitations posed by the legislation on citizen engagement, and sought to establish the implications thereof. Most participants, particularly the public office-bearers, agreed with the researcher on the identified limitations. What emerged from the pattern of responses is that most participants were willing to work hard in order to mitigate such limiting legislative requirements. This

willingness included operating outside the legislated timeframes in order to achieve meaningful citizen engagement.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The inevitable reality that is facing the post-apartheid local government is to meet the ever increasing basic needs of the entire citizenry, including those that were previously excluded. The democratic dispensation enhanced the role and status of local government in South Africa, from being a mere administrative unit into an independent sphere of government (RSA, 1996: 81-82; De Visser 2009). Being the sphere that is closest to the people, the local government is often one that faces the brunt of citizens' anger when the promises of the new democratic government are not realised. Chief amongst many factors that have impacted on the relationship between the citizens and the municipalities are the ineffective public participation approaches that are viewed as passive and lacking in depth (Marais et al., 2007). This failure has resulted in the lack of meaningful engagement amongst the key stakeholders within the local government, namely, the citizens, the ward councillors, the officials, the civic organisations and the business sector.

The citizens' distrust of, and dissatisfaction with the municipal leadership has been evidenced through the violent protests that are directed at the municipalities by the local citizens. Amongst the reasons proffered for the protests is a lack of opportunities or spaces for meaningful engagement between the citizens and the municipalities on service delivery issues (Friedman, (2010) in Buccus, 2010).

This research was born out of the concern for the perceived failure of the public participation approaches and mechanisms that are currently employed by the local government in the country (Fourie & Reutener, 2012; Friedman, 2006; Kabemba, 2003; Hicks, 2007; Hicks & Buccus: 2007; Langa & Jerome: 2004; Smith, 2004). The purpose of this research was to explore whether the meaningful practice of citizen engagement in the Integrated Development Planning and budgeting processes of the local government would resolve the current service delivery quandary and backlogs that are experienced by this sector. Following is the main research question that guided the inquiry: Will the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms in the local government lead to the alleviation of service delivery and developmental backlogs (better service delivery)? Out of this main question emanated the thesis of this study, which claimed that

meaningful citizen engagement in the planning and budgeting processes at local government may lead to better service delivery.

The research was interested in understanding the participants' experiences of the phenomenon, and what it means to them. In other words, the research attempted to understand the participants' world views, their first-hand experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Merriam, 2002), and their perspectives on the potential of meaningful citizen engagement to address the current service delivery challenges faced by the local government. It is worth to restate that meaningful citizen engagement occupies a pivotal place in the local polity in South Africa, as even the most politically arrogant citizens have begun to question the manner in which the local government engages them. Recent incidents have served to highlight the concerns of the local citizenry with regard to the way the municipalities were relating to them. This led to what has been termed a 'crisis in the credibility of local government', and has manifested itself through, *inter alia*, violent service delivery protests by the poorer communities and legal actions by the wealthier communities (NT, 2011:22-23).

## 7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In addressing the research problem and the stated research questions, and through the review of literature, the study managed to contribute new knowledge to the field of public participation in the local government sphere. New knowledge first emanated from the introduction and the definition of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement into the local governance discourse. It was clearly demonstrated in the research how the concept of meaningful citizen engagement leans on the notion of deliberative democracy. The reviewed literature confirmed a lack of deliberative and meaningful spaces for citizen engagement during the formulation of the IDPs and Budgets.

As such, the ideal concept of meaningful citizen engagement as introduced and unpacked in this research, promises a solution to the dearth of deliberation in the engagement of citizens. It is anticipated that further critique or analysis of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement and its definition would result in more knowledge creation.

Moreover, the research emphasized the application of deliberative democracy into the citizen engagement processes, which is currently not being pursued effectively. This represents a contribution to knowledge in that it has a potential of moving the current public participation process from its passive state to a more in-depth and meaningful exercise. This also has a potential of enriching and deepening local democracy, and restoring public trust to the local government. The research further recommended the employment of public deliberation as a tool to implement meaningful citizen engagement mechanisms into the system. This is due to the fact that public deliberation is a process in which deliberative democracy takes place (Delli Carpini et al., 2004:315). In this way, the research suggested an empirical dimension of the concept of meaningful citizen engagement. Furthermore, adopting the public deliberation approach has a potential of ameliorating the challenges of the current passive public participation system in that citizens will contribute more to the resolution of service delivery dilemmas.

