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**AN ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
SELECTED WARD COMMITTEES IN THE CITY OF CAPE
TOWN**

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SMTCHE007

A minor dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of Master of Social Science in Political
Studies

Faculty of the Humanities

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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.....Date:.....

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University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates public participation at local government level in South Africa, namely, the ward committee system. It will look at the extent to which ward committees, as instruments of public participation, can be said to empower citizen involvement in local government decision-making. Therefore the research question is what do the processes of public participation reveal about public empowerment at municipal government level?

To realise the objectives of this study, Fung and Wrights Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) model is applied to five ward committees in diverse-socio-economic areas in the southern suburbs in the city of Cape Town. It should be noted that EPG is a possible model that can be used to enhance participation and facilitate empowerment at municipal government level.

Fung and Wrights EPG model focuses on three institutional design properties necessary to enhance the effectiveness of ward committees within municipalities: (1) *Devolution*: assessing the extent to which political and administrative power was devolved to ward committees, (2) *Centralised supervision and coordination*: assessing whether and to what extent formal linkages of responsibility, such as communication and resource distribution, existed between ward committees, ward councillors and the office of the speaker, and, (2) *State centred, not voluntaristic structures*: assessing the extent to which ward committees formed part of the municipality rather than being an additional voluntary structure outside of the municipality.

It also included focusing on three principle design features of ward committees: (a) *Practical orientation*: assessing whether and to what extent ward committee members focused and reported on practical and real world problems that they and their constituents could relate too and identify with. (b) *Bottom-up participation*: assessing the composition of ward committees and whether ordinary citizens constituted the majority of the ward committee membership , and, (3) *Deliberative solution generation*: assessing whether and to what extent ward committee members solved problems through processes of reasoned deliberation, joint-planning, and strategizing in conjunction with their ward councillors.

This list of criteria was used to investigate the effectiveness of five diverse socio-economic wards in the southern suburbs of the city of Cape Town. Thus a multiple case study strategy is employed and the methods of data collection contributing to the analyses of these selected wards includes participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 'key informants': ward councillors and a representative from the office of the speaker. The data was collected between June and July 2012, and revealed that from a small number of selected cases, participation at ward level constitutes a moderate level of empowerment, where participation takes the form of informing, consultation, placation and or partnerships.

The ward committee system is therefore not a structure that gives citizens the ultimate level of empowerment and one that takes the form of delegated power. Since the ward committee system has not yet allowed citizens to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on the state and define, plan and decide what projects will benefit their lives directly, citizens remain moderately empowered.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1) Introduction

This study investigates public participation at local government level in South Africa, namely, the ward committee system. It will look at the extent to which ward committees, as instruments of public participation, can be said to empower citizen involvement in local government decision-making. Therefore the research question is what do the processes of public participation reveal about public empowerment at municipal government level?

1.2) Background and motivation for the study

Participatory local governance emerged as a result of a democratic deficit, which governments from both northern and southern democracies faced.¹ Citizens continuously voted their governments into power by way of elections with the hope that these governments would respond to their basic needs, such as, in the case of South Africa, the delivery of public services, and would alleviate high levels of poverty and inequality.² However, when this did not occur, the citizens became frustrated and less inclined to participate in government, to the point of non-involvement in political participation processes instituted by the state: those structures by means of which they could hold their national, provincial and local governments accountable and monitor their performances.³

¹ John. Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation? Deepening the Deepening Democracy Debate*, (2006):8[Online]. Available: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp264.pdf> [2011 November,20]

² Imraan. Buccus and Janine. Hicks, "Crafting New Democratic Spaces: Participatory Policy-making in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa" *African Politics: Beyond the Third Wave Democratisation*, (2008):151[Online]. Available: <http://www.jutaacademic.co.za/africanpolitics/chapters/chapter8.pdf>[2011 November,20]; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 9.

³ Buccus and Hicks,152.

In seeking a solution, governments across both northern and southern democracies adopted reforms in the 1990's to promote decentralisation processes across all spheres of government such as in national, provincial and local government.⁴ Like many other democracies, South Africa followed suit, as is evident in the Constitution (1996) which regards local government as a distinctive, interdependent and interrelated sphere of government⁵ with its key objective being to “encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matter of local government.”⁶ This objective clearly indicates that the role of citizens goes beyond just electing their council representatives, and that the role of their council representatives involves more than simply consulting with citizens. Both parties should be actively engaged with one another.⁷ Given that local government was the sphere of government closest to the people, its role, as set out in the Constitution (1996), was supplying basic goods and services to communities. However, in this context citizens were now required to be involved in local government decision-making processes. When this did not happen, the new dispensation government passed various pieces of legislation including the White Paper on Developmental Local Government (1998); a piece of legislation in support of public participation.⁸

⁴ Andrea. Cornwall and Vera.S. Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change? The politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas*. (London, Zed Books, 2007):1; Andrea. Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces: situating participation in development, IDS Working Paper 170*, (2002):14 [Online]. Available: <http://www.drc-citizenship.org/system/assets/1052734369/original/1052734369-cornwall.2002-making.pdf?1289311080> [2011 November,20]; Harry.Blair, “Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries”, *World Development* 28 1(2000):21 [Online]. Available: <http://www.linkinohub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0305750X99001096> [2012, January 10]

⁵ Constitution, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, (1996), 25.

⁶ Ibid, 81.

⁷ Imraan. Buccus, David. Hemson, Janine. Hicks and Laurence. Piper , “ Community Development and engagement with local governance in South Africa,” *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* (2008):300.; Piper and Tapscott,6.

⁸ Ward Committee Resource Book, *Best practices and lessons learnt for municipal officials, councillors and local governance practitioners*, chapter 2 (2005):13. [Online]. Available: http://www.westerncape.gov.za/Text/2006/2/ward_committee_resource_book.pdf [2012, January,13]

Yet it was the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 that obligated municipalities to “develop a culture of municipal governance that worked hand-in-hand with formal representative government (that is elected leaders) with a system of participatory governance (that is community participation).”⁹The ward committee system was thus created as a participatory structure. Through the ward committee citizens could engage with their respective municipal government officials on issues such as the (1) Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process; (2) Performance Management System (PMS); (3) Municipal Performance; (4) the municipal budget, and (5) strategic decisions pertaining to public services or the procedure for voicing grievances relating to major service delivery issues.¹⁰

The rationale behind the ward committee system was to bridge the divide between local municipalities and their communities. Ward committees came to be understood as filling a space, acting as a channel of communication because of their members’ background knowledge and understanding of the communities they represented. Hence, they served to channel information about community needs, concerns and preferences back to their ward councillors, who in turn conveyed this information and these issues to the council.¹¹

⁹ Ibid, 14.

¹⁰ Ward Committee resource Book, 15-16.; Laurence. Piper and Christopher. Tapscott , *Mediation: The Missing Middle in South Africa. ANC Party dominance, Social Movements and Participatory Governance in South Africa*, (2011):6 [Online]. Available: [http:// www.saopaulo2011.ipso.org/sites/default/files/papers/paper-944.pdf](http://www.saopaulo2011.ipso.org/sites/default/files/papers/paper-944.pdf) [2011 August,12].; Janine. Hicks, “ Strengthening womans participation in local governance: lessons and strategies,” *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal*(2010): i36.

¹¹ Ward committee resource book, 11.; Laurence . Piper and Bettina. Von Lieres, *Inviting Failure: Citizen Participation and Local Governance in South Africa*, (2008):1 [Online]. Available: http://www.fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sc/pipervonlieres.pdf[2011 August, 12].

Consequently, many researchers who have studied the ward committee system have found it to be flawed based in terms of the principles of its design and implementation. Because of these weaknesses, the ward committee system has not functioned in a manner that has provided citizens with the opportunity to influence and change planning policies and outcomes.¹²

Against this background I intend my study to extend beyond the confines of a model of public participation based upon a normative account as to why it is necessary for citizens to participate in local government, the benefits of such participation, and the strengths and weaknesses of institutionalised structures and processes to facilitate such participation. My intention is to investigate and measure the effectiveness of existing ward committees in coordinating and facilitating public participation at local government level, and in a way that leads to greater public empowerment through citizens' direct involvement in decision-making processes that impact directly on their lives. It is my hope that this study will contribute to existing scholarship in the field of participatory local governance and assist policymakers in the field of public participation.

1.3) Research objectives

For almost two decades South Africa has been committed to a particular type of participatory democracy, a representative democracy. In this context it is therefore imperative that the participation process establishes links between citizens and their representatives which ensure a sense of ownership over formal decision-making processes and improve public participation dynamics.

¹² Piper and Von Lieres, 12.; Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper, 299.; Tanja. Winkler, "Retracking Johannesburg: Spaces for participation and Policy making", *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31 3 (2011): 258.

Crucial to this kind of participation, and the citizen empowerment that flows from it, is the increased accountability of public representatives to their constituents. Over the years, many theorists of the representative democracy model have presented different approaches that argue for a representative democracy that develops effective institutionalised structures in ways that lead to deeper forms of expression on the part of citizens. These theoretical approaches, referred to as the 'deepening of democracy', range from (1) representative democracy; (2) participatory democracy; (3) deliberative democracy; and (4) empowered participatory governance (EPG).¹³In order to address the main research problem, one theoretical approach, the empowered participatory governance model (EPG) was applied to the ward committee system as a possible option to enhance participation and facilitate empowerment at municipal government level. The objectives of the study are realised by focusing on three institutional design properties necessary to enhance the effectiveness of ward committees within municipalities:

- *Devolution*: assessing the extent to which political and administrative power was devolved to ward committees.
- *Centralised supervision and coordination*: assessing whether and to what extent formal linkages of responsibility, such as communication and resource distribution, existed between ward committees, ward councillors and the office of the speaker.
- *State centred, not voluntaristic structures*: assessing the extent to which ward committees formed part of the municipality rather than being an additional voluntary structure outside of the municipality,

¹³ Cornwall and Coelho, *Spaces for Change? The politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas*,3&5.; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*,9.; Buccus and Hicks, *Crafting New Democratic Spaces*,152.; Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces: situating participation in development*,5.

These objectives also included focusing on three principle design features of ward committees:

- *Practical orientation*: assessing whether and to what extent ward committee members focused and reported on practical and real world problems that they and their constituents could relate too and identify with.
- *Bottom-up participation*: assessing the composition of ward committees and whether ordinary citizens constituted the majority of the ward committee membership.
- *Deliberative solution generation*: assessing whether and to what extent ward committee members solved problems through processes of reasoned deliberation, joint-planning, and strategizing in conjunction with their ward councillors.¹⁴

1.4) Research methodology

For the research study I used a qualitative approach, by means of employing a multiple case study strategy focusing on five wards in diverse socio-economic areas of the southern suburbs in the city of Cape Town. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of two months between June and July 2012. To fulfil the objectives of my study I used participant observation and semi-structured interviews with key informants: ward councillors and a representative from the office of the speaker in the city of Cape Town.

¹⁴ Archon,Fung and Erik.O.Wright, "Deepening Democracy:Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance," *Politics and Society* 29 (1) (2001):17-21.

1.5) Overview of chapters

The study is organised into six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter provides a conceptual overview, setting out the background to the emergence of participatory local governance as a result of a 'democratic deficit.' In this context concepts such as 'participation' and 'empowerment' are defined, and various forms of participation are discussed in order to provide an understanding of what would constitute citizen empowerment. The focus then shifts to public participation in the context of South African local government: the participatory initiatives employed, such as the ward committee system, the practical challenges experienced by the ward committee system and the theoretical perspectives as to how to make public participation at local level more transformative in practice.

The third chapter outlines various theoretical approaches to studying public participation and empowerment at local government level. This is followed by a framework for the analysis of the findings of my research from investigating the processes of public participation, i.e. the ward committee system and what these ward committees reveal about public empowerment at municipal government level.

The fourth chapter discusses the research approach and design together with providing details about the data collection methods used: participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The limitations of the study and the research ethics are also discussed.

The fifth chapter provides an analysis of wards observed and includes data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants: ward councillors and a representative from the office of the speaker.

Chapter six provides the conclusion to the overall study and makes certain recommendations in terms of deepening participatory democracy.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

2.1) Introduction

The purpose of this conceptual overview is to clarify the meanings and assumptions related to public participation and public empowerment at local government level. The chapter starts by setting out a background to the emergence of participatory local governance as a result of a 'democratic deficit' in the course of the twentieth century in both northern and southern democracies. In this specific context concepts such as 'participation' and 'empowerment' are defined, and various forms of participation discussed, in order to provide an understanding of what would constitute citizen empowerment. Thereafter the focus shifts to public participation in the context of South African local government, and includes the participatory initiatives employed at local government level, such as the ward committee system, the challenges faced in practice and in terms of theoretical perspectives as to how to make public participation at local level more transformative.

2.2) Democratic Deficit: The emergence of 'participatory local governance'

During the twentieth century as democracy began to spread across countries in both the north i.e. Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and, in the south i.e. parts of Asia and Africa, governments faced a crisis. There seemed to be an ever-increasing divide developing between the state and its people.¹⁵

¹⁵ John. Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation? Deepening the Deepening Democracy Debate*, (2006):8-9[Online]. Available: <http://www.drc-citizenship.org/.../1052734506-gaventa.2006-triumph.pdf> [2011 November,20]

To many authors this could be attributed to what came to be termed a 'democratic deficit.' Buccus and Hicks see this 'deficit' in terms of limitations of the liberal democracy model, as "the failure of established liberal notions of representative or participatory democracy to link citizens with the institutions and processes of the state, impacting on the quality and vibrancy of democracy and resulting in reduced accountability."¹⁶

Citizens from both northern and southern democracies voted their governments into power by way of elections with the intention that they would respond to their basic needs such as the delivery of public services and alleviate high levels of poverty and inequality. When governments seemed slow or lacking in these areas, citizens became disappointed and frustrated. Not only had they become sceptical about whom they elected as their leaders to address their concerns but another factor, corruption did not sit well with citizens adding to their mistrust of political parties and state institutions.¹⁷

As a result, citizens from both northern and southern democracies became less inclined or not involved in political participation processes instituted by the state, structures where they could hold their governments accountable and monitor their performance. Democracy seemed to be diminishing as the gap between citizens and their government institutions widened, placing further strain on an already disconnected relationship between the state and its people.¹⁸

¹⁶ Imraan. Buccus and Janine. Hicks, "Crafting New Democratic Spaces: Participatory Policy-making in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa" *African Politics: Beyond the Third Wave Democratisation*, (2008):152[Online]. Available: <http://www.jutaacademic.co.za/africanpolitics/chapters/chapter8.pdf>[2011 November,20]

¹⁷ Ibid,151; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 9.

¹⁸ Buccus and Hicks, 152.

In seeking a solution to this democratic deficit, both northern and southern democratic governments adopted reform measures to promote decentralisation processes during the 1990's. The reforms were focused not primarily only at national level but at local government level as well.¹⁹ Local government can therefore be defined in general terms "as a decentralized representative institution with general and specific powers devolved to it in respect of an identified restricted geographical area within a state."²⁰

According to this definition, local government is an integral sphere of democratic, representative government because it is that sphere which is closest to the people in comparison to national or provincial government, and has the enormous responsibility task of providing goods and services to communities.²¹

¹⁹ Andrea. Cornwall and Vera.S. Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change? The politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas*. (London, Zed Books, 2007):1; Andrea. Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces: situating participation in development, IDS Working Paper 170*, (2002):14[Online]. Available: <http://www.drc-citizenship.org/system/assets/1052734369/original/1052734369-cornwall.2002-making.pdf?1289311080> [2011 November,20]; Harry.Blair, "Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries", *World Development* 28 1(2000):21 [Online]. Available: <http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0305750X99001096> [2012,January 10]

²⁰ Sanjiv. K. Babooa, *Public Participation in the making and Implementation of Policy in Mauritius with reference to Port Louis' local government*, (2008):19[Online]. Available: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/3064/thesis_babooa_s.pdf?sequence=1 [2012,February 12]

²¹ Dumisani Nyalunga, " An enabling environment for public participation in local government," *International NGO Journal* 1 (1) (2006):1[Online]. Available: https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:lo-rrZql1IAJ:www.ddp.org.za/information-material/articles/An%2520enabling%2520environment%2520for%2520public%2520participation%2520in%2520local%2520government.pdf/download+D.Nyalunga,+An+enabling+environment+for+public+participation+in+local+government,&hl=en&gl=za&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjRbk1zUUaqEY-4LBDVgaQtDgFnxBAI-VLo7EnL_HOjAoEz1JraugIMOBgReYlysD8hI0cU4piw43o9Fgbh3V8F7v_fxXjBLtNAHsFeAh5EqJ50kYAGQdai1tqIQ9ieAdwc4QN&sig=AHIEtbSsw6oXysjSjZeSwfF9NvdS6Ql8w [2011 November,15]. ; Blair,21.

Decentralisation processes that were initially adopted at local government level stemmed from market based approaches to public goods and were based on public choice theory. Public choice theory recognises individuals as motivated by self-interest, only seeking to capitalize on public funds and power. However, this approach has resulted in a lack of responsiveness of local government structures to the needs of citizens and inefficient delivery of services to citizens.²²To rectify this problem, governments looked at another reform, the New Public Management (NPM) approach. However, this was yet another market based approach stemming from the private sector and which was to be applied to the public sector, and, "It focused on outcome orientated partnerships between the public and private sector to provide services to citizens."²³

NPM comprised of two main components economics and private management. The former was concerned with achieving defined objectives, or 'outputs', by allowing choice through markets, while the latter aimed at advocating greater managerial flexibility within public sector organisations.²⁴The main aim of the NPM approach was to get local government to run more efficiently and to provide quality services to communities.²⁵However, the inception of such an approach meant that citizens were no longer regarded as beneficiaries of such services, but users and choosers thereof.²⁶

²² Mildred. E. Warner and Germa' Bel, "Competition or monopoly? Comparing privatization of local public services in the US and Spain," *Public Administration* 86 (3) (2008):724 [Online]. Available: <http://www.ub.edu/graap/BelPA.pdf> [2012 May, 1]

²³ G. Sabbir.Cheema, *From Public Administration to Governance: The Paradigm Shift in the Link between Government and Citizens*, (2004):2 [Online]. Available: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan020731.pdf> [2011,May 24]

²⁴ Owen.E. Hughes, *Public Management and Administration: An Introduction*, Third Edition. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan,2003), 60.

²⁵ Ibid,64.

²⁶ Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*,13.

It was assumed that if citizens paid for their services they would value them more. However, this approach, although it did contribute to the efficient delivery of public services, it catered mainly to those who could afford to pay for such services over those who could not.²⁷ As a result of this approach to local government management, democracy has in fact been downsized in the sense that, “participation and empowerment were progressively recast within the market idiom.”²⁸ Decentralisation processes had thus fallen short of a fundamental democratic component: the participation of the public in local government decision-making processes.²⁹ Recognising this flaw, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) advocated for an emerging trend known as ‘governance’.³⁰ Governance aimed at combining the marketization principles of NPM with two added components: (1) the involvement of citizens in the service delivery process, and (2) accountability.³¹

Democratic local governance or developmental local government was endorsed by world global development agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UNDP, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as a strategy³² and generally regarded as “the meaningful authority devolved to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to the local citizenry, who enjoy full political rights and liberty.”³³

²⁷ Ibid,13-14.

²⁸ Ibid,14.

²⁹ Blair,21.

³⁰ United Nations, “World Sector Reform Report 2005:Unlocking the human potential for public sector reform” Chapter 1, (New York :2005),13.

³¹ Blair,22.

³² Ibid,22.

³³ Ibid,21.

This meant that citizens could now be involved in local government decision-making processes which impacted directly on their lives. Thus local democracy could be deepened, local governments legitimacy and long-term planning improved, while at the same time supporting development initiatives, and ultimately contributing to the empowerment of ordinary citizens.³⁴

It is in the context of this development of local government from a decentralised, public management, market driven model to a more public participatory model that the concept of participation and empowerment will be defined and expanded. In addition, those forms of participation which leads to citizen empowerment will be explored and described.

2.3) Conceptualising participation and empowerment

Participation

Participation in the context of democratic government has come to represent different things to different people. Cornwall sees participation in government in terms of people getting together either to vote, discuss and plan, or be informed about certain government initiatives at public meetings.³⁵ Thus in the context of democratic governance, in simple terms participation is taking part in processes be they social, political or of a cultural nature.³⁶

³⁴ David. Everatt, Hein. Marias and Nobayethi. Dube, "Participation for what purpose? Analysing the Depth and quality of public participation in the Integrated Development Planning Process in Gauteng," *Politikon* 37 (2-3) (2010):227.; Blair,22.

³⁵ Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*,2.

³⁶ Alexander. Sidorenko, *Empowerment and Participation in Policy Action on Ageing* ,(2006):1 [Online]. Available: <http://dfasuomi.stakes.fi/NR/ronlyres/ABF1AF26-5D33.../Sidorenko.pdf> 2012, January,15]

The World Bank (WB) sees participation in the context of democratic governance also as “...process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.”³⁷ From the perspective of this study, participation is conceptualised in terms of citizens taking part in the decision-making processes of any project, from the beginning stages of planning development initiatives, sharing in the benefits thereof up until the end stages of evaluating development initiatives.³⁸ Citizen participation is also closely associated with ‘empowerment’. Theorists take the view that participation goes beyond the process of people simply being invited to take part in political and developmental processes. According to some theorists, citizen participation in democratic local government should be about their empowerment.³⁹

Empowerment

In the context of government, empowerment can be understood as the transference of power in decision-making processes, and the distribution of resources, from a government to its people.⁴⁰ In this context empowerment is clearly about power.⁴¹ According to Gaventa, power can be classified according to four categories:

- (1) *Power over-* relates to the ability to act, control or influence another person’s thoughts and actions. A person either has or does not have power. This concept is a

³⁷ World Bank, *World Bank participation sourcebook*, (1996):XI [Online]. Available: <http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/SID-6CCCF7C0-AF2801EA/dokumente/en-SVMP-sourcebook-world-bank-intro-1997.pdf> [2011 November,20]

³⁸ Hedayat .A.Nikkah and Ma’rof .Redzuan, “Participation as a Meduim of Empowerment in Community Development,” *European Journal of Social Sciences* 11 1 (2009):172[Online]. Available: http://www.eurojournals.com/ejss_11_1_14.pdf [2011,November 20]

³⁹ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 223-224.

⁴⁰ Everatt, Marias and Dube,225;Nikkah and Redzuan,173.

⁴¹ Nikkah and Redzuan,173.

‘zero-sum’ approach. The way in which one gains power if one does not have it is to take it from those who do.⁴²

(2) *Power to-* is the ability to act, organise and change the hierarchical government structure by means of having access to decision-making processes. This is regarded as a ‘positive sum’ approach.⁴³

(3) *Power with-* means that power is gained through the collective strengthening of others rather than through taking power over others.⁴⁴

(4) *Power within* - power begins and resides with individuals by means of building their self esteem and changing their views about their individual rights, capacities and potential.⁴⁵

Empowerment can also be regarded in terms of making or creating of spaces to draw people in, particularly those from poorer more marginalised backgrounds.⁴⁶ Spaces can either be instituted by the state, from the top-down, known as ‘invited spaces’, or spaces can be created from the bottom-up by civil society, known as ‘organic spaces’.⁴⁷ Invited spaces are those official spaces regulated by the states which are opened up in order that citizens may interact with their representatives.⁴⁸ This process allows ordinary people to present their different views and opinions about policy decisions that affect their lives directly.⁴⁹

⁴² Cecilia.Luttrell; Sitna.Quiroz; Claire.Scrutton and Kate.Bird, *Understanding and Operationalising Empowerment*, (2009):6.[Online]. Available: <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/5500.pdf> [2012 April,20]; John. Gaventa, *Powerpack: Understanding Power for Social Change*,(2011):6.[Online].Available: <http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/powerpack-web-version-2011.pdf> [2012 April,20]

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*,2.

⁴⁷ Laurence. Piper and Christopher. Tapscott , *Mediation: The Missing Middle in South Africa.ANC Party dominance, Social Movements and Participatory Governance in South Africa*, (2011):2 [Online]. Available: <http://www.saopaulo2011.ipso.org/sites/default/files/papers/paper-944.pdf> [2011 August,12]

⁴⁸ Cornwall and Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 1.

⁴⁹ Blair, 3.

In this context, empowerment also involves the expanding of already existing spaces in government, i.e. 'invited spaces', to encompass other potential spaces for engagement such as 'organic spaces'.⁵⁰ An organic space is a term coined by Cornwall to describe the spaces created by citizens themselves. According to Cornwall, these spaces are formed by non power-holders (citizens) who share similar concerns about issues that affect their lives, and who strive for a common agenda. In this process they voice their concerns and needs to power-holders (the state) through popular protests or social movements.⁵¹ Invited spaces can arise out of organic spaces, and vice versa, each in the process of citizens' struggle for transformation, legitimacy, resistance or cooption.⁵²

In sum, empowerment is a process of change in the course of which individuals or groups with little or no power gain the confidence, self-esteem and power to express their grievances, to voice their concerns in participatory spaces, and to proceed in addressing those issues that affect their daily lives. The key to individuals or groups gaining control or power, and taking action, stems from their unrestricted access to relevant information and the development of their skills and capacities to make maximum use of that information, which in turn will benefit them.⁵³

⁵⁰ Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*, 2-3.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 17.

⁵² Samuel. Hickey and Giles. Mohan, Ed. *Participation from Tyranny to Transformation: Exploring new approaches to participation in development*. (London, Zed Books, 2004), 35.

⁵³ Nikkah and Redzuan, 173.

2.4) Forms of participation that lead to empowerment

Practitioners and researchers in the field of participatory government, through their studies of how programmes and projects have been implemented, have identified different forms of participation that have contributed to low, moderate or high levels of empowerment.⁵⁴ These typologies of participation although different, share certain commonalities that are explored in this section. This typology provides a means by which to determine the degree of scope citizens are afforded to influence decision-making processes themselves.⁵⁵

A) Low level of empowerment: (participation as a form of manipulation or coercion)

Participation that takes the form of manipulation⁵⁶ or coercion⁵⁷ by government officials is considered to be both the lowest form of participation and a low level of empowerment.⁵⁸ According to this type of participation, citizens are not involved in the planning or carrying out of projects, and thus have no control over the processes of participation or decision-making. Instead they are simply 'educated' about proposed-projects, or told what to do, rather than informed or consulted.⁵⁹ In addition, this type of citizen participation can be regarded as a "means to an order".⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Asnarulkhadi. A. Samah and Fariborz.Aref, "The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and Application of Community Empowerment and Participation in Processes of Community Development in Malaysia," *Journal of American Sciences* 7 2 (2011):186; Nikkah and Redzuan, 173-174.

⁵⁵ Samah and Aref, 188.

⁵⁶ Sherry.R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen participation," *JIAAP* 35(4)(1969):217.

⁵⁷ Samah and Aref, 190.

⁵⁸ Arnstein, 217; Nikkah and Redzuan, 172; Samah and Aref, 190.

⁵⁹ Arnstein, 217; Nikkah and Redzuan, 172; Samah and Aref, 190.

⁶⁰ Samah and Aref, 190.

The state is more concerned with achieving defined goals and objectives than with seeking the necessary input from citizens.⁶¹

B) Moderate level of empowerment :(participation as a form of informing ,consultation, placation and or partnerships)

Participation that takes the form of informing citizens, consulting with them,⁶² and placating them, the process of which citizens play an advisory role,⁶³ or they [citizens] form partnerships with government agencies,⁶⁴ is regarded as the first stage of encouraging and developing legitimate-in terms of participatory governance-forms of participation.⁶⁵

This type of participation generates a moderate level of empowerment because; (1) 'Informing' involves the dissemination of information to citizens by government officials. This provides an opportunity for the public to understand and be kept abreast of problems faced by local government, to be informed of the projected solutions to these problems, and available opportunities and alternatives. (2) 'Consultation' provides citizens with the opportunity to present their concerns and aspirations and to give feedback. In this process government listens and acknowledges citizens grievances and their suggestions and also provides citizens with feedback on the ways in which their input contributed to the making of decisions.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Nikkah and Redzuan,172;Samah and Aref,190.

⁶² Francois.Theron, Nicky. Ceasar and Ismail. Davids, *Participation According to IAP2 Principles: Opportunity or Challenge for Intergrated Development Planning in South Africa*, (2007):15 [Online]. Available: http://www.iap2.org.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/files/770/journal_issue1_idp.doc .pdf [2011 November,12]

⁶³ Arnstein, 222.

⁶⁴ Samah and Aref, 190; Theron, Ceasar and Davids, 15.

⁶⁵ Arnstein, 217; Samah and Aref, 190.

⁶⁶ Theron, Cesar and Davids, 15.

However, informing and consultation alone will not assure a change in the status quo in terms of participation which generates a moderate level of citizen empowerment. (3) 'Placation' for example is "to place a few hand-picked "worthy" poor on boards of Community Action Agencies."⁶⁷ Citizens on these boards are provided the opportunity to give advice or plan projects with government officials. However, their ability to influence decisions effectively and meaningfully remains limited, because power-holders (the state) maintain, "the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice."⁶⁸ (4) 'Partnerships' between citizens and power-holders (the state) means that both government officials and the public work directly with one another in every stage of the decision-making process, from planning development initiatives and projects, to identifying solutions to problems. The result of this collaboration is that citizens acquire various skills and knowledge from the developmental process.⁶⁹ In context specific South Africa, Gwala and Theron (2012) argue for an 'appropriate mix' of participation strategies combined with various forms of participation, "to allow the beneficiaries an empowering stake in their own development."⁷⁰

C) High level of empowerment : (participation as a form of delegated power and citizen control)

Participation that takes the form of delegated power and citizen control⁷¹ is not only considered the highest form of participation,⁷² but is also regarded as a high level of

⁶⁷ Arnstein, 222.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Theron, Ceasar and Davids, 15; Nikkhah and Redzuan, 174.

⁷⁰ Mzonzima Gwala and Francois Theron, Abstract: "Beyond community meetings: towards innovative participation in developmental local government," *The 13th International Winelands Conference Stellenbosch*, (2012) [Online]. Available: <http://www.deloitte.com/multifiledownload?solutionName=deloitte.com> [2012, November 10].

⁷¹ Arnstein, 217-218.

⁷² Ibid.

empowerment.⁷³ Participation is seen as an end goal as citizens are afforded the opportunity to be directly involved in development processes from planning to inception.⁷⁴

Citizens, in conjunction with responsible authority, are able to define, plan and decide what projects will benefit their lives directly and meaningfully. From this it can be deduced that the successful implementation of projects arises from the interaction between a state and its citizens in that the citizens' demands are met through their continued and direct involvement in development processes.⁷⁵ This involvement provides citizens with an opportunity to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on the state. They become more empowered as they have the space and develop the ability to do everything for themselves, rather than wait for the state to do it for them, including sustaining the life of a project, or creating and establishing new projects.⁷⁶

At this point citizens will have gained some form of control and level of decision-making authority in the development process.⁷⁷ It does not necessarily mean that citizens have seized power from the traditional holder of power (the state). Participation takes place within institutionalised structures created and regulated by the state itself, and thus the state's power is not reduced. Rather citizens change the power relationship that previously prevailed and dominated state structures within such structures, disadvantaging and disempowering citizens in the first place. Therefore this type of participation provides citizens with the opportunity to exercise their power (such as their active contribution and

⁷³ Nikkah and Redzuan, 173.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 173-174.

⁷⁵ Samah and Aref, 190.

⁷⁶ Nikkah and Redzuan, 174; Samah and Aref, 190.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 173-174; Ibid.

influence in decision-making processes) over state representatives in institutionalised structures.⁷⁸

In short, the high level of empowerment obtained “is not directly power that is taken by the people from the power-holder...,”⁷⁹ but resides in the citizens “ability to see the boundary of flexibility within the social structure and to take this opportunity to try their best to manoeuvre within these real spaces available to meet their own needs as a group at local level.”⁸⁰

2.5) Shifting patterns of public participation at local government level in South Africa

Popular Mobilisation in South Africa:

Given South Africa’s historical legacy, public participation is not an unfamiliar practice. Prior to 1994, the apartheid regime created a racially segregated society and a municipal government structure which ensured that participation by African, Asian and Coloured communities was suppressed.⁸¹ Apartheid regime policies resulted in the creation of eleven separate ethnic states, each having its own administrative system, government and legislation.⁸² South African cities were divided along racial and unequal social, spatial and

⁷⁸ Samah and Aref, 192.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Nyalunga, “An enabling environment for public participation in local government,” 1.

⁸² Robert Cameron and Chantal Milne, “Affirmative Action in the South African Public Service,” *commissioned paper for the World Bank*, Cape Town (2004):4.

economic lines.⁸³This was particularly evident at local government level, which was considered the lowest level of government in a hierarchical governmental structure.⁸⁴

During the 1980's in South Africa, each racial group was designated its own type of local government system but with very dissimilar and unequal powers and capacities. White Local Authorities (WLAs) governed and administered the areas in which whites resided and which were reserved for them over other races in accordance with segregation laws. Their municipalities were therefore fully developed, each consisting of a political council which included an administrative staff tasked with carrying out council duties and had taxation powers.⁸⁵

Asian and Coloured areas were officially managed by Management Boards and Local Affairs Committees. However, both these structures were dependent on either provincial administrations or on the administration of WLAs to provide necessary goods and services to their [Asian and Coloured] communities. These Management Committees were generally regarded as puppet structures established via elections characterised of white National Party (NP) members, with relatively low levels of Asian and Coloured participation.⁸⁶

Black people were forced to reside in areas that were underdeveloped and reserved for African communities.⁸⁷Black Local Authorities (BLAs) were tasked with governing and administering these areas, which lacked the basic infrastructure to enable BLAs to provide necessary goods and services to their communities, thus often gaining a reputation for

⁸³ Dumisani Nyalunga, "The revitalisation of Local Government in South Africa," *International NGO Journal* 1 (2) (2006):016[Online]. Available: <http://www.academicjournals.org/inqoj/pdf/Pdf2006/Nov/Nyalunga.pdf> [2012 May, 1]

⁸⁴ Nyalunga, "An enabling environment for public participation in local government," 1.

⁸⁵ Nyalunga, "The revitalisation of Local Government in South Africa," 015.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 015-016.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

inefficiency.⁸⁸ What became evident was that the apartheid local government system was designed to support and perpetuate an agenda of separation and exclusion of certain groups from government, thus limiting the opportunities for marginalised groups to participate in decision-making processes.⁸⁹ These policies of racial segregation instituted by the pre-1994 government gave rise to grass-root movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).⁹⁰

These movements gained support from marginalised communities in South Africa all uniting through protests in their fight for regime change, and the need for change in the way in which the majority of the population had been racially demarcated.⁹¹ This popular mobilisation can be regarded as an organic space of the 1980s and as contributing to the effective demise of apartheid rule.⁹² Following the collapse of an authoritative regime, South Africa ushered in a new democratically elected government in 1994. Most social movements of the 1980s either formed partnerships with each other or were absorbed into the African National Congress (ANC) government.⁹³ The new ANC government faced a stark reality. They had not only to unite a racially segregated society but also deal with a number of macro-economic and social challenges which people were convinced the new government could address and deliver on.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibid, 016.

⁸⁹ Nyalunga, "An enabling environment for public participation in local government," 1; Nyalunga, "The revitalisation of Local Government in South Africa", 061.

⁹⁰ Piper and Tapscott, *Mediation: The Missing Middle in South Africa. ANC Party dominance, Social Movements and Participatory Governance in South Africa*, 3.

⁹¹ Ibid, 3.; Nyalunga, "The revitalisation of Local Government in South Africa", 061.