The findings of the research from the interviews and focus groups served to enhance the empirical dimension of the research. Most respondents favoured the implementation of meaningful citizen engagement into the processes of IDP and Budget formulation. The quoted responses, particularly from the Ward Councillors, the Community Members and the Ward Committee members indicated that, the application of the concept in the engagement mechanisms of the local government would greatly improve the quality of the outcomes thereof. In agreement with the literature review on the most proffered reason for service delivery protests, more participants agreed that the lack of citizen voice was one of the causes of community distrust and dissatisfaction with their municipalities.

During the observations, for example, the study found that no sufficient spaces for public deliberation were opened. The public participation meetings for the presentation of the draft IDPs and Budgets, only served their true purpose, which was to present the proposed drafts for comments. No assurance could be identified that the inputs of the citizens would be considered prior to the finalisation of the documents. This was further exacerbated by the pressure to meet the deadlines for the approval of the Budgets and IDPs, as prescribed by the legislation. As alluded in the relevant section on the analysis of findings, the research also established that there was no monitoring and evaluation measures in place to ensure that the inputs of the citizens were not discarded after the meetings. Thus, the empirical

research findings validated the secondary data from the literature in confirming that the current public participation processes were not meaningful. In other words, the data from the fieldwork confirmed that the current spaces were not designed to 'engage' the citizens on the future plans. These mechanisms were only created for the purpose of compliance with relevant legislation. In the final analysis, the empirical findings reiterated a need for the implementation of an expanded version of the current processes, which has been termed meaningful citizen engagement in this research.

Lastly, the research introduced the criteria for assessing whether the conditions of meaningful citizen engagement are met or not. In the thesis, these are referred to as conditions of deliberative democracy. Even though the above-mentioned conditions were sourced from the literature, it is the first time that they are introduced as conditions to measure the meaningfulness of citizen engagement mechanisms.

## 7.3 RECOMMENDED PLAN OF ACTION

Based on the survey of literature for this research, as well as the findings from in-depth interviews and observations, the following recommendations are herewith proposed:

- That the local government sphere develops a new strategy wherein citizens would be engaged throughout the financial year, instead of quarterly periods. This may require the amendment of legislation or the proclamation of new regulations in order to comply with the law;
- Limitation of engagement activities to the affected locales or wards. This means doing away with the combination of different wards in a single public meeting as this has proved to be ineffective and chaotic;
- Introducing public deliberation into the meetings by involving the citizens from the agenda setting process up to the implementation of the decisions or plans. This would entail the emphasis of the 'bottom up' approach, wherein the affected citizens are enabled to define their own problem and to find their own solutions to address it;
- Encouragement of citizens to participate through the use of sampling methods during the invitations. This means that, specific individuals who are affected by the

problem should be identified beforehand (sampled) and the invitations targeted directly to them; and

- Introduction of specialist facilitators to conduct the public participation meetings, ensuring that all in attendance are able to follow the discussions and to contribute therein. The facilitators would also be responsible to record the decisions taken so that all in attendance would be held accountable for the implementation thereof.

## 7.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

As alluded above, citizen engagement in the local government occupies a pivotal place in the South African local polity, so much so that a number of research endeavours have been undertaken already (Smith, 2004; Marais et al., 2007; Booysen, 2007, Webler & Tuler, 2004; Gaventa, 2005). Notably, all the researchers attempt to unlock the puzzle that comes with public participation, mainly, of what its shortcomings are and where they emanated from (Fourie & Reutener, 2012; Ally, 2012; Andoh, 2011). Further to note is that various research interventions in South Africa have focused on the procedural dimensions of citizen engagement mechanisms, thereby neglecting the substantive gains that can be made out of the process.

This research undertook to explore and understand the effects that the meaningful citizen engagement phenomenon can have within the context of the local government. The intention of this research has been to examine whether the introduction of this new phenomenon would make a difference in the way services are planned for and delivered. The study sought to expand the empirical knowledge base, through accessing the experiences and the perspectives of the participants. In that way, the research findings were more practical and could easily be implementable in future, similar contexts.