⁹² Piper and Tapscott, *Mediation: The Missing Middle in South Africa. ANC Party dominance, Social Movements and Participatory Governance in South Africa*, 3.

⁹³ Ibid 3-4.

⁹⁴ Prof Mohammed. I. Jahed, *Structural transformation of economies: Lessons from the South*, (2010):4 [Online]. Available: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Knowledge/Session%201.1.4_1.Structural%20Transformation%20of%20Economies.pdf [2011, May 2]

Despite these challenges, South Africa like many other emerging democracies at the time, such as Latin America,⁹⁵ Brazil, India, Bolivia and the Philippines⁹⁶ established new institutional reforms across all spheres of government in an attempt to combat socio-economic problems. The South African Constitution (1996) lent support to this initiative. Chapter 3 of the South African Constitution (1996) states that national, provincial and local government are regarded as distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres of government.⁹⁷ Chapter 7 of the Constitution, Section 152 (1) outlines the objectives of local government: to “encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matter of local government.”⁹⁸ This objective indicates that citizens’ move beyond simply electing their council representatives, and that their council representatives move beyond simply consulting with citizens, that both actively engage with one another.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, public sector reform measures came under scrutiny considering the challenges government faced, in particular that faced by local government, the crucial promise of delivering basic social goods and services, in particular, to those from marginalised communities and those who could not afford to pay for private goods and services. This did not bode well for the ANC led government as citizens once again emerged from a hiatus of mass mobilisation that had once dominated the apartheid era to voice their concerns about poor delivery of services through grass-root movements.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ United Nations, 16.

⁹⁶ Piper and Tapscott, 2.; Laurence . Piper and Bettina. Von Lieres, *Inviting Failure: Citizen Participation and Local Governance in South Africa*, (2008):4 [Online]. Available: http://www.fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sc/pipervonlieres.pdf [2011 August, 12]

⁹⁷ Constitution, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, (1996), 25;

⁹⁸ Ibid, 81.

⁹⁹ Imraan. Buccus, David. Hemson, Janine. Hicks and Laurence. Piper , “ Community Development and engagement with local governance in South Africa,” *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* (2008):300.; Piper and Tapscott, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Piper and Tapscott, 5.

2.6) Legislative and Policy Frameworks for public participation at local government level

As has been described, the Constitution of 1996 made reference to the fact that citizens are required to be actively involved in local government decision-making processes. However, government, recognising that this was not the case in practice, and given that local government was tasked with the responsibility of supplying basic goods and services to communities, decided to combine New Public Management (NPM) reforms with emerging governance trends. The South African government thus passed various pieces of legislation at local government level in support of public participation. The White Paper on Developmental Local Government (1998) was introduced as a model that aimed at making local government “committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find long-term or sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of lives of the community.”¹⁰¹

Further stipulations indicated that “municipalities are encouraged to build local democracy by developing strategies and mechanisms to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups.”¹⁰² However, it was the Municipal Systems Act of (2000) that obligated municipalities to “develop a culture of municipal governance that works hand-in-hand with formal representative government (elected leaders) with a system of participatory governance (community participation).”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ward Committee Resource Book, *Best practices and lessons learnt for municipal officials, councillors and local governance practitioners*, chapter 2 (2005):13. [Online]. Available: http://www.westerncape.gov.za/Text/2006/2/ward_committee_resource_book.pdf [2012, January,13]

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 14.

This is considered a significant feature of the act in terms of developing a closer partnership between municipalities and their local communities because municipalities are responsible for the creation of structures and mechanisms that facilitate the participation of citizens in the affairs of municipalities. These include (1) Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process; (2) Performance Management System (PMS); (3) Municipal Performance; (4) the municipal budget (5) and channels for participating in strategic decisions pertaining to public services.¹⁰⁴

2.7) Participatory local governance in South Africa: Ward committees

The main 'invited space' introduced was the creation of the ward committee system.¹⁰⁵ In accordance with the June (2005) Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees, a ward committee is seen as:

- a) An advisory body;
- b) A representative structure;
- c) An independent structure; and
- d) An impartial body that must perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ward Committee resource Book, 15-16.; Tapscott and Piper, 6.; Janine. Hicks, " Strengthening womans participation in local governance: lessons and strategies," *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal*(2010): i36

¹⁰⁵ Ward Committee resource book, 20.; Piper and Von Lieres,1.; Laurence. Piper and Nonhlanhla. Chanza, *Too raw to represent: the marginalisation of youth in Msunduzi ward committees*,(2006):18.[Online]. Available:http://www.cpp.org.za/publications/critical_dialogue/vol2no1_2006/laurence.pdf [2012, January, 13]

¹⁰⁶ Smith and De Visser,10.

In terms of these features, a ward committee can therefore be described as a spatial sub-sector of a municipality and as both a representative and an independent structure.¹⁰⁷ Being a representative structure means that each ward of a municipality is required to set up a ward committee consisting of no more than ten people. Committee members are elected by the ward area local community, while the chairperson of the ward committee system is the ward councillor as stipulated in the Municipal Structures Act of (1998) Section 73 (2). “A ward committee consists of—(a) the councillor representing that ward in the council, who must also be the chairperson of the committee; and (b) not more than 10 other persons.”¹⁰⁸

Those elected have to represent the diversity of interests to be found within that ward, such as the youth, religious groups, sports and welfare, business, environment, education, and older persons etc, including an equitable representation of both men and woman.¹⁰⁹ The rules and regulations pertaining to the election of committee members are made by the Council as noted in the Municipal Structures Act of (1998) Section 73 (3):

A metro or local council must make rules regulating—
 (a) the procedure to elect the subsection (2)(b) members of a ward committee, taking into account the need—
 (i) for women to be equitably represented in a ward committee; and
 (ii) for a diversity of interests in the ward to be represented.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ward Committee resource book, 20; Piper and Von Lieres, 1.; Piper and Chanza, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Smith and De Visser,6.

¹⁰⁹ Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper, 300; Piper and Von Lieres, 1; Terence. Smith and Jaap. De Visser, *Are ward committees working? Insights from six case studies*, (2009): 11-12 [Online]. Available: <http://www.communitylawcentre.org.za> [2012 January , 13]

¹¹⁰ Smith and De Visser,6.

In terms of being an independent structure, a ward committee is required to perform its duties in a manner that is fair and unbiased, without fear or favour.¹¹¹ The main objective of the ward committee system was to bridge the divide between local municipalities and their communities. Ward committees can be understood to fill this space by acting as a channel of communication because of the background knowledge of members of the committee and their understanding of the communities they represent. Hence they serve to channel that information about community needs, concerns and preferences to their ward councillors, who in turn convey these issues to the council.¹¹²

The power and functions of ward committees relate to making recommendations that may affect their wards. They may put forward their recommendations through the ward councillor, or the councillor to the council, the executive committee, mayor or sub-council as noted in the Municipal Structures Act 1998 Section 74.¹¹³ Other duties and powers may also be delegated to the ward committee by the municipal council as it deems fit.¹¹⁴ The powers and duties of a ward committee as stipulated in the (2005) Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Ward Committees are:

- a) To serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality.
- b) To create formal unbiased communication channels as well as cooperative partnerships between the community and the council.
- c) To serve as a mobilising agent for community action within the ward (e.g. ensuring the active participation of the community in service payment campaigns, Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and budget processes and decisions about municipal services and by-laws.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Ibid, 10.

¹¹² Ward committee resource book, 11.; Piper and Von Lieres, 1.

¹¹³ Smith and De Visser, 7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 7.

¹¹⁵ Ibid,10.

Members of a ward committee may also express their dissatisfaction with their ward councillor's performance in writing to the municipal council. When it comes to capacity-building ward committees are required to develop and produce an annual capacity-building and needs assessment plan inclusive of a budget for each of its members. Meetings with ward committees are also required to take place on a regular basis in order for inputs from the community to be addressed regarding the delivery of services as well as other issues that might arise within the ward. This also allows ward councillors the opportunity to provide communities with feedback about issues that affect them.¹¹⁶

Municipalities are also required to make administrative arrangements that allow for ward committees to perform their duties effectively. These could range from getting administrative staff to perform functional duties pertaining to logistical arrangements, such as providing transport for ward committee members to and from meetings, supplying them with the necessary resources such as office equipment and stationary, disseminating information about meetings through the use of advertisements or other forms of media available; and developing educational training programmes for ward committee members to enhance their capacity and leadership skills.¹¹⁷ The responsibilities of municipalities to their ward committees also include providing financial assistance to ward committees from the allocated municipal budget. The length of terms of office of ward committee members are determined by the municipality and have recently been changed to a period of five years in accordance with the Local Government Laws Amendment Act of (2008).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

Although the South African government has made concrete efforts to foster greater citizen participation in local government, what has transpired in practice is somewhat different from the government's intentions.¹¹⁹ Researchers who have studied the ward committee system, and requirements for public consultation on the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) processes and the annual budget etc have agreed that ward committees have not functioned in a manner that effectively provides citizens with the opportunity to influence and change planning policies and outcomes.¹²⁰

Combinations of reasons have been provided ranging from (1) the politics of representation and the limited powers ward committees have, (2) their functional limitations as a result of poor administration by municipal staff, and (3) the fact that ward committees do not expand their terms of reference to include other forms of public participation.¹²¹ These reasons are explored in greater detail in this chapter.

¹¹⁹ Hicks, i40.; Theron, Ceaser and Davids, 2.; Imraan .Buccus and Ralph. Mathekga, *The Challenge of Local Government in South Africa: Securing Community Participation*, (2006): 11. [Online]. Available: <http://www.idasa.org/media/uploads/outputs/files/1%20Imraan%20%20Ralph1%20gayl1.pdf> [2012 January,13]

¹²⁰ Piper and Von Lieres,12.; Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper, 299.;Tanja. Winkler, "Retracking Johannesburg: Spaces for participation and Policy making", *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31 3 (2011): 258.

¹²¹ Piper and Von Lieres, 12; Mirjam. von Donk, "Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction: A Civil Society Perspective on Local Government in South Africa," *Good Governance Learning Network* (2011): 59-61. [Online]. Available: <http://www.eisa.org.za/PDF/sou2011ggln.pdf> [2012 November,8]

2.8) Politics of representation and power limitations

2.8.1) Representation

In accordance with the Structures Act the designers of ward committees are the municipalities.¹²² According to Smith and De Visser, research indicates that ward committees in South Africa have in fact become mere extensions of political parties. This development stems from the manner in which they have been constituted.¹²³ In the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) handbook (2005), the ward councillor is regarded as the chairperson and has the responsibility of convening the citizen meetings to elect committee members.¹²⁴

According to Smith and De Visser, researchers who have studied the ward committee have alleged that ward councillors have been directly involved in selecting committee members who share similar political ties or who are members of the same political party.¹²⁵ As a result, ward committees cannot be said to be broadly representative of wider community interest groups.¹²⁶ The research of Piper and Deacon in the Msunduzi Municipality in the Pietermaritzburg area lends supportive evidence to the above claims. Their research revealed a number of discrepancies related to the process of electing of ward committees including their lack of representivity.¹²⁷

¹²² Sophie. Oldfield, *Building Consensus and Conflict:Community Systems and Local Participatory Mechanisms in Democratising Local Governance* , (2007): 491. [Online]. Available: <http://www.princeton.edu/.../Oldfield,%20Building%20Consensus.pdf> [2012 February, 4]

¹²³ Smith and De Visser, 16.

¹²⁴ Smith and De Visser,11.

¹²⁵ Smith and De Visser,16.

¹²⁶ Smith and De Visser, 16.

¹²⁷ Laurence Piper and Roger Deacon, *Party politics, elite accountability and public participation:Ward Committee politics in the Mzunduzi Municipality*, (2008):72[Online].Available: <http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/transformation/article/view/989/804> [2012 May,4]

They note that “some ward councillors reported having sectoral representation with meetings in localised areas, some had one mass meeting, while others co-opted people from existing organisations.”¹²⁸ They further observed the close relationship ties between ward committee members and political party members. This was reflected in the representation of the ward committee system and contributed to its politicisation. For example, “...the IFP-associated ward committees looked extraordinarily similar to the IFP branches...”.¹²⁹ Furthermore, they indicated that an ANC ward councillor who wanted to avoid any hostility, “... had amalgamated the ward committee with the ANC branch into a single committee of 26 members.”¹³⁰ Research conducted by Piper and Chanza at the same municipality also revealed an under-representation of the youth in wards in the Msunduzi Municipality.¹³¹

In terms of legislation, ward committees are also required to record and convey their deliberations via the ward councillor.¹³² To deliberate means to provide reason-based arguments as to why a certain course of action should or should not be taken.¹³³ This form of discussion and debate is derived from the works of Habermas as a form of public communicative action that leads to understanding.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid,72-73.

¹³⁰ Ibid,72-73.

¹³¹ Laurence Piper and Nonhlanhla Chanza, *Too 'raw' to represent: the marginalisation of youth in Msunduzi ward committees*,(2006):20 [Online]. Available:http://www.cpp.org.za/publications/critical_dialogue/vol2no1_2006/laurence.pdf [2012, January, 13]

¹³² Piper and Von Lieres, 18; Oldfield,491.

¹³³ Joshua. Cohen and Archon .Fung, *Radical democracy*,(2004):26[Online]:Available:http://www.archonfung.com/docs/.../Cohen_Fung_Debate_SPSR2004.pdf [2012,January 15]; Andrew. Knops,“Delivering Deliberations Emancipatory Potential” *Political Theory* 34 (2006):4 [Online]. Available: <http://ptx.sagepub.com/content/34/594>[2012 January, 12]

¹³⁴ Knops, 5.

However, the under-representation of certain groups, including the political representation of ward committee members, causes a ripple effect when it comes time for them to deliberate and make and shape policy decisions.¹³⁵ By all account, deliberations and decision-making in these ward committees reflects specific political ends instead of the needs and preferences of communities.¹³⁶

2.8.2) Powers

Another aspect of the ward committee system that has been poorly designed and implemented pertains to their [ward committees] influence on IDP decision-making processes.¹³⁷ This can be attributed to a legislative design flaw: the Municipal Structures Act limits the formal powers of ward committees to providing advice to ward councillors by identifying potential problems that affect their wards, and deliberating on them.¹³⁸

The act does however, allow municipalities to entrust certain powers and duties to ward committees as a municipality deems fit, such as serving as the main officialised structure and unbiased channel of communication in the municipality, building cooperative partnerships between communities and their council using various means available, as well as guaranteeing the active participation of communities in the IDP processes.¹³⁹ Consequently, these duties and powers have not necessarily been delegated in a meaningful manner in terms of citizen participation by municipalities and this affects the way in which ward committees operate.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Smith and De Visser, 16.

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Ibid,20.

¹³⁸ Oldfield, 492.

¹³⁹ Smith and De Visser,10.

¹⁴⁰ Terence Smith, *The role of ward committees in enhancing participatory governance and development in South Africa: Evidence from six ward committee case studies*, (2008):14[Online]. Available: <http://www.ldphs.org.za/publications/publications-by-theme/local-government-in-south-africa/community->

Ward councillors also appear to have limited powers when it comes to addressing their constituents' multiple needs through the deliberation processes of municipal councils.¹⁴¹ As a result, ward committee decisions are not explicitly incorporated or integrated within local municipal Integrated Development Planning (IDP) processes or annual budgets, thus hampering their effectiveness and implementation. Ward committees therefore have little say in the planning, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation arising from these decision-making processes.¹⁴²

Instead the ward committee members serve merely as advisors to ward councillors and support local councils' prearranged positions and predetermined programmes at monthly council meetings.¹⁴³ As Oldfield points out:

Ward councillors are functionally challenged if there is no explicit way in which ward committee concerns structurally become part of council agenda's. Bound by the political party caucus processes and party structures, ward councillors often sit lower in political party hierarchies, with proportional representation councillors shaping party policy decisions.¹⁴⁴

In addition, although ward committees are required to be independent structures, another contentious issue relates to the role of ward committees in terms of monitoring and evaluating both the performance of their ward councillor and their municipality.¹⁴⁵

[participation/The%20Role%20Of%20Ward%20Committees%20In%20Enhancing%20Participatory%20Local%20Governance%20And%20Development%20In%20South%20Africa%20Evidence%20From%20Six%20Ward%20Committee%20Case%20Studies%20-Research%20Paper.pdf](#) [2012,May 1]

¹⁴¹ Oldfield,491.; Smith,17.

¹⁴² Piper and Von Lieres, 18; Smith and De Visser, 17.

¹⁴³ Oldfield, 891; Piper and Von Lieres, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Oldfield,492.

¹⁴⁵ Smith,14.

Consequently, even if ward members feel disappointed with ward councillors' decisions, or feel marginalized especially where representation is concerned, their deliberations may not be taken seriously.¹⁴⁶ This situation has come about as a result of ambiguous policy guidelines that have not clearly set out the role of ward committees in terms of monitoring, evaluating or reporting poor performances of ward councillors of their municipalities.¹⁴⁷ The DPLG (2005) handbook is not much clearer or specific, stating only that ward committees, "can monitor the performance of the municipality and raise issues of concern to the local ward."¹⁴⁸

2.9) Functional limitations to ward committees due to administrative weaknesses

To sustain participation on the part of the members of a ward committee and to ensure that they perform their duties efficiently and effectively requires support for ward councillors and commitment from municipalities. However, in many cases municipalities have not budgeted adequately for capacity-building training or adequate financial assistance to ward committees.¹⁴⁹ Thus in many cases the members of ward committees still lack the appropriate skills, education and expertise for them to function effectively. Similarly, ward councillors find it difficult to keep their members actively participating and interested due to the lack of resources and funding available for ward committees.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Piper and Von Lieres, 18.; Oldfield,491.

¹⁴⁷ Oldfield,491.; Smith,14.

¹⁴⁸ Smith and De Visser,11.

¹⁴⁹ Oldfield, 491; Smith and De Visser, 18.;

¹⁵⁰ Smith and De Visser, 18-19.

Access to information also plays a crucial role in terms of a ward committees' effectiveness. Information disseminated about targets and indicators with regards to the IDP and the annual municipal budget are produced in a highly technical format and in language that is at times inaccessible to many members of ward committees. The result is that ward councillors find it hard to fully understand and relay such information to their ward committees in a manner that they can understand. At the same time ward committees might also find it difficult to receive relevant feedback relating to the municipal budget because the budget does not indicate the exact allocated funds for specific wards, or stipulate key delivery strategies in their wards.¹⁵¹

2.10) Relationships to other structures

In South Africa ward committees are the main invited space through and within which citizens engage with their local representatives.¹⁵² Some researchers note that the establishment of ward committees has had the effect of displacing or replicating other forms of participation legislated by the state, and that this might not necessarily be advantageous for participative democracy, particularly if the displaced structure was performing the task efficiently and effectively.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 20.

¹⁵² Smith and De Visser, 21.; Mathekg and Buccus, 12.; Everatt, Marias and Dube, 233-234.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Piper and Deacon observed in the Msunduzi Municipality in Pietermaritzburg the ways in which the ward committee system ended up affecting other structures, such as the rate payers' association. Although this structure was in existence prior to the ward committee system, the ward committee started performing similar functions to those of the rate payers' association, and ended up replacing it.¹⁵⁴

Ward committees have come to be regarded as a more adequate and constructive mechanism through which citizens can voice their grievances and needs, while alternative forms of participation have come to be seen in a negative light. Everatt, Marias and Dube, from their interviews conducted in Gauteng Province, found that most respondents regarded ward committees as legitimate vehicles for participation, while they took a negative view of other forms of participation that citizens might use, such as protests, marches or strikes.¹⁵⁵

Some respondents felt that these avenues of participation were at times initiated by individuals or political factions as a means of deposing or embarrassing councillors instead of serving a specific social purpose such as marching about issues relating specifically to service delivery.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Piper and Deacon,78.

¹⁵⁵ Everatt, Marias and Dube,233-234.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid,234.

2.11) Transformative potential for ‘invited spaces’: the ward committee system

Getting design and implementation principles right in order for ward committees to function appropriately and effectively require the provision of the necessary training and skills and adequate resources, and the dissemination of accessible information. All of this can unlock the potential of ward committees to become transformative and empowering spaces for citizen participation.

In any innovative participatory space, representation (indirect participation) is inevitable. This means that some speakers are authorized to speak on behalf of others, an authority based either on their shared identity, experience, traditional authority or proximity.¹⁵⁷ However, Houtzager, who has conducted research in Sao Paulo on the participatory councils and budgeting processes, argues that it is necessary to clarify who speaks for whom in such spaces and in what specific ways they represent different identities.¹⁵⁸

Smith and de Visser on the other hand argue that broader representation can be achieved through the use of sub-committees and flexibility within the ward committee system, such as the ward forums the City of Cape Town established consisting of 20 representatives from various sectors within a ward.¹⁵⁹ This system would require changes in legislation, specifically, section 73 (2) b of the Municipal Structures Act.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 25.

¹⁵⁸ John. Gaventa, *Representation, Community leadership and participation: Citizen involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Government*, (2004):28 [Online]. Available: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/centreoncitizenship/jgnru.pdf> [2012 January, 12]

¹⁵⁹ Smith and De Visser, 17, Smith, 13.

¹⁶⁰ Smith, 13.

Everatt, Marias and Dube regard the involvement of strong organized structures, such as non-government organisations (NGOs), and strong community-based organisations, as another element necessary for deepening and sustaining public participation.¹⁶¹ In addressing the issue of political influence, Smith and de Visser propose that there should be a change in legislation that prevents councillors from holding positions as chairpersons of ward committees.¹⁶² In cases where, political parties capture invited spaces, Everatt, Marais and Dube argue that civil society organisations (CSOs) can take positive advantage of such situations by forging alliances with political parties, thus altering the power relationship that exists within such a space.¹⁶³

Theorists and practitioners alike also argue that ward committees cannot be regarded as the only mechanism by which citizens engage with their representatives. Alternative forms of direct participation can more fully encompass South African society.¹⁶⁴ It has been argued that the state and public servants will have to open and extend invited spaces to incorporate and complement other forms of participation such as protest marches and strikes, and a variety of other direct actions.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 233.

¹⁶² Smith and De Visser, 17.

¹⁶³ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 233.

¹⁶⁴ Oldfield, 492.

¹⁶⁵ Laurence. Piper, "Not waiting for Jackie O: Lessons for public participation advocacy in South Africa," *Africanus* 41 1 (2011): 40 [Online]. Available: http://www.sabinet.co.za/abstracts/canus/canus_v41_n1_a4.html [2012 February, 4]; Everatt, Marias and Dube, 230.

Everatt, Marias and Dube would agree with argument, citing that, although there are legitimate, adequate and multiple ways in which citizens participate and voice their grievances such as ward committees, municipal public meetings, organising petitions etc¹⁶⁶; all forms of participation, including marches or protests, should be considered as another legitimate form of public expression.¹⁶⁷

It should be noted that these forms of expression, have served to produce faster and more substantial results than legislated forms of participation. According to Doreen Atkinson, although government does not condone public protests, it is aware and mindful of citizens' frustrations.¹⁶⁸ Instead of incorporating alternative forms of participation, the government has responded to citizens' frustrations by expelling officials or councillors who are not performing their duties and functions effectively, and hiring skilled personal in an attempt to speed up infrastructure delivery.¹⁶⁹

Of greater significance to deepening public participation is the transformative potential of ward committees to influence and change planning policies and outcomes provided if political powers and financial resources are devolved to them. This has been successfully achieved in cases such as Kerala and Porto Alegre.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 230.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 234.

¹⁶⁸ Doreen Atkinson, "Taking to the streets; has developmental local government failed in South Africa", in Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, Roger Southall and Jessica Lutchman, eds., *State of the Nation, South Africa*. (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007): 74.

¹⁶⁹ This refers to 'Project Consolidate' (Atkinson, 2007), 75.

¹⁷⁰ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 245.; Winkler, 258.

However, in South Africa decision-making powers remain centralized and policy-making continues to take place within a 'top-down' model. Local authorities have been criticised by researchers for continuing to function on the assumption that they are entitled to make decisions on behalf of ordinary citizens because they believe they know what citizens needs and concerns are, and therefore do not have to seek their input. As a result local authorities have not fully committed to integrating ward committees into the planning processes; instead they develop and implement plans themselves. Many theorists and practitioners argue that this defeats the entire purpose of empowering constituents. Theorists and practitioners further argue that IDPs require a different type of public servant, one who plans with communities instead of for them.¹⁷¹

This argument has been reinforced by Nel who argues that local change agents, be they project managers or local officials, need to make it a point to consult with communities in identifying their needs, interests and expectations when it pertains to development planning projects.¹⁷² Everatt, Marias and Davids maintain that this should not just be a once-off consultation, but an ongoing detailed discussion and that issues can be further deliberated within wards.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 226-227.; Theron, Ceaser and Davids, 4-5.

¹⁷² Heather. J. Nel, "A project management approach to implementation and development programmes within the local government sphere: an empirical analysis," *Development Southern Africa* 18 5 (2001):613.

¹⁷³ Everatt, Marais and Dube,246.

Nel suggests that the means by which this can be achieved at local level and will result in effective projects from the point of planning to conception is if (1) the purpose of a project is clearly defined by both local authorities and communities, (2) key participants have been identified in the involvement of such projects (3) representatives have been established from the outset as to who represents the broader community in cases where interest groups are concerned, and (4) everyone involved will have to accept that community participation will account for the amount of time taken to design and implement projects.¹⁷⁴

In this process recommended by Nel, participation does not simply imply an invitational right, set out in the Constitution, but should be regarded as a right entitling all citizens to contribute to influencing and changing integrated development planning policies and outcomes.¹⁷⁵ This also allows for the positive shifting and sharing of power between local authorities and communities.¹⁷⁶ Another simpler means of transforming ward committees to enable them to operate in a more efficient and effective manner would require the necessary support from municipal administrative staff.¹⁷⁷

Many of the challenges ward committees are faced with can be easily improved and eradicated, such as municipalities providing ward committees with the necessary resources and capacity-building skills, providing logistical support or thinking of better creative ways of publicizing events and processes, making information more accessible and widely disseminated by using all forms of media to distribute information regarding IDPs and annual budgets.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Nel, 613.

¹⁷⁵ Winkler, 258.

¹⁷⁶ Gaventa, *Representation, Community leadership and participation*, 30.

¹⁷⁷ Piper and Von Lieres, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Everatt, Marias and Dube, 246.

2.12) Conclusion

This purpose of this chapter has been to provide a conceptual overview of local participatory governance and how it emerged during the course of the twentieth century and was implemented in South Africa at local government level, post 1994. The chapter described how the main participatory space, the ward committee system, has not been as effective as it should have been over the last two decades. As a result, the following chapter intends to provide a framework that could further analyse and examine how ward committees operate as structures of participation and empowerment.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1) Aim of the study

This chapter aims to provide a framework for the analysis of my research pertaining to the processes of public participation, specifically, the ward committee system and what a study of ward committees reveal about the extent of public empowerment at municipal government level. Public participation as reviewed in the previous chapter has become a fundamental component of democracy in the last decade in South Africa. The research moves beyond the confines of public participation based upon a normative account as to why it is necessary for citizens to participate in local government, the benefits of such participation and the strengths and weaknesses of institutionalised structures and processes to facilitate such participation. My intention is to investigate the effectiveness of existing ward committees in coordinating and facilitating public participation at local government level.

Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.), argued that a representative democracy requires the establishment of links between citizens and their representatives to ensure both a sense of ownership over formal decision-making processes and the accountability of representatives to their constituents. In this chapter I list the various theoretical approaches to 'deepening' a representative democracy in terms of raising the level of participation by communities in government decision-making, and creating stronger more meaningful and inclusive links between local government and communities.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Cornwall and Coelho, *Spaces for Change? The politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas*, 3&5.; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 7.; Buccus and Hicks, *Crafting New Democratic Spaces*, 152.; Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces: situating participation in development*, 5.

These approaches are classified in the literature as (1) representative democracy; (2) participatory democracy; (3) deliberative democracy; and (4) empowered participatory governance (EPG). None of the respective proponents of these approaches agrees on an ideal model of public participation. They can be seen as providing possible options that could result in greater public participation and facilitate public empowerment.¹⁸⁰ In addition, inherent in each of these approaches, are both positive elements and criticisms thereof.

3.2) Approaches to deepening democracy

(1) Representative democracy

The theory of a representative democracy is based on citizens allowing their elected representatives the right to speak on their behalf, interact with state institutions, and mediate on their behalf in processes that impact their daily lives. Most theorists view this approach as the only legitimate means by which poorer more marginalised groups diverse and varied issues and preferences can have a significant impact within the policy arena.¹⁸¹ Friedman concurs with proponents of the theory in terms of these criteria stating that, “the only mechanism yet devised which is capable of this is a representative democracy, because it is able to establish how all citizens feel about particular ideas and interests.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 14.

¹⁸¹ Buccus and Hicks, *Crafting New Democratic Spaces*, 152; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 14; Michelle Esau, *Deepening democracy through local participation: Examining the ward committee system as a form of local participation in Bonteheuwel in the Western Cape*, (2007):4 [Online]. Available: <http://www.accede.co.za/downloads/DBBS%20Paper%206%20Esau.pdf> [2011 November, 20]

¹⁸² Buccus and Hicks, *Crafting New Democratic Spaces*, 152.

Positive elements: Besides representatives playing a fundamental role in presenting community claims, and promoting the particular interests and needs of citizens, the main strength of this approach stems from representatives providing a form of checks and balances on those who exercise power.¹⁸³

Criticisms: Critics of this approach believe that citizens lose their power to make and shape policy by granting representatives the right to speak on their behalf.¹⁸⁴ Thus they argue that, “representation is a very limited tool for ensuring official accountability.”¹⁸⁵ In addition, this approach can be seen to favour certain interest groups, particularly those of a specific gender, race, social status or educational background. Consequently, only some citizens would benefit from policies at the cost of other citizens, or groups of citizens, or gain political leverage in political processes.¹⁸⁶

Furthermore, the approach does not address issues of autonomy such as, “how, whether and under what conditions it [civil society] exercises its potential for political power in support of popular control and political equality,¹⁸⁷ including the degree to which states have the capacity to respond to civil society demands.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 14.

¹⁸⁴ Esau, 7.; Cohen and Fung, 25.

¹⁸⁵ Cohen and Fung, 25.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

(2) Participatory democracy

The theory of participatory democracy is based on the idea of institutionalised spaces being opened up by the state to allow more direct citizen participation in decision-making processes.¹⁸⁹ These ‘invited spaces’, as referred to by Cornwall and Coelho, are provided for by the state and supported by legal and constitutional mandates.¹⁹⁰

Invited spaces also exist in dynamic relation to other spaces such as closed and created spaces. Closed spaces are spaces in which decisions are taken by a few actors, with greater power and knowledge than other actors in a community, behind closed doors. This serves to limit the scope for a wider range of actors to be included in policy-making decisions.¹⁹¹

Organic or created spaces are formed by citizens themselves who do not necessarily have power in decision-making processes but share similar concerns and issues that affect their lives. Citizens involved in such spaces are all striving towards a common agenda, voicing their concerns against those in power through popular protests or social movements.¹⁹²

Closed spaces have the ability to create invited spaces; similarly, invited spaces may arise out of claimed spaces each in their struggle for transformation, resistance, cooption or legitimacy.¹⁹³ This approach is not considered a replacement or substitute for a representative democracy, but an essential component thereof.

¹⁸⁹ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 15.; Cornwall and Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 4.

¹⁹⁰ Cornwall and Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 1.

¹⁹¹ Hickey and Mohan, 35.

¹⁹² Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*, 17; Hickey and Mohan, 35.

¹⁹³ Hickey and Mohan, 35.

Positive elements: Proponents of this approach assert that a direct form of participation broadens the scope for citizen participation by bringing together a multitude of social actors from various backgrounds and groupings (gender, race, social status, educational background). This form of participation also ensures that less organised and vocal groups are provided with an opportunity to engage with their governments directly through the opening up of spaces, or creation of participatory mechanisms, so that citizens may participate in the core activities of government such as decision-making.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, it allows for the forging of relationships between social actors, the acquiring of skills and knowledge of citizens from one another, the assistance of citizens in projects pertaining to development and poverty alleviation, while simultaneously improving public governance and sustaining accountability.¹⁹⁵

Criticisms: Critics question this approach because it assumes that, by simply creating new institutionalised spaces and inviting citizens to participate will result in greater participation, or that there will be a change in the power relationships found within such spaces.¹⁹⁶

However, Cornwall argues that,

even if actors enter the new spaces, their interactions may simply replicate and reproduce pre-existing power relationships, or while providing openings for some to participate more, new spaces for participation may also be surrounded by forms of power that shape who can enter the space in the first place, on what issues and with what effect.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Cornwall and Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 1-2; John. Ackerman, "Co-Governance for Accountability: Beyond "Exit" and "Voice" World Development, 22 3 (2004): 448 [Electronic]. Available: <http://www.mendeley.com/research/cogovernance-accountability-beyond-exit-voice/> [2012 January, 12]

¹⁹⁵ Cornwall and Coelho, Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 6.; Ackerman, 447.

¹⁹⁶ Cornwall and Coelho Ed. *Spaces for Change*, 12.; Cornwall, *Making spaces, changing spaces*, 15.; Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 16.

¹⁹⁷ John. Gaventa, *Representation, Community leadership and participation*, 30.

In addition, critics of the approach argue that even if citizens do enter such spaces, factors related to their access to resources, their lack of education, their class, race or gender can impede their ability to exercise their voices effectively on issues and policies that affect their lives directly.¹⁹⁸ Thus, any space within which some form of public participation takes place, cannot be considered neutral because spaces are shaped and influenced by different power relations.¹⁹⁹ Although power acquired in one space can be applied in another space, the power a citizen or groups of citizens' gains in one type of space may be unequal in another space. Ultimately, the power a citizen or groups of citizens, hold in any given space is determined by those who created the space in the first place.²⁰⁰

(3) *Deliberative Democracy*

The deliberative democracy approach attempts to combine the positive elements of participation and representation. However, in this model, added emphasis is placed on the quality and nature of the discussion and debates people engage in when they find themselves coming together in institutionalised spaces.²⁰¹ This would be regarded as deliberation which, "involves parties advancing reasons for accepting and rejecting proposals,"²⁰² whilst, the democratic part of a deliberative democracy is defined by Elser as that which, "includes the collective decision-making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives."²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Hickey and Mohan, 34.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.; 35-36.

²⁰¹ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 17; Jon. Elster, Ed. *Deliberative Democracy*. (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 142.; John.S Dryzek, "Deliberative Democracy in Divided Societies Alternatives to Agonism and Analgesia" *Political Theory* 33 (2005): 218 [Electronic]. Available: <http://ptx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/2/218> [2012 January, 12]

²⁰² Knops, 3.

²⁰³ Elster, 8.

Positive elements: The significance of this approach in terms of deepening public participation is that it allows for reasoned agreement among citizens, and represents a shifting away from bargaining, interest aggregation and power. Radical democrats argue that in this kind of participation citizens are given a chance to voice their opinions and to provide cogent reasons why a certain course of action is to be considered, and this in turn allows them to influence policy.²⁰⁴

Through reasoned-based arguments, virtues such as rationality, autonomy and morality are enhanced and developed in both citizens and their communities. The quality of legislation improves as people become aware and understand the moral principles that regulate it.²⁰⁵ Citizens also make more informed and socially aware decisions through their understanding of what members of their society desire and need, what their interests are and how to relate to those interests. Thus, the outcomes of democratic decision-making are enhanced because people who are well informed and who consider the preferences of all members of a community often make better decisions for themselves and their communities.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Cohen and Fung, 26.; Knops, 4.