The research findings pointed to a need for more structural and institutional changes in the conduction of citizen engagement within the local government sphere of South Africa. The findings, if acted upon, would have implications for both the local government and the citizenry at large. For the local government, the implications will be mostly felt on the financial and human resource areas. Whereas, for the citizens, the findings will affect their epistemological dimensions in that their knowledge base would be expanded beyond what they currently know and believe in. The implications of the study are discussed below.

### 7.4.1 Implications for the Institutional Arrangements

The relevant municipalities that formed part of this research, and the rest of the local government could face various institutional implications, should they choose to act on the findings of this research. The research findings indicated that, for the successful implementation of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government, new institutional arrangements were required. New institutional arrangements are key to enabling the role players in the process to freely maneuver from one approach to another without the fear of non-compliance with the legislation. The findings revealed that, apart from the rigid understanding of the citizen engagement by the office-bearers, certain actions would need to be taken to ensure that citizens are engaged meaningfully.

On the basis of the above, the local government enabling legislation would need to be considered, with a view of effecting necessary amendments where required. At the present moment, the processes that are followed are mainly conducted in order to comply with legislation, which action has been found to be hampering the chances of expanding the spaces for engagement. It is for this reason that the current legislative prescripts would need to be reviewed in order to enable the municipalities to engage the citizens meaningfully. The main findings of this research suggested that an alternative option would be to conduct the engagement on the IDP and budget on a continuous basis. This may call for the enhancement of the institutional capacity in order to be able to handle the additional work load in a professional manner. As such, the municipalities may need to consider recruiting additional, sufficiently skilled staff components and to undertake the advanced training of the existing ones. Specific skills that may be required include those of qualified facilitators, those skilled in the deliberative practices and those who are skilled in the use and the management of social networking media.

Undertaking the proposed institutional arrangement would also mean that, in addition to new training, new work procedures would have to be introduced for the relevant officials dealing with citizen engagement. In order to realize the above, the financial implications are inevitable for the local government. However, it should be noted that such financial implications may not have adverse effects in the total human resource operating budgets as the municipalities always budget for various training programmes. In this case, funds could

simply be diverted from some other generic training to the newly identified skills-specific ones.

Finally, the local government would also need to consider certain initiatives that would help regain the trust of the citizens, as this was also repeatedly identified by the participants. Specific measures would need to be considered to enhance their brand names in order to shake away the bad images that led to them being mistrusted by the citizens they serve. This implies that there would be a need strengthen communication and marketing strategies, in order to ensure effective delivery of the message to the citizens. Needless to say, this exercise may also lead to the additional financial implications to those municipalities that do not have the marketing and communication capacity in-house.

It is important to state here that the above-mentioned financial implications would yield better results in the long run as the citizens and the municipalities work together to address local issues.

### 7.4.2 Implications for the Citizenry

The research findings on the roles and responsibilities of the citizens suggested a need for the acceleration of public education or outreach as identified by some research participants. The areas that require more attention are the education on the local government legislation, education on their roles and responsibilities in regard to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the IDPs and the budgets, and education on the importance of active citizenship. This will require a sustained drive to reach and mobilise the citizens into understanding and participating in the outreach programmes. The stated areas of attention for the proposed outreach programmes have been a feature in the findings from various interviews. Many participants, especially the Ward Councillors and Community Members repeatedly singled out the need for the introduction of public education. Furthermore, the observations on various public meetings revealed very poor attendance by the citizens, others did not even know what the meetings were called for. This revealed a level of ignorance and lack of interest in the local governance issues. It is believed that enhancing the knowledge of the citizens on the identified areas would ensure that they participate meaningfully and raise relevant issues in the appropriate forums. The

public education is also expected to capacitate the communities on the deliberative skills by empowering them with communication and public speaking skills.

Apart from the financial implications to implement the above findings, the citizens will also be required to play an important, active role. This means that citizens will be required to sacrifice their time in order to attend the programmes, and to attend the meetings and workshops. More important is that citizens will have to be very active in the local government affairs in order for them to be familiar with the current affairs. As such, this means more responsibilities for the citizens, as well as being more vigilance.