²⁰⁵ James. Bohman and William. Rehg, Ed. *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. (Cambridge, The MIT press, 1999), 244-245.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; 247-248.

Criticisms: The main criticisms of this approach comes from diversity theorists, who argue that it does not take into account the reality of issues of difference and identity which exercise a significant influence on authentic, reason-based deliberations.²⁰⁷ Other theorists view the approach in terms of its narrow understanding of what reasoned deliberation amongst citizens could or should be, especially amongst citizens from different cultures, political and gender groupings.²⁰⁸

Furthermore, critics of this model view it as a process that considers a particular communicative style based on assertiveness and 'reason' or regulated debate, and in so doing, devalues other acts of communication such as storytelling, rhetoric, and expressions of need. Consequently, it is seen as a communicative theory that favours those that are culturally advantaged.²⁰⁹

Other critics argue that a deliberative democracy faces certain constraints in attempting to combine participation and deliberation. Participation and deliberation are regarded by some theorists as two very different approaches. According to Cohen and Fung, the sheer social complexity and scope of modern democracies limits the degree to which both approaches can be applied, and as such, will lead to certain trade-offs being made. They argue that if governments insist on deliberation of quality, they could see public participation in local government decreasing. If raising levels of participation is the primary concern, the quality of deliberation might be reduced.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 18; Bohman and Rehg, 398-399; Simone. Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory", *Annual Review Political Science* 6 (2003): 16 [Electronic]. Available: <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/.../annurev.polisci.6.121901.085538> [2012 January 12]

²⁰⁸ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 18; Chambers, 15.

²⁰⁹ Archon. Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 123.

²¹⁰ Cohen and Fung, 27.

Cohen and Fung argue that deliberation depends on citizens having an acquired interest in, as well as substantial knowledge about, the issues up for discussion. When any issue is up for discussion, a relatively small number of people, in any given polity will possess the relevant knowledge and interest pertaining to an issue. Thus, the quality of deliberation is diminished due to the scope of informed participation.²¹¹ Even though quantitatively knowledge is not fixed, they are ever changing as people continue to acquire skills and knowledge, and the quality of their deliberation and participation may improve. However, when taking into account the amount of time and resources needed in any given area of public governance to develop this knowledge and these skills, this too could hinder the possibility of participation being both fully deliberative and inclusively participatory.²¹²

(4) Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG)

Fung and Wright believe that they have produced a positive model that can assist governments in deepening the ways in which their citizens both participate in, and influence policy.²¹³ The empowered participatory governance (EPG) model is premised on merging the positive elements of the representation, participation and deliberation models and combining them to focus on three principles: (1) practical and tangible concerns and problems, (2) bottom-up participation to empower citizens through direct involvement in decision-making, and (3) deliberation and generation of solutions through joint-planning, problem-solving and strategizing.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Fung, 213-214.

²¹⁴ Archon, Fung and Erik. O. Wright, "Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance" *Politics and Society* 29 (1) (2001):18-21.

For experiments they conducted in, for example, Porto Alegre's budgeting system and India's Panchayat reforms in West Bengal and Kerala, to name a few, Fung and Wright found that similarities in terms of motivating and institutional supports associated with participatory governance helped to achieve these above principles.

These included the devolution of power, centralized supervision and coordination, and participatory structures being state centred rather than voluntaristic structures.²¹⁵ In addition, Fung and Wright highlight the importance of a background enabling conditions necessary to complete the model 'a rough equality of power'.²¹⁶

Positive elements: According to Fung and Wright, the EPG model can advance effective problem solving, promote equity, and deepen and broaden participation.²¹⁷ Effective problem solving stems from transferring decision-making power to citizens who are significantly more knowledgeable as a result of their direct experience of a problematic or unacceptable situation, and who also know how best to alleviate or improve that situation.

Deliberation provides for all participants to make better decisions, provide alternative solutions which they have considered deeply, and commit to implementing decisions based on all the relevant information gathered.²¹⁸ Fairness and equity are achieved through the inclusion of disadvantaged individuals,²¹⁹ while the breadth and depths of forms of participation increases through channels for, and incentives to, participate.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Fung and Wright,17.

²¹⁶ Ibid.;25.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.;26.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.;27.

Criticisms: Fung and Wright note the possible criticisms pertaining to the EPG model. They admit that an unequal distribution of power can arise in any given participatory space, and thus questions of who gets to participate need to be answered.²²¹

There is also the issue of ‘forum-shopping’ whereby citizens might find themselves seeking out other venues and spaces in which to deliberate if they feel that their interests and needs are not dealt with in institutionalized processes.²²² Furthermore, although EPG is intended to benefit all citizens involved, even if they do not participate directly, there is still the potential of ‘rent-seeking’ in which participants change the flow of public goods to all by capturing deliberative apparatus in order to benefit their own personal needs or party agendas.²²³

In addition, citizens may themselves be apathetic, politically disengaged and or ignorant about the participatory structures and processes at their disposal.²²⁴ Lastly, Fung and Wright argue that the EPG model might not be easily sustained as some parties might prevent the development of participatory structures or processes and end up merging into those exact organisations they were intended to replace.²²⁵ Consequently, the EPG model cannot be considered a universal reform strategy as it cannot be applied to all institutional settings.²²⁶

²²¹ Ibid.; 33-34.

²²² Ibid.;34-35.

²²³ Ibid.; 35-36.

²²⁴ Ibid.;37.

²²⁵ Ibid.;37.

²²⁶ Caroline. Patsias, *Participatory Democracy, Decentralization and Local Governance: the Montreal Participatory Budget in the light of “Empowered Participatory Governance,”* (2011):2 [Online]. Available: <http://www.saopaulo2011.ipso.org/sites/default/files/papers/paper-1163.pdf> [2012 April,04]

However, although all four approaches may in varying degrees be problematic to apply or sustain in practice, what becomes evident is that they overlap with one another. No single approach can be perceived as better or to be preferred above another. For the purposes of a theoretical framework all of these approaches contribute to providing a clear understanding of how they could be used in combination with one another to promote a deeper and more enhanced democracy in practice.²²⁷

3.3) Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) model applied to the local ward committee system in South Africa

In order to outline my theoretical framework for this research, I will expand upon the concepts included in the Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) model presented by Fung and Wright and present my rationale for using it in terms of how it relates to the ward committee system in South Africa. I chose to use this model because it moves beyond traditional democratic practices by merging representation, participation and deliberation in an attempt to find context specific solutions to real problems that citizens face in their daily lives and in the process empower them. Representatives can only be held accountable once they have listened to and understood local problems and issues, have attempted to address them, and accounted to their constituents for actions taken. Since, the EPG model derives from research conducted in Brazil and India, two developing countries that have faced similar socio-economic conditions to those of South Africa, it may be appropriate to apply to South Africa's ward committee system.

²²⁷ Gaventa, *Triumph, Deficit and Contestation?*, 20.

3.3.1) Design properties of ward committees within municipalities

If one were to apply the EPG model to the main invited space, the ward committee system at local government level in South Africa, the following institutional properties could be effectively employed to enhance the roles and structures of ward committees within a municipality. Three institutional properties are explored below: (1) devolution; (2) centralized supervision and coordination, and (3) state centred and not voluntaristic institutions of participatory governance.

(1) Devolution

According to Fung and Wright EPG model, devolution can be understood in terms of “the devolution of public decision-making authority to empowered local units.”²²⁸ According to Fung and Wright administrative and political power should be devolved to local action units. In this devolution process, citizens are included at all stages of decision-making, from planning, conception through to implementation and monitoring. The case of Port Alegre’s participatory budget system lends support to the applicability of this feature. In this study citizens were invited to participate in decision-making at local government level and became directly involved in the processes of service delivery from establishing, implementing to monitoring procedures.²²⁹

²²⁸ Fung and Wright.;17.

²²⁹ Ibid.;22.

In South Africa, the devolving of power to ward committees can only be measured when taking into account the entire framework of how power works at municipal participatory governance level.²³⁰ There is no clear indication from policy documents exactly how power is meant to be devolved to ward committees. What is evident though is that ward committees, in accordance with the Municipal Structures Act (1998) Section 74, clearly indicates that executive powers may not be delegated to ward committees; ward committee members can only make recommendations on matters that affect their ward.²³¹ What this means in reality is that, they do not have the power to implement decisions; instead, according to policy, ward committees have been designed to handle only the most basic issues affecting their communities.²³²

The only way one can really measure devolution of power in terms of the extent to which committee members are empowered, is by examining whether, and the extent to which, ward committees' decisions on proposed initiatives are supported and funded by their municipalities in such a way that they themselves are able to improve their circumstances and lives. However, this would mean that such decisions on proposed initiatives normally handled by municipal officials and ward councillors themselves are now taken over by committee members.²³³

²³⁰ Ngcobo,62.

²³¹ Smith and De Visser, 7.

²³² Cedrick Bhekumusa Ngcobo. "The Msunduzi Community Participation Policy: Narrowing the Participatory- Democratic deficit," Masters dissertation.; University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg,2009:63.

²³³ Ibid.

According to researchers in this field, such as Ngcobo (2009), this has not happened in practice in South Africa. Instead, ward committees are in fact decentralised institutions of the municipality, which is not the same as the devolution of power as advocated by Fung and Wright. Power still resides in the hands of municipal officials and ward councillors; ward committees are still unable to affect the decisions of the council. Thus, change at policy level would be required if power is to be devolved to ward committees.²³⁴

(2) Centralized Supervision and Coordination

Fung and Wright define this as “the creation of formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution and communication that connect local units to each other, and to super-ordinate, more centralized authorities.”²³⁵ According to Fung and Wright, local action units should not be autonomous or atomized structures of decision-making in relation to central authorities. Fung and Wright advocate for a coordinated form of decentralisation.²³⁶ According to this model, information is fed from local action units to centralized bodies in an attempt to keep them abreast about decisions and problems that arise.²³⁷ By opening and using these communication channels, centralized bodies can provide a means of assistance to local action units when problems, such as the coordination and distribution of resources, become too complex and beyond the capacity for local action units. In addition, they [centralized bodies] can play a role in strengthening local democratic deliberations so that they can lead to effective decision-making or problem-solving.²³⁸

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Fung and Wright, 17.

²³⁶ Ibid.; 22.

²³⁷ Ibid.; 23.

²³⁸ Ibid.; 22.

This was evident in both the Indian Panchayat system and the Porto Alegre budgeting system, where higher levels of government received information about relevant decisions made by villages and neighbourhoods.²³⁹ Similarly, accountability is enhanced on both sides from the top-down and the bottom-up, through a centralised supervisory and co-ordinating body. In addition, the risk of patronage and elitism is reduced as the coordinated body is not affiliated to a traditional clientelistic network, while citizens themselves are provided the necessary independence to decide and establish their own priorities and how they intend using the resources at their disposal.²⁴⁰ The office of the speaker would constitute the central body in which ward committees are located.²⁴¹

The office of the speaker has been designated a variety of responsibilities to manage and supervise the ward committee system. These responsibilities range from encouraging ward councillors to hold regular ward committee meetings, including community meetings, on a periodic basis so that relevant information is disseminated both from the bottom-up and the top-down, and input is sought from the bottom-up.²⁴² However, Ngcobo advocates that the office of the speaker should be mandated to go above and beyond its required responsibilities. For the office of the speaker to be effective as a centralised body, it will need to visit different ward committees and make sure they are functioning properly, provide them with the necessary resources if they are not functioning appropriately, connect different ward committees with one another in terms of distributing information that could help other wards in solving problems or lead to effective decision-making.²⁴³

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Patsias, 4.

²⁴¹ Ngcobo, 64.

²⁴² Ibid, 65.

²⁴³ Ibid, 65-66.

In addition, the ward councillors can be viewed as the co-ordinating body tasked with holding committee meetings. However, a problem arises when ward councillors are also the chairpersons of these meetings and the only people allowed to play this controlling role. This defeats the purpose of ordinary members of the community, the ward committee members, taking on the responsibility of chairing these meetings if these meetings are either not held or councillors are preoccupied with other duties. Ward committee members should be required to chair these meetings to provide them with an opportunity to learn from such experiences and to develop their deliberation and participation skills.²⁴⁴

(3) State Centered, Not Voluntaristic

Fung and Wright understand this as:

the use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these decentred problem-solving efforts rather than leaving them as informal or voluntary affairs...²⁴⁵ Experiments should 'colonize' and transform state institutions in such a way that administrative bureaucracies tasked with working out problems are restructured into these deliberative groups.²⁴⁶

Fung and Wright advocate for these groups to be allowed the power to implement the outcomes of their deliberations via the authorization of formal governance institutions.²⁴⁷

Ward committees have been designated and supported by policy to form part of the organs of local government, such as the municipality, which is state-centred. They are not meant to function outside of municipal set institutions.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Ibid,65.

²⁴⁵ Fung and Wright, 17.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.;25.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.;23.

²⁴⁸ Ngcobo,66.

They therefore differ from other public participatory structures like civic organisations, for example churches or NGO's which are generally regarded as additional structures outside of formal governance institutions. This would indicate that government is serious about ordinary citizens participating in these decision-making processes that impact on their lives directly and that citizens should be actively involved in the daily activities of local government.²⁴⁹ Thus, according to Ngcobo, ward committees should be granted access to state information and resources in their local areas if ward committees do form a part of municipal institutions. Yet, according to Ngcobo, they have failed to be an effective participatory mechanism because of their lack of necessary state resources and capacity to fulfil this function and this, has impeded their effectiveness in terms of really engaging as many people as possible in participatory governance.²⁵⁰

3.3.2) The principal design features of ward committees

Fung and Wright advocate 'local action units', ward committees, in order to operate effectively, be designed according to the following general principles: (A) practical orientation; (B) bottom-up participation and ; (C) deliberative solution generation.

(A) Practical orientation

In terms of the EPG model, in order for local action units to enable citizen participation that is effective, they should have a clear focus on practical and real-world problems and on concerns citizens know about experientially, can relate to and identify with. These could include safety and security, health and nutrition, educational training issues, housing or

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid,68-69.

land, water, sanitation, energy, roads, and public works.²⁵¹ According to Fung and Wright, the benefits to the community of a local action unit with a practical focus is that “it creates situations in which actors accustomed to competing with one another for power or resources might begin to cooperate and build more congenial relations.”²⁵²

The practical orientation of ward committees, as noted in the ward committee resource book issued by the South African government, indicates that the centre of attention of ward committees should be major service delivery issues, such as water, sanitation, electricity, roads, storm water drainage and social services such as health, safety and security etc. Above and beyond these areas of focus, the ward committee resource book also designates specific portfolio’s to ward committee members which have either been decided on by the ward itself if and when the need arises, or portfolio’s in which a ward committee member is already actively serving. Through following this process, ward committee members represent communities and deal with their specific issues, problems and concerns as these relate to a particular portfolio. In some instances, specific portfolios will not have been allocated to ward committee members because of geographical areas that are too large; in such cases sub-committees are established.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Fung and Wright, 18.; Ruche Daniels, *Public participation in the City of Cape Town, A Review*, (2012):5. [Online]. Available: https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:V7ZTUTAlIEYJ:gpl.gov.za/index.php/component/docman/doc_download/710-public-participation-in-the-city-of-cape-town-a-review.html+ruche+daniels&hl=en&gl=za&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESh8IHeSOG2nn874-mIqtvPg9b9wAcglj9QstFonIQtgUYGRXsl4pTIVumIgx0meB3B0EC8ZXJx4GNrZt6LIhwPY-qEYzBum14mdCEVNyzSPw2aD7IXBQv-tNT8TaLR1aa4m-Wwx&sig=AHIEtbR_MapLy84psOQTL8QTKACV-SW-XA [2012 April, 28]

²⁵² Fung and Wright, 18.

²⁵³ Ward committee resource book, 40-41.

Whatever the case, ward committee policy documents need to clarify and clearly define the roles of both the ward committees and the sub-committees in order to avoid overlaps. Secondly, these policy documents need to grant ward committees the right to deal with specific issues and outline in precise terms the ways in which sub-committees should assist them when the need arises.²⁵⁴

(B) Bottom-up participation

Bottom-up participation refers to the empowerment of citizens' through direct involvement in decision-making. In this kind of participation local action units would be required to seek input from ordinary citizens about problems that affect their lives directly. Through bottom-up participation ordinary citizens' ideas and knowledge about the problems and concerns they face are taken into account. This allows local action units to use these knowledgeable ideas as a means to find solutions to ordinary citizens' problems. Fung and Wright do not consider technical expertise and language to be of no value in the participation process. They propose that its value for the participation process resides in the facilitation of deliberative decision-making rather than acting as an obstruction to ordinary citizens' input.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Cedrick Bhekumusa Ngcobo. "The Msunduzi Community Participation Policy: Narrowing the Participatory- Democratic deficit," Masters dissertation.; University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2009:54-55.

²⁵⁵ Fung and Wright, 18.

The Municipal Systems Act of (2000), Section 17 (2) makes it very clear what is required of ward committees to promote participation from the bottom up. They must actively seek input from their communities through receiving and considering their citizens' grievances, including sharing information with their constituents' on a regular basis, or notifying them about issues that the council are considering, and sharing information about the state of affairs of a municipality.²⁵⁶ If ward committees truly reflect a bottom up participatory structure, then these aspects of their design need to be taken into account.

In addition to these design features and aspects, it is important to examine the way in which ward committees are structured. Ward committees are required by law to be representative structures constituting a diverse range of interest groups within that ward. These groups should include religious groups, the youth, older persons, business, sports, welfare, environment and education, and an equal representation of both men and woman. In addition, ward committees are meant to include no more than ten people selected from the local community as stipulated by the Municipal Structures Act of (1998). However, in the Western Cape, ward forums which consist of up to 20 members have been established instead of ward committees, in an attempt to broaden the scope for representivity.²⁵⁷ It should be noted that, greater representation does not necessarily lead to greater participation.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Smith and De Visser, 9.

²⁵⁷ Smith and De Visser, 10.

²⁵⁸ Ngcobo, 57.

Thus ordinary people of the community are required to fill the majority of seats on the ward committee. An ordinary citizen is of primary importance and emphasis in the ward committee, in that an ordinary member of the committee is in theory not linked to a formal salaried position in the municipality. This is fundamentally important because citizens themselves need to be in charge of a ward committee whose purpose is to resolve issues that affect their daily lives, coupled with acquiring the necessary resources to help them to this. If this is not the case, the ward committee system is in real danger of being just another political structure which perpetuates and reinforces patronage and elitism, or of being a structure based on tokenism, instead of one which empowers citizens.²⁵⁹

As stipulated in the Municipal Structures Act of (1998), the ward councillor is also the chairperson of the ward committee.²⁶⁰ Consequently, ward councillors tend to be politically aligned.²⁶¹ This has a ripple effect in terms of committee members addressing problems that affect their daily lives, especially if decisions in the provision of services to communities are caught up in the political decisions of ward councillors, leading to delays in services being delivered. According to Ngcobo, ward committee members should be left to deal with basic service delivery issues rather than these issues being under the control of ward councillors or municipal council officials. However, at the same time, these issues need to be dealt with at policy level, as ward councillors may be required or pressured to make decisions based on party lines instead of being the decisions of ordinary community members. This therefore raises the question as to how impartial ward councillors can be in their thinking and decision-making, given their political ties.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Smith and De Visser, 6.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 16.

²⁶² Ngcobo, 57-58.

Nevertheless, the ward councillor is the direct link between ordinary citizens and their council, the core-decision making body in the municipality. Thus it is important that ward committee decisions be linked to municipality decisions. Ward councillors position allows him or her to keep his or her constituents' abreast of necessary and relevant information as it pertains to their municipality. This information could include actions and decisions under consideration or taken by the council, or the state of affairs of a municipality etc. Ward councillors should relay this information to their ward committee members so that they in turn may inform their communities about these matters and receive feedback. Furthermore, ward committees should be allowed the power to resolve problems by means of following through on decisions taken by the council, tie action to discussion.²⁶³

It can be argued that this information can only flow from the bottom-up and from the top-down if meetings are held on a regular basis at ward level. Although ward councillors are mandated by law to hold regular meetings, these do not necessarily take place. The ward committee system should be an active participatory structure of the municipality rather than a representative and advisory body. This can only be achieved if ward committee members take the initiative in holding their ward councillors accountable if meetings are not being held on a regular basis, given that ward committee members cannot by law themselves chair meetings.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Ibid, 59.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Furthermore, ward committee members should also take it upon themselves to report to ward councillors about relevant issues that arise in their ward even if meetings are not being held. Similarly, ward committee members, in order to keep abreast of important information, should actively request information from councillors about decisions under consideration by the municipality or about the state of affairs of the municipality, instead of waiting for ward councillors to report to them on such matters.²⁶⁵

(C) Deliberative solution generation

Deliberative solution generation can be understood as participants attempting to solve problems through processes of reasoned deliberation, joint-planning and strategizing.²⁶⁶ Fung and Wright argue that participants enter sites in which they look forward to strategies and solutions being expressed and forged through deliberation and planning with other participants, instead of advancing reasons for pre-given principles, proposals, values or policies.²⁶⁷

They further argue that experts should engage with participants in the decision-making process instead of employing the basic characteristics of (1) command and control, which insulates participants from discussions, (2) aggregative voting that leads individuals to voting according to their own interests without the consideration of others, or, (3) strategic bargaining or negotiation which brings different actors together who have the power, authority and the resources to enable them to take decisions that are not necessarily fair but are taken for their own benefit.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Fung and Wright, 19.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 19-20.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 20.

Although Fung and Wright do not dispute that some of the above variants might arise in practice in the EPG model, they believe that the effects of these can be minimised if clear deliberative procedures are set out as is evident in their study on the village plans in Kerala, India.²⁶⁹

A clear deliberative process would entail a structured agenda where participants put forward various proposals and collectively decide what group priorities should be considered or what the best strategy should be adopted that seems most promising. The justification of proposals would need to be those which advance common interests and take into account the amount of resources at the groups' disposal for that proposal to be considered. If however, various proposals are considered but disagreements persist about which proposal serves the groups' common interest, voting for the best group choice would take place. An authentic deliberative ballot according to Fung and Wright is one where participants cast their vote based solely on the most reasonable choice in terms of the community and not on the option that serves their own interests.²⁷⁰

Deliberative solution generation would define the way in which decisions are made at ward level. However, the ward committee resource book, or any other policy pertaining to the ward committee system is not clear or specific about the deliberative procedures to be employed. Piper underwrites this lack of guidance or specificity for ward committees in terms of deliberative procedures, citing that, "there is no specific requirement or policy at national level that requires that they operate in a deliberative way."²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Ibid,19.

²⁷⁰ Ibid19.

²⁷¹ Laurence Piper, "Disempowered design and party capture: Why ward committees will not deepen democracy in South Africa," *Summary for staff and student seminar programme*, Political Studies Department, University of the Western Cape,2009:3.

For deliberative solution generation to take place, local governance would require change at policy level in the form of setting out clear deliberative procedures of decision-making at ward level.²⁷² However, due to this existing gap in policy, it can therefore be assumed that ward committees run the risk of employing familiar social choice methods of decision-making such as (1) command or control, (2) aggregation, or, (3) strategic bargaining and negotiation. These are methods that are different from what EPG advocates in terms of participation and will be explored in detail.²⁷³

(1) *Command and Control*-the basic characteristic of this type of decision-making is experts, be they managers, bureaucrats or specialist, being delegated to discuss and make decisions among themselves on behalf of a ward, because of their power, knowledge and skills. This means that they do not consider seeking the necessary input from ordinary citizens, who are entirely excluded from the deliberative process.²⁷⁴

(2) *Aggregation*- this is a method of decision-making whereby a “group’s choice results from combining the preferences of the individual participants that make it up.”²⁷⁵ Although decisions are by voting, the ballot differs from an authentic deliberative ballot as advocated by the EPG model.²⁷⁶ In aggregative voting, participants categorize and vote for their choices based solely according to their own interests and desires. The option that receives the most votes is selected as the group’s final and binding decision. According to Fung and Wright, the shortcomings

²⁷² Ngcobo,60.

²⁷³ Fung and Wright,20.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid,19.

of aggregative voting lie “in the failure of electoral mechanisms to effectively respect electors’ desires due to problems like patronage and corruption.”²⁷⁷

(3) *Strategic bargaining and negotiation* brings different actors together who have power and authority, and the necessary resources to enable them to make decisions that are not necessarily fair but can be to their own benefit.²⁷⁸

According to Ngcobo, from the above it can be assumed that ward committees are more likely to employ an aggregative method of decision-making. In addition, from a practical standpoint, one might ask how involved are ward committees in the decision-making process? Are ward committee members sufficiently empowered to put forward their own projects based on local deliberations? Do ward committees receive the necessary financial and or administrative support from the municipality for such initiatives?²⁷⁹

Fung and Wright mention numerous factors that could either impede or facilitate deliberations. They use Kerala’s high literacy rates as a factor that influenced the balance of power between participants and enhanced deliberations in Kerala’s participatory experiment.²⁸⁰ According to Fung and Wright:

Most fundamentally, perhaps, the likelihood that these institutional designs will generate desired effects depends significantly upon the balance of power between actors engaged in EPG, and in particular the configurations of non-deliberative power, that constitute the terrain upon which structured deliberation inside EPG occurs. Participants will be much more likely to engage in earnest deliberation when alternatives to it—such as strategic domination or exit from the process altogether—are made less attractive by roughly balanced power.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Ibid ,20.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ngcobo,61.

²⁸⁰ Fung and Wright,24.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

Background enabling conditions influences who gets to participate in the ward committee, given the likelihood that ordinary members come from diverse backgrounds and possess a variety of skills, resources or lack thereof. All of these factors play a part in whether participants will feel comfortable participating in a ward committee, especially in deliberations, given participants' different resources.²⁸² However, Fung and Wright argue that even, though these background enabling conditions exist and could result in stifling deliberations, the presence of these background enabling conditions could actually act as a catalyst for ordinary members to be willing to participate in deliberations. Thus, although participants do not have to have absolute equality of power, a 'rough balance of power' should be evident.²⁸³

3.4) Conclusion

This chapter outlined various approaches to deepening democratic processes of participation, such as the ward committee system. Given that the empowered participatory governance (EPG) model encompasses the qualities of many of the other models such as the representative democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy models. The EPG model was the one considered best suited to being applied at ward level because it focused on three institutional properties necessary to enhance the effectiveness of ward committees in municipalities: (1) devolution, (2) centralised supervision and coordination, and (3) being a state centred, rather than a voluntaristic local governance structure. Fung and Wright further advocated that in order that ward committees to function effectively three design features should be evident such as (a) practical orientation, (b) bottom-up participation and, (c) deliberative solution generation.

²⁸² Ngcobo, 67-68.

²⁸³ Fung and Wright, 24.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1) Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a multiple case-study strategy as my research design. This involved an in-depth analysis of participatory structures at local government level. Employing this strategy, provided me with a way to collect data that would enable me to assess the effectiveness of participatory structures, such as ward committees, and the level of empowerment derived by citizens from their direct involvement in the decision-making processes of these structures.

The approach required me to position myself as a participant observer in ward committee meetings, as well as conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as ward councillors and other municipal officials, as a means of gaining insight into the design and operation of the ward committee system. Case study strategies take the form of comprehensive examinations of groups or organisations and the collection of empirical data from collected from one or more organisations, or groups within organisations.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Jean F. Hartley, "Case Studies in Organizational Research," *Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research: A Practical Guide*, ed. Catherine Cassel and Gillian Symon (London: Sage publications, 1997), 208.

A case-study narrows the scope of the analysis to a particular issue, facilitating more in-depth inquiry. The theoretical framework for the multiple case study strategy employed in this research is described by Yin who advocates working from a theoretical framework as fundamental for what he terms 'replication logic'. Replication occurs when data collected across several cases yields similar results and thus informs and enriches the data collected.²⁸⁵ This means that the researcher depends on analytical generalisation, an attempt to "generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory."²⁸⁶ If replication is found across several cases, the researcher can have more confidence in the results and the overall study can be considered to be robust.²⁸⁷

I employed a multiple case study strategy because I explored the ward committee system at local government level with the use of a detailed theoretical framework from which to collect and analyse my data; and the number of cases included five wards from diverse socio-economic areas in the southern suburbs of the city of Cape Town.

4.2) Selection of cases

According to Stake, there are three general rules when selecting cases for a case study. Firstly, cases should be selected because for their relevance to the phenomenon being studied. Secondly, cases should be diverse, representing both typical and atypical settings and or environments,²⁸⁸ and lastly, they should provide good prospects for learning about the activity and situation related to the case or cases.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Robert K .Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods: Applied Social Research Methods Series*, Volume 5. (United States of America: Sage publications, 1984), 49.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 39.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 48-49.

²⁸⁸ Robert E. Stake, *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 22-23.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 23 &25.

Yin stipulates that “each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (*a literal replication*) or (b) produces contrary results but for predictable reasons (*a theoretical replication*).”²⁹⁰

My unit of analysis consisted of wards at local government level. I decided that the focus on wards would be within the vicinity of the southern suburbs area to ensure the extent of diversity across wards in the city of Cape Town. The areas included in wards A, B, C, D and E are classified in Table 4.2.1.²⁹¹ Notably, some of the areas also overlap across wards.

TABLE 4.2.1

Wards	Demarcated areas included in wards
A	Bishops court - Constantia - Fernwood - Plumstead west of the railway line - Porter Estate - Table Mountain - Trovato - Upper Newlands - Wynberg west of railway line
B	Grassy Park - Lavender Hill (West of 14th Avenue, North of St Bernard Avenue, St Christopher Avenue, & Hek Street, East of Prince George Drive) - Parkwood - Retreat
C	Claremont (South-east of paradise- and Protea Road, west of railway, north of Pine Street, Highwick Road and Herschel Road, east of Edinburgh Drive) - Kenilworth - Newlands - Rondebosch - Table Mountain
D	Claremont (South of Keurboom Road, Belvedere Road and Alcoyne Road, west of Kromboom Parkway, north of Doncaster Road and Bell Road, East Worcester Street and Palmyra Road) - Kenilworth - Mowbray - Rondebosch - Rosebank
E	Fairways - Golf Links Estate - Ottery - Plumstead - Wetton - Wynberg

There was a degree of socio-economic diversity across wards. Three of the wards, wards A, C and D, fall under the same sub-council, sub-council 20, where the demographic profile indicates that ‘white’ people make up the majority, totalling 76.86 %, while 41.68 % of the residents in these areas earn between R76 801-R307 200 per year in terms of household income.²⁹² Wards B and E fall under the same sub-council, sub-council 18 whose

²⁹⁰ Yin, 48-49.

²⁹¹ *City of Cape Town*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/councilonline/Pages/ViewWardDetails.aspx?FirstWardSequenceNo=1&LastWardSequenceNo=10> [01 May 2012]

²⁹² *City of Cape Town, Census 2001-2006 Subcouncils*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/2001census/Documents/2006%20Subcouncil20.htm> [28 August,2012]

demographic profile indicates that 'coloured' people make up the majority of the sub-council, totalling 74.04%, while 36.46% of residents in these areas earn between R19 201-R76 800 a year in terms of household income.²⁹³ Thus wards A, C and D can be regarded as areas where higher income people reside and wards B and E are where middle-income people reside.

During May 2012, I found the contact details of ward councillors in the region of the southern suburbs via the city of Cape Town's governmental website. I then started calling approximately 20 ward councillors in an attempt to gain access to their ward committee meetings to observe the proceedings and to collect my primary data. This proved to be a daunting task because the majority of ward councillors hold their meetings on a bi-monthly basis, while some wards were either not in operation and was in the process of establishing their ward committees or waiting for positions to be filled by the municipal officials. Nevertheless, five ward councillors were due to hold their meetings during the month of June 2012, and granted me access to their meetings. Three of the wards were in high income status areas and two in middle-income status areas. This combination provided me with wards from diverse socio-economic areas within the southern suburbs in the city of Cape Town as case studies.

²⁹³ *City of Cape Town, Census 2001-2006 Subcouncils*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/2001census/Documents/2006%20Subcouncil18.htm> [28 August, 2012]

4.3) Data collection

Yin describes a variety of data collection methods for a multiple case study strategy. These range from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, physical artefacts, and participant observation.²⁹⁴ My fieldwork was conducted over a period of two months between June and July 2012.

To fulfil the objectives of my study, I chose to use data collection methods participant observation and semi-structured interviews with key informants: the ward councillors who chair ward committee meetings; and a representative from the office of the speaker whose responsibility it is to oversee the overall functioning of wards in the city of Cape Town. The office of the speaker has also been designated the responsibility of managing community participation at local government level, especially as it relates to the ward committee system, by means of ensuring that they function effectively; such as encouraging ward councillors to hold regular ward committee meetings; including community meetings on a periodic basis so that relevant information is disseminated from the bottom-up and the top-down and input is sought from the bottom-up as well.²⁹⁵ Two methods of data collection participant observation and semi-structured interviews are described in detail.

²⁹⁴ Yin, 79.

²⁹⁵ City of Cape Town, Council Overview: A Comprehensive guide to council structures, finance, governance, directorates and planning, (2011):10[Online]. Available: http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/CityReports/Documents/CoCT_Co_councillor_handbook_v3.pdf [28 August, 2012]

4.3.1) Participant Observation

Participant observation was useful to my study because I was able to experience firsthand the functioning of ward committees in the course of observing ward committee meeting processes and procedures. This data collection method allows the researcher to play the role of observer and provide the researcher with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the community, group or organisation by means of immersing him or herself within that community, group or organisation, and to experience firsthand how the organisation operates and the ways in which the members of the community think, act or feel in the situation.²⁹⁶ Waddington describes it as:

best suited to research projects which emphasize the importance of human meanings, interpretations and interactions, where the phenomenon under investigation is generally obscured from public view; where it is controversial; and where it is little understood and it may therefore be assumed that an 'insider' perspective would enhance our existing knowledge.²⁹⁷

Prior to entering the field to observe ward committee meetings; I compiled a list of criteria for observing meetings. The list of criteria was based on my theoretical framework and is included in Appendix A. After observing the first ward committee meeting, I made changes to the list of criteria. These changes are included in Appendix B; and constitute my final list of the criteria I used throughout my observation of ward committee meetings.

²⁹⁶ Dr Catherine Dawson, *A Practical Guide to Research Methods: A user-friendly manual for mastering research techniques and projects*, 2nd ed. (United Kingdom: How to books, 2006) , 33-34; David Waddington, "Participant Observation," *Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research: A Practical Guide*, ed. Catherine Cassel and Gillian Symon (London: Sage publications, 1997), 107-108.

²⁹⁷ Waddington, 108.

4.3.2) Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is another method of data collection and is a common form of interviewing method used in qualitative studies. The aim of using such a method is to elicit information from individuals that can be used to extend the understanding of the research problem being studied. In the interview the same list of questions are asked of all interviewees to ensure continuity and consistency. By designing and posing semi-structured questions, the researcher creates a degree of flexibility, leaving room for respondents to elaborate on important information arising from the questions.²⁹⁸

Semi-structured interviews are usually conducted with 'key informants', those people with personal knowledge and a depth of understanding of the community or group they represent. These key informants are described as:

privileged witnesses, or people who, because of their position, activities or responsibilities, have a good understanding of the problem to be explored. These witnesses are not necessarily members of the population targeted by the study, but they all have a major interest in that population. In addition to being privileged witnesses of specific problems, they may represent specific client groups and areas, have administrative responsibilities in a municipality or community organization, be experts in a particular field, and so forth.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Dawson, 30.