## 7.5 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The research has identified some gaps in the literature that would need to be addressed in future, some of which are briefly discussed below. The research pointed to the dwindling interest in the attendance of meetings by the citizens, as lamented by the participants and confirmed by the non-participant observations. Various reasons were provided by the participants for this phenomenon, which all lack scientific evidence. For most of the Ward Councillors and Community Members, the assumption is that the perceived lack of interest was a result of dissatisfaction with the manner in which municipalities are governed. Whereas, the Senior Officials viewed the lack of interest as ignorance and lack of understanding on the part of the citizens. This effectively means that no one knows for sure what is behind the dwindling participation in the public meetings. As such this calls for an empirical research in order to understand the causes and to recommend solutions to the alleged problem.

Several proposals to improve meaningful citizen engagement in the local government were identified in this research and these require further investigation. The new study should be directed at the possible introduction of deliberation into the current citizen engagement processes with a view of phasing in the fully-fledged concept. The possible study should also entail the analysis of the current processes and recommend what needs to be amended or added in order to infuse the deliberative culture therein. This can also be achieved through the publication of papers from this study, on the theory and practice of

public deliberations. This could also be achieved through the development of some form of guideline or manual from this research for the training and guidance of the practitioners.

The analysis and evaluative studies on the use of social media will also help to expand the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in order to reach the wider population. This will also be achieved through the publication of papers from this thesis to address relevant topics.

Furthermore, the research findings from the comparative profiling of the sampled municipalities, had raised questions on the linkage between the municipal achievements on the AGSA audit findings on PDOs and the actual service delivery performance. This warrants the commission of further research as it is currently not helping those who consume such reports. Such audit findings may well be regarded as misleading as the empirical findings of this research revealed the opposite of what has been reported in most instances.

## 7.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research took a comparative approach on all the sampled municipalities as units of analysis of the phenomenon, and in order to establish whether there was a nexus between the delivery of basic services and the participatory planning therein. The audit outcomes report from the Auditor-General of South Africa was employed as a measure and criteria to select and examine the sampled municipalities on the above aspects. As alluded elsewhere in the thesis, the comparative analysis and profiling of the municipalities revealed that skewed development patterns were still alive, making it impossible to say with much certainty that one municipality was performing better than the other. The comparative profiling revealed that those areas with affluent communities possess better infrastructure, thus receiving better services than those with poor communities. This resulted from the outcomes of decades of separate development planning that banished and marginalized the poor towards the outskirts of the urban edge.

As such, the research found that all the municipalities, including those that were found to be performing better when audited, were failing to address the growing needs of the poor and marginalized communities within their areas. These findings raised questions of the

relationship between the clean or unqualified audit findings and actual service delivery by the municipalities, and deserve further studies.

Moreover, this research has effectively demonstrated a need for enhancing the efforts of engaging the citizens in a meaningful way within the local government. Recent research has called for the opening of effective (reads meaningful) spaces of engagement for the citizens, which implied that the current spaces are not sufficient. It can be argued that the government of South Africa has long been aware of such a need, as evidenced by the existing of various progressive legislation that enable citizen engagement in the local sphere of government. Furthermore, it can be argued that, the local government has, so far, been unable to convert the good intentions of the legislative framework into a positive outcome.

Even though this research has engaged with all the issues, more research is still needed to expand on other areas that have not been fully addressed herein. Broadening research into the issues that pertain the interface amongst all local government stakeholders, for example, may help to highlight the gaps into the citizen engagement continuum. This may reveal other challenges and issues that have not been addressed by this research, and in that way, suggest more appropriate resolutions thereof.

The findings of this research have been presented in a manner that invites more engagement from the stakeholders within the local government. The findings will present the interested parties with opportunities of further deliberating on the issues raised in regard to the general nature of democracy in the local government, and citizen engagement in particular.

The end result of this research will be the introduction of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement discourse in the local governance. Strong arguments have been proffered and supported by the findings, on the advantages of implementing the mechanisms that lean on the notion of meaningful citizen engagement in the local government. Furthermore, the findings have also highlighted some of the possible challenges towards the successful implementation of the concept as developed and discussed in this thesis. As is the case with all research, what remains to be done after this

research is an orientation to actions that would result in the successful implementation of the notion of meaningful citizen engagement.

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