²⁹⁹ *Guide to Organizing Semi-structured Interviews with Key Informant: charting a course to safe living volume 11*, (2009):2 [Online]. Available: http://www.inspq.gc.ca/pdf/publications/guide_entretien_vol11_eng.pdf [2012 August, 4]

The key informants with whom I conducted semi-structures interviews were the five ward councillors whose ward meetings I had observed. Ward councillors have the responsibility of chairing ward committee meetings³⁰⁰ and are essentially presiding officers of ward committees, having statutory responsibilities to ensure to the effective functioning of ward committees. Prior to conducting interviews with ward councillors, I drew up a list of questions which are included in Appendix C. The main aim of these questions was to gain firsthand knowledge from ward councillors in terms of what they understood to be their roles and responsibilities as ward councillor. The design of these questions was informed by my theoretical framework and the intention was as a means of extending my understanding of ward committee deliberations.

In addition to interviewing ward councillors, I interviewed a representative from the office of the speaker using a different set of questions to those questions posed to ward councillors. This set of questions is included in Appendix D. The reason why these questions differed from the questions posed to ward councillors was because the office of the speaker representative is also the chairperson of the city council and supervises council meetings. The office of the speaker has also been designated the responsibility of managing public participation at local government level, especially as it relates to the ward committee system, by ensuring that they function effectively.³⁰¹ Therefore the purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews with a representative from this office was to obtain a broader and more strategic perspective on public participation across all the ward committees to be found in the city of Cape Town.

³⁰⁰ Terence. Smith and Jaap. De Visser, Are ward committees working? Insights from six case studies, (2009):6[Online].Available: <http://www.communitylawcentre.org.za> [2012 January,13]

³⁰¹ City of Cape Town, Council Overview: A Comprehensive guide to council structures, finance, governance, directorates and planning, 10.

4.3.3) Reliability and Validity

To ensure that the credibility of a research study is not compromised, a researcher needs to test the reliability and validity of the method of data collection used. The degree of reliability of a study is understood to be, “the extent to which results are consistent over time, and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability, and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.”³⁰² Therefore reliability refers to the quality of the process of participatory observation and semi-structured interviews as a research tool, and whether or not it produces repeatability and accuracy of results. Validity on the other hand, “truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are...”³⁰³

To ensure the reliability of my study, the same list of criteria was used in observing each of the five wards. The information I received from observing ward committee meetings was recorded by means of hand written notes which were then retyped as soon as possible, the same day or the following day while the information was fresh. I had not used a recording device during participant interviews because I thought that it would have been inappropriate. However, had I used both hand written notes and a recording device I would have been more assured of capturing fully what I needed to, or anything that I might have missed.

³⁰² Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *The Qualitative Report* 8 4 (2003):598 [Online]. Available: <http://www.http://peoplelearn.homestead.com/medhome/qualitative/reliab.validity.pdf> [2012 August,3]

³⁰³ Ibid, 599.

Furthermore, because my list of criteria was quite extensive and detailed, it followed a logical structure and, given that ward committee meetings followed their own logical structure rather than my list of observation criteria, attempting to record everything proved to be somewhat overwhelming. As a result because I only had one opportunity to sit in each of the ward committee meetings, and it was vital for me not to miss any important information relating to my list of criteria, there were times that I ended up writing about everything that I observed. Thus, some of the information was not entirely relevant in that it went beyond what I was required to observe from my list of criteria. There was also a vast quantity of detailed information being provided at ward committee meetings.

To ensure the reliability of the semi-structured interviews, all five ward councillors were posed the same questions based on my theoretical framework. The only municipal official whose set of questions was different was that of the representative from the office of the speaker because of his position in managing and supervising the overall ward committee system in the city of Cape Town. Nevertheless, in terms of interview procedure, both ward councillors and the representative from the office of the speaker were interviewed whereby I adhered to the questions as they were listed on the page. I therefore did not divert or pose extra questions or state the questions in such a manner that made it easier or more difficult for them to understand. Hand written notes were used and the information was typed up immediately after the interviews. I did not think of it at the time to use a recording device while interviewing my key informants.

Thus as in the case of observing ward committee meetings, more detailed information could have been captured had a recording device been used, given that semi-structured interviews gave key informants the opportunity to elaborate, which was the case in these interviews. In an attempt to ensure the validity of my study the list of criteria used to observe ward committee meetings, and the semi-structured questions posed to key informants in the interviews, stemmed from my theoretical framework. I maintained the validity of my study by observing ward committees held in five diverse socio-economic wards in the southern suburbs of the city of Cape Town and incorporated semi-structured interviews with ward councillors from these wards into my research.

In addition, I interviewed a representative from the office of the speaker considering him to have a more comprehensive overview and understanding of public participation at local government level in the city of Cape Town. However, time constraints on collecting my data, limited me in terms of collecting data across more wards as well as conducting focus-groups with ward committee representatives themselves.

4.4) Research limitations

Despite my attempt to analyse multiple wards, the research was limited in the extent to which it could generalise about the role of wards in promoting public participation. If however, a larger number of wards from across various suburban areas were sampled this would have enabled my research to have more generalisable conclusions. It was also my intention to arrange focus groups with representatives from all five wards, but given the limited time with which I had to complete my dissertation, the focus groups could not be convened.

4.5) Research Ethics

In order for me to obtain access to ward committee meetings and conduct my participant observation, I required the necessary permission from ward councillors. Formal permission was granted in writing by ward councillors; and a consent form was emailed to councillors prior to their meetings. This is included in Appendix E. After observing each meeting, the consent form was signed by the ward councillor for my own record keeping in order of ensuring their anonymity. In addition, I sought ethical clearance from the Political Studies Department for approval of both the letter of consent and the semi-structured interview questions to be posed to ward councillors. On request some changes were made to the original consent form; which is included in Appendix F. The ethical clearance form sent for approval to the Political Studies Department is included in Appendix G. No changes were requested with regards to the ethical clearance form.

4.6) Conclusion

This chapter describes the way in which my study was qualitative. I chose to employ a multiple case-study research design strategy, because I had a rich and detailed theoretical framework from which to work. My theoretical framework provided me with a list of criteria with which to observe five ward committee meetings in diverse socio-economic areas in the southern suburbs of the City of Cape Town. It also served as a framework conducting semi-structured interviews with such key informants, five ward councillors and a representative from the office of the speaker. This method of data collection not only helped to make my study more reliable and valid, but overall, both methods helped me to obtain rich empirical data about participatory governance.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

5.1) Introduction

This data analysis chapter applies Fung and Wright's, Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) model in assessing the functioning of ward committees in five wards within the southern suburbs in the city of Cape Town, three of which are high income wards, and two of which are middle-income wards. This assessment is informed by three general principles as advocated by Fung and Wright, (a) practical orientation; (b) bottom-up participation and (c) deliberative solution generation. Fung and Wright argue that the effectiveness of ward committees would be enhanced if three institutional properties exist in support of the ward committee system: (1) devolution of power, (2) centralised supervision and coordination, and (3) being state-centered, rather than voluntaristic structures within municipalities. This chapter thus begins by investigating the institutional properties that support the ward committee system. This is followed by an assessment of the functioning of wards based on the three general principles of Fung and Wright's model.

5.2) Design properties of ward committees within municipalities

5.2.1) Devolution

This can be understood as “the devolution of public decision-making authority to empowered local units.”³⁰⁴ According to Fung and Wright, administrative and political power should be devolved to local action units for example, ward committees. According to this model, citizens are included at all stages of decision-making from planning and conception through to implementation and monitoring.³⁰⁵

According to all ward councillors interviewed, ward committee members can present general maintenance or service delivery projects or proposals which are in accordance with municipal policy or by-laws.³⁰⁶ Ward councillors from wards A, B, C and E indicated that this has not happened as yet in their wards, and as a result members of the committee act as an advisory body only in terms of making suggestions and putting forward issues or problems relating to general basic services.³⁰⁷ The ward D, ward councillor stated in his interview that, “ward members have put forth proposals to me. I will analyze it and seek advice from the manager and then take it forward.”³⁰⁸ Ward councillors from all wards indicated that if and when members do put forward projects and proposals, these are either accepted or rejected based on the type and viability of the project and whether there is funding available. Thus, the final authority still lies in the hands of ward councillors and municipal officials.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Fung and Wright.; 17.

³⁰⁵ Ibid;22.

³⁰⁶ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-Council Offices, June and July 2012).*

³⁰⁷ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, and E, (Sub-Council Offices, June and July 2012).*

³⁰⁸ *Interview with ward councillor D, (Sub-council Offices, July 2012)*

³⁰⁹ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-Council Offices, June and July 2012).*

From my observation in wards A, B, C and E, ward committee members representing civic based organisations raised key service delivery issues and or suggestions, while other ward committee members who had been assigned specific portfolio's such as safety and security, designated vulnerable groups, sports, environment, education etc, reported key problems that their constituents faced and or made suggestions. I further observed that no projects or proposals were put forward by any ward committee members across these wards, only ward councillors themselves put forward projects. Thus it was apparent that ward committee members did not deliberate about the choice of projects as these had already been decided by the ward councillors themselves. However, ward committee members were allowed the opportunity to raise their objections to these projects.³¹⁰ In the case of ward A and B, members seemed sufficiently satisfied with the proposed projects not to raise any objections.³¹¹

However, in ward E a member raised objections about an education project that encompassed five schools in the area saying that, "you [the ward councillor] indicated that there are five high schools in the ward, when in fact one of the schools is not a public school, but a private school of which the majority of its students are bussed in from other areas."³¹² Although the ward councillor was aware of this, ward committee members were made aware by the ward councillor that no school in the ward was going to be discriminated against even if it was a private school.³¹³

³¹⁰ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³¹¹ *Participant observation of wards A and B (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³¹² *Participant observation of ward E (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³¹³ *Ibid.*

Similarly in ward C, when a member object to a project being piloted in a specific area, the matter erupted into a heated argument between the ward councillor and the ward committee member.³¹⁴ Across wards A, B, C and E where projects were concerned it appeared that ward councillors were essentially keeping their members informed about their choice of project and spending in terms of their additional budget allocations. Thus ward committee members were not involved in choosing what projects they wanted to have in their wards; their input was only required after the choice of project had been decided on and monies had been allocated to these projects.³¹⁵

Only one ward, ward D, did I observe any actual devolution of administrative and political power. Members of this ward put forward suggestions and proposals in addition to reporting on both key service delivery issues and specific problems as they related to their designated sectors. When a proposed initiative or project was put forward by members, arguments were made for or against the proposal. After members collectively deliberated, and eventually reached a consensus, the proposed initiative was adopted by the committee. The councillor of this ward also sought the input of ward members about other projects before allocating any monies to these projects, and even tasked them to seek additional input from their constituents.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ *Participant observation of ward C, (Sub-council office, June 2012)*

³¹⁵ *Participant observation of wards A, B,C and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³¹⁶ *Participant observation of ward D, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

In the course of the meeting, ward committee members reiterated clearly that they preferred to handle key service delivery issues or specific problems related to their community or area collectively with constituents whom they were representing. This they would do through contacting the appropriate officials to address their problems; whilst using the ward committee system only as a means to put forward more pressing matters that they could not handle through the official channels.³¹⁷

5.2.2) Centralized Supervision and Coordination

This can be understood as “the creation of formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution, and communication that connect local units with each other, and with super-ordinate, more centralized authorities.”³¹⁸ According to Fung and Wright, local action units, for example ward committees should not be autonomous or atomized structures of decision-making in relation to central authorities. Fung and Wright advocate for a coordinated form of decentralisation,³¹⁹ where information is fed from local action units to centralized bodies in an attempt to keep the centralised bodies abreast about decisions and problems that arise.³²⁰

The centralized supervening body for wards is the office of the speaker.³²¹ In an interview, a representative of the office of the speaker described the functions of the office of the speaker: “we are like a resource centre; we push wards in the right direction so that they spend money more effectively.”³²²

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Fung and Wright; 17.

³¹⁹ Ibid.; 22.

³²⁰ Ibid; 23.

³²¹ Ngcobo,64.

³²² *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

According to the office of the speaker representative, some of the common problems preventing wards from functioning effectively are their lack of resources and lack of experience of ward councillors, given that: “50% of ward councillors are brand-new and therefore they make it up as they go along.”³²³

From my observations of ward councillors this appeared true in wards where middle-income residents resided, wards B and E. In both these wards, councillors required the assistance of their Public relations councillors and or personal assistants in chairing meetings.³²⁴ However, this was understandable given that the councillor from ward B had only been a ward councillor for a year.³²⁵ However, lack of experience could not be attributed to the performance of the ward councillor in ward E, who had in fact been a councillor for over 11 years and thus had considerable on the job experience.³²⁶ Nevertheless, this is an indicator that ward councillors require adequate training on an ongoing basis despite their level of experience since they still do not have the confidence and the required skill to chair ward committee meetings on their own. Furthermore, from my observations in wards B and E, I noted that some ward committee members were new to the ward forum and thus had not received an agenda for the meeting,³²⁷ while other ward committee members had not received an agenda that had supposedly been delivered to them by courier.³²⁸

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ *Participant observation of ward B and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³²⁵ *Interview with ward councillor B*, (Sub-council office, July 2012)

³²⁶ *Interview with ward councillor E*, (Sub-council office, July 2012)

³²⁷ *Participant observation of ward B*, (Sub-council office, June,2012)

³²⁸ *Participant observation of ward E*, (Sub-council office, June, 2012)

The ward councillor's personal assistant had not printed any extra copies, seemingly unaware that new committee members were joining the ward forum, and had also assumed that the agenda had been delivered to existing ward committee members. In addition, ward committee members had not received printed versions of the chairperson's report. As a result, and from what I observed, the lack of copies of the agenda coupled with the lack of copies of the chairperson's reports ultimately affected the ability of ward committee members to provide their feedback.³²⁹

Congruently, according to a representative from the office of the speaker, one of the biggest problems has been that the office of the speaker has not had a clear or comprehensive idea about the overall functioning of wards in the city of Cape Town, and had admitted that the office had not conducted any research into the ward committee system thus far. Nevertheless, a process for measuring the effectiveness of the ward committee system was being established in light of the fact that, according to the representative from the office of the speaker, salaries of local officials and stipends of R500 per meeting were being paid to ward committee members out of the local government budget.³³⁰ The representative from the office of the speaker considered that,

it is important for us to go out and measure the ward committee system because monies allocated to representatives must indicate that they are consulting with their constituents' that they are not using the monies for their own personal means, but to carry out their duties. Similarly, we may do a quick audit of wards to ascertain whether councillors are holding meetings, when did they meet and did they consult with their representatives.³³¹

³²⁹ *Participant observation of ward B and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³³⁰ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

³³¹ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

Aside from the role of the office of the speaker, ward councillors are collectively regarded as the coordinating body tasked with holding ward committee meetings.³³² From my observation across all wards, ward councillors were in fact holding meetings on a bi-monthly basis with their representatives at sub-council offices at suitable times to accommodate representatives.³³³ Ward councillors also stated that information was being shared across wards at policy party caucus meetings such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and inter-ward committee meetings at sub-councils, all of which enabled councillors to be kept informed about what was happening in other wards and to share ideas. Ward councillors could also obtain such information via the city's website, where minutes of all ward meetings are available, and the information being in the public domain once the wards have held their meetings.³³⁴ However, from my observation, a member from ward D raised the issue of a lack of communication that,

wards should have more communication between each other, either via the councillor or between themselves as well, so that if the same issues are being dealt with in wards and certain wards have achieved results in such matters they should be willing to share that information because it does not seem to be happening.³³⁵

The ward councillor also noted that corporate services would be notified to address the seriousness of the poor communication strategy.³³⁶

³³² Ncgobo,65.

³³³ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³³⁴ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)

³³⁵ *Participant observation of ward D*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

5.2.3) State-centered, not voluntaristic

According to Fung and Wright, this form of local governance can be understood as,

the use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these decentred problem-solving efforts rather than leaving them as informal or voluntary affairs...³³⁷ Experiments should 'colonize' and transform state institutions in such a way that administrative bureaucracies tasked with working out problems are restructured into these deliberative groups.³³⁸

According to this model, deliberative groups are allowed the power to implement the outcomes of their deliberations via the authorization of formal governance institutions.³³⁹ From my observations, all ward committees and ward forums did in fact form part of one local government structure: the municipality, which is state-centred.

Similarly, civic based organisations, such as residents associations, which are regarded as additional structures outside of formal governance institutions, were also incorporated into the ward committee system.³⁴⁰ A representative from the office of the speaker noted that,

although civic associations are a perfect residual, they also have a common cause and so wards need to have their input because we are there to say , how can we help in that common cause. The ultimate aim is that no civil unrest should be happening in any ward. This should really be a last resort. If this happening then the question is why hasn't these issues been brought to the attention of the councillor or sub-council?, why hasn't it been raised ?.³⁴¹

³³⁷ Fung and Wright, 17.

³³⁸ Ibid.;25.

³³⁹ Ibid.;23.

³⁴⁰ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁴¹ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker*, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)

In addition, from my observation, ward meetings were being held at sub-council offices.³⁴²

The ward councillors from both high income wards A, C and D, and middle-income wards, B and E, stated that members have access to sub-council offices to carry out any necessary administrative duties such as making phone calls, photocopies etc.³⁴³

In addition to this benefit, according to the representative from the office of the speaker, ward committee members are also paid a stipend of R500 per meeting which is to be used for administrative duties and transportation etc.³⁴⁴ According to councillors across all wards, members could also access state information via the city's website to obtain minutes of previous meetings, and from administrators at the sub-council who distributed information to members.³⁴⁵

However, from my observation in middle-income wards, wards B and E, the majority of members had not received copies of agendas for meetings or of the chairperson's reports, and this impeded their level of participation at meetings in terms of providing feedback and also relaying information to their constituents'.³⁴⁶ In high income wards, wards A, C and D, all members had copies of agendas and the chairperson's reports.³⁴⁷ As a result of the situation in middle-income wards, a representative from the office of the speaker indicated that they have employed other initiatives to ensure effective public participation through wards in an attempt to receive informed, quality comments from citizens.³⁴⁸

³⁴² *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁴³ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)*

³⁴⁴ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

³⁴⁵ *Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)*

³⁴⁶ *Participant observation of wards B and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012).*

³⁴⁷ *Participant observation of wards A, C and D, (Sub-council offices, June 2012).*

³⁴⁸ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

These strategies include advertising using standard information about how to articulate a concern or request and who the contact person is for residents to voice their concerns about service delivery issues in their communities. The representative from the office of the speaker also stated that, “we discourage wards from placing their own ads because we want consistency across the board, as no ward is more important than another ward.”³⁴⁹

The second strategy is to make use of the sub-council as a channel through which more communities get involved by citizens registering their organisations on the city’s database to be represented as one of the sectors on the ward committee. The strategy is to make use of the queue system, for example, “targeting citizens at day hospitals or clinics on specific days that are very busy and use it to our advantage to get them to fill in questionnaires or to do market research.”³⁵⁰

Through the use of such on-site surveys, “we are measuring what people think about things because they live in those communities.”³⁵¹ The reason for this, according to the office of the speaker representative, is that, “we are reworking the policy on public participation, so that when it goes to council we can show them all the things that we have done to evaluate public participation and put forth recommendations to council.”³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

5.3) The principal design features of ward committees

(A) Practical orientation

In terms of the EPG model, in order for local action units, for example ward committees, to enable public participation that is effective, they should have a clear focus on practical and real-life problems and concerns that citizens know about, can relate to and identify with. One of the main benefits of a local action unit with a practical focus, according to Fung and Wright, is that “it creates situations in which actors accustomed to competing with one another for power or resources might begin to cooperate and build more congenial relations.”³⁵³

Strengths and weaknesses of practical orientation at ward level.

There is a defined process for members of a ward committee to be selected to represent a certain sector or portfolio on a ward committee or ward forum, and this portfolio defines what issues or problems they are to report on. According to the representative from the office of the speaker,

the current administration has stuck to legislation by setting up an election process, registration of different categories or sectors and nominations stemming from the different categories or sectors. Ward councillors decide which sectors they want based on the registration of those sectors. So it is not about who gets the seat, because ward councillors may not interfere in that process.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Fung and Wright, 18.

³⁵⁴ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

Councillors from all wards confirmed this procedure, citing that they do in fact choose the sectors that they want to have on their ward committees or ward forums, be they community based organisations, civic based organisations such as resident associations, schools, sports groups, safety and security matters, religious organisations, agriculture etc. After councillors have identified their specific sectors, a nomination process comes into effect whereby those sectors chosen are required to put forward their representatives for nomination.³⁵⁵

From my observation across all five wards, members of the ward committee were designated a sector which they were required to represent. These ranged from civic based organisations such as resident associations to specific portfolio's such as safety and security, the environment, arts and culture, designated vulnerable groups, sports or education portfolios.³⁵⁶ Members from wards A, C, D and E who represented civic based organisations reported on key service delivery issues relating to their areas. Major service delivery issues were similar across these wards and ranged from (1) the upgrading of parks in terms of basic maintenance of fencing, increasing litter bins, hard surfacing for pathways, greening, fixing lights, upgrading cycling lanes, placing signage for dumping; (2) the blockage of storm and water drainage as a result of pollution spills, physical litter or leaves; (3) necessary traffic calming measures such as speed humps and traffic circles, and including the necessary road signage and the upgrading of road markings, filling potholes and fixing of fire-hydrants; (4) the construction of footbridges; (5) increasing safety and security measures required as a result of vagrancy, prostitution and drug dealing.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ *Interviews with councillors from ward A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July, 2012)*

³⁵⁶ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁵⁷ *Participant observation of wards A, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

I also observed that wards consisted of members representing specific portfolios, whose duty it was to report on specific problems related to that portfolio.³⁵⁸ For example, in ward A, a member representing the sports portfolio reported on the increased break-ins to club premises and pump-houses.³⁵⁹ In ward B a member representing the designated vulnerable group sector indicated to the councillor that disadvantaged children from her area were not attending any camps and wanted to know when camps would be arranged.³⁶⁰ Similarly, a member in ward C informed the councillor about the elderly complaining about having to submit the same documentation pertaining to rebates and asked whether there was a simpler process.³⁶¹ In ward D the member assigned the environmental portfolio reported about pollution spills, caused by builders using the storm-water system to dispose of builder's sand which leads straight into the rivers; and that builders were using sidewalks and curbs to store building material. Another member from the same ward, who had been assigned the safety and security portfolio, reported on theft from motor vehicles, apparently a common incident in the ward, and pointed out the need to address the social implications of security and rehabilitation initiatives. Another member from the same ward, with the education portfolio, indicated that the fields of a school in her area required upgrading and that the irrigation needed to be repaired.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁵⁹ *Participant observation of ward A, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁶⁰ *Participant observation of ward B, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁶¹ *Participant observation of ward C, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁶² *Participant observation of ward D, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

There appeared to be some confusion from two members, from ward D with regards to representing their specific portfolios. Members were unsure if they were only required to focus on problems related to their portfolio in terms of what they had noticed in their area or throughout the entire ward.³⁶³ As a result, from what I observed across wards A, C, D and E, was that members representing designated portfolios such as environment, education, sports, or safety and security portfolios were also reporting on other key service delivery related issues outside of their portfolios and this information was similar to that being reported by members from civic based organisations. This caused confusion amongst ward committee members because they were unsure of their roles and functions and what exactly they were required to report on in terms of how the information related specifically to their designated sectors. However, from my observation, this confusion but was not detrimental to deliberations; the information simply became repetitive.³⁶⁴

(B) Bottom-up participation

Bottom–up participation refers to the empowerment of citizens through direct involvement in decision-making. In this regard local action units, for example ward committees would be required to seek the input from ordinary citizens about problems that affect their lives directly. Through bottom-up participation the ideas, knowledge and experience of ordinary citizens about the problems and concerns they face are taken into account. This allows local action units to draw on ordinary citizens’ concerns and ideas as a way to find solutions to their problems.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ *Participant observation of wards A, C, D and E, (sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁶⁵ Fung and Wright,18.

Strength and weaknesses of bottom-up participation at ward level.

The composition of wards:

By law ward committees are meant to be representative structures constituting a diverse range of interest groups within a ward. These should include religious groups, the youth, older persons, business, sports, welfare, environment, education etc and an equitable representation of both men and woman. In addition, ward committees are meant to be made up of no more than ten people selected from the local community, while ward forums should consist of twenty people.³⁶⁶ This was confirmed by a representative from the office of the speaker:

ward committees should make sure that they have representation from the sectors in their ward on the ward committee and need to liaise with these organisations from the sectors. They need to be the finger on the pulse about how the community feels about things because we need to be taught by the community about how best to be effective in liaising with them.³⁶⁷

Notably, three of the high income wards, wards A, C and D had ward committees, whilst two of the middle-income wards, wards B and E had ward forums. From my observation, across all wards, members of these committees and forums were ordinary citizens with no links to formal positions within the municipality. However, one of the most fundamental flaws at ward level was that none of the wards had the required number of members, the ten members required to make up a ward committee: ward A with only five members, ward C, with only two members and ward D with only seven members.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Smith and De Visser, 10.

³⁶⁷ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

³⁶⁸ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

The ward forums did not have the required twenty members: ward B with seven members and ward E with five members. In addition, the youth were also underrepresented across all wards, with members ranging in ages of 35 and above. Only two wards, ward A and D, had a balanced representation of both men and women.³⁶⁹

The reason cited by councillors for their lack of members was that the membership of wards was dependent on whether the different sectors put forward their nominations for representatives.³⁷⁰ Even though there is a defined legislative process which councillors have to abide by as indicated previously,³⁷¹ the ward councillor from ward A stated that, “two of my members I have never met because they have not attended any meetings. I will have to relook at their portfolios and what portfolio’s they represent.”³⁷²

Ward C’s councillor stated that, “I really have to beg people to attend and attendance of members is one thing I really need to work on.”³⁷³ Both ward D and E councillors stated that attendance by committee members was very good.³⁷⁴ The councillor from ward C reported that, “although at times there might be one or two apologies, if I do not see ward committee members at meetings because they are high powered business people, I do still see them in other capacities such as public meetings.”³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Interviews with councillors from wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)*

³⁷¹ *Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)*

³⁷² *Interview with ward councillor A, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁷³ *Interview with ward councillor C, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁷⁴ *Interview with ward councillor D and E (Sub-council offices, July 2012)*

³⁷⁵ *Interview with ward councillor D, (Sub-council offices, July 2012)*

Yet the same could not be said from my observation in ward B. Before ward B's forum meeting, the councillor admitted to me that she hand-picked people because she lacked members.³⁷⁶ The composition of her ward was also determined by "people who are interested in working for the Democratic Alliance (DA) and members are required to pay R10 to participate in all the activities required of them to be a member."³⁷⁷ The ward councillor did not indicate to whom the R10 was to be paid.

Participation of ward members:

From my observation, the participation of members was largely influenced by how councillors chaired their meetings. There was a significant difference in the way the ward councillor in ward D chaired the meeting from the rest of the ward councillors from wards A, B, C and E, whose meetings I observed. Although all councillors are required to table their chairpersons report first, which is a report that provides members with the necessary updates about council decisions, the IDP budget, the mayors social redress programme, and additional monies allocated to the ward for specific projects;³⁷⁸ the councillor from ward D choose to open his meeting by leaving his chairperson's report for last and instead began the meeting by allowing all his members to put forward their most pressing concerns to be discussed. The result of this was that, all ward D's members participated throughout the entire meeting with the councillor listening intently and providing feedback. By leaving his chairpersons report for last, most of the issues and feedback that members wanted clarity on had been deliberated and dealt with collectively as a ward committee and with the councillor. Thereafter, the councillor could focus on providing members with the necessary

³⁷⁶ *Participant observation of ward B*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁷⁷ *Interview with ward councillor B*, (Sub-council offices, July 2012)

³⁷⁸ *Participant observation of wards, A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

updates relating to council decisions. In this way the meeting was dominated not by the ward councillor, but by ward members, who at the end of the meeting also raised objections and or provided suggestions relating to the chairpersons report.³⁷⁹

According to my observation, councillors from wards A, B, C and E, opened their meetings by reading their chairperson's report. This took up a large part of the meeting and left members with little time to discuss pressing matters relating to their designated portfolios or residential areas. Although members were given the opportunity to provide suggestions or raise issues related to the chairperson's report, only a few members did so.³⁸⁰ The reasons for this varied across these wards.

In wards A and E, some members wanted clarity about issues that were mentioned which related to their specific portfolios and they provided more suggestions, while other members seemed content with the information provided by the councillor and did not raise any objections.³⁸¹ In wards B and E, members did not have copies of the agenda or the chairperson's report and thus lost track of most of the information.³⁸² One member from ward B complained, "the report is so heavily laden with figures that I require a copy to give any feedback at the next meeting, but what I did get was that, not once, did I hear how all the monies from the IDP budget would be used for development projects in this ward."³⁸³

³⁷⁹ *Participant observation of ward, D*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

³⁸⁰ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁸¹ *Participant observation of wards A and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁸² *Participant observation of wards B and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁸³ *Participant observation of ward B*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

In the ward C meeting, when a member wanted justification for certain decisions about projects being piloted in a specific area, both the member and the councillor began having heated arguments around this issue. The member, dissatisfied with the councillor's answer and his way of responding, became despondent and simply decided to listen to the rest of what the councillor had to say.³⁸⁴

Ward councillors also encourage members to submit written reports as action items to be discussed on the agenda.³⁸⁵ However, from my observation, members from high income wards such as wards A, C and D, made use of this opportunity, while members from middle-income wards, such as wards B and E, did not.³⁸⁶ The submission of reports plays a major role in whether representatives report, and report fully, on their constituents' concerns. From my observation, where members had submitted written reports, such as in high income wards A, C and D, members gave detailed information about their constituents' grievances as well as tasking their councillor to take certain matters to council.³⁸⁷ However, where members did not submit written reports but were given leeway to give verbal reports such as in middle-income wards B and E, members reported on one or two issues that were of concern or value in terms of taking these matters to council, but only on what they could think of randomly at the time.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ *Participant observation of ward C*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

³⁸⁵ *Interviews with ward councillors, A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council office, June and July 2012)

³⁸⁶ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁸⁷ *Participant observation of wards A, C and D*, (Sub-council offices, June, 2012)

³⁸⁸ *Participant observation of wards B and E*, (Sub-council offices, June, 2012)

For example, in ward B a member raised the issue about camps for disadvantaged children in the area, including legal advice for a parent whose child faced disciplinary action. With regard to members participating in meetings and submitting written reports on their grievances and concerns, the councillor of ward B had this to say,

ward forum meetings are not a platform for complaints and each member would be required to be at public meetings so that citizens could know who their representatives were. Public meetings would also not be a platform for complaints. Questionnaires would be handed out at public meetings for citizens to voice their grievances and that these concerns would be dealt with by members in their submission of reports at ward forum meetings. Members are required to submit complaints in writing in their reports prior to meetings and present suggestions surrounding citizens concerns.³⁸⁹

The ward B councillor further stated that “members will need to bring issues onto the agenda that affect their communities and be my ears and eyes.”³⁹⁰ In ward E, members complained about a fire hydrant leak, the non-issuing of liquor licences in areas with schools in close proximity as well as religious institutions and issues about fencing that needed to be upgraded to barbed wire because the mesh fencing was continuously being stolen. The comment of the councillor of the ward was, “such matters that they brought up have to be submitted to me in writing for the next meeting.”³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ *Participant observation of ward B*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

³⁹⁰ *Interview with ward councillor B*, (Sub-council office, July 2012)

³⁹¹ *Participant observation of ward E*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

(C) Deliberative solution generation

Deliberative solution generation involves participants attempting to solve problems through processes of reasoned deliberation, joint-planning, and strategizing.³⁹² Fung and Wright argue that participants enter sites in which they look forward to strategies and solutions being expressed and forged through deliberation and planning with other participants instead of advancing reasons to pre-given principles, proposals, values or policies.³⁹³

Strength and weaknesses of deliberative solution generation at ward level

The structure of the agenda

Where the structures of agendas are concerned, a representative from the office of the speaker explained: “the idea is that we need to have councillors across the board follow the same guidelines of having a standard agenda.”³⁹⁴ From what I observed, ward meetings followed a logical structure. Firstly, applications for leave or apologies were noted, followed by the confirmation of the minutes pertaining of the previous meeting. Thereafter, the chairperson, the ward councillor, tabled the chairperson’s report, followed by responses or suggestions from members, and, lastly, members were required to discuss their constituents’ problems and concerns.³⁹⁵ From my observation, in ward D, the ward councillor tabled the chairperson’s report as the last item on the agenda.³⁹⁶

³⁹² Fung and Wright,19.

³⁹³ Ibid, 19-20.

³⁹⁴ Interview with a representative from the office of the speaker, (Cape Town Civic Centre, July 2012)

³⁹⁵ Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

³⁹⁶ Participant observation of ward D, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

Deliberations on projects or proposals

Ward councillors from across all wards indicated that their ward members could put forward service delivery projects or proposals in accordance with municipal policy and by-laws, but that it depended on the type of project or proposal and whether there was funding available.³⁹⁷ However, from my observations, all wards had been allocated funding of R200-000 to be used for short-term operational projects, and the wards needed to identify which projects could be covered with the allocated funding. Middle-income status wards were allocated additional funding above the R200-000 under the mayor's redress programme.³⁹⁸

Only one ward councillor from ward D, having also received additional funding from other sources, above the R200-000 allocated to the ward, presented a project wish list to his members. Members were required to take the list back to their constituents, discuss the projects with them, seek their input, and add any additional projects that they felt were necessary. At the next ward meeting, members would then deliberate on these projects and finalise where and how the monies would be spent.³⁹⁹ Consequently, from my observation, ward councillors from wards A, B, C and E, had employed what Fung and Wright call a command and control form of decision-making.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ *Interviews with ward councillors, A B, C, D and E, (Sub-council, June and July 2012)*

³⁹⁸ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

³⁹⁹ *Participant observation of ward D, (Sub-council office, June 2012)*

⁴⁰⁰ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

A command and control type of decision-making is employed where experts, be it managers, bureaucrats or specialists, discuss and make decisions among themselves because of their power, knowledge and skills. In this process, they do not consider seeking the necessary input from ordinary citizens, thus excluding them entirely from the deliberative process.⁴⁰¹ From my observations across all wards A, B, C and E, ward councillors merely informed their members about what projects the R200-000 would be used for in their ward and ward committee members could raise objections.⁴⁰² For example in ward A, the councillor indicated that monies would be spent on a park management plan and the upgrading of parks including outdoor gyms to attract the youth. From my observation, ward committee members seemed satisfied and thus did not raise any objections to these projects.⁴⁰³

In ward B, the councillor indicated that monies would be allocated to projects that she felt were of necessity in the ward such as a safety and security project, a skilled school project and a senior's community project. Ward committee members did not raise any objections to these projects.⁴⁰⁴ In ward C, when the ward councillor announced that monies would be allocated to a recycling project and the upgrading of parks a heated argument ensued between the ward councillor and a member because the project was to be piloted in a specific area,⁴⁰⁵ while in ward E, monies would be allocated to the upgrading of two large parks as well as an education project. Here a member objected to the education project because it included a private high school in the area which was attended by students from

⁴⁰¹ Fung and Wright, 20.

⁴⁰² *Participant observation of wards A, B, C and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

⁴⁰³ *Participant observation of ward A*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

⁴⁰⁴ *Participant observation of ward B*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

⁴⁰⁵ *Participant observation of ward C*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

outside the area.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, from my observations, ward committee members across wards A, B, C and E, did not to any marked extent deliberate about the choice of project with their ward councillors. These projects had been chosen by the ward councillor, and although members were provided the opportunity to raise their objections,⁴⁰⁷ from my observations this did not occur in wards A and B because members seemed satisfied.⁴⁰⁸ In contrast, in ward E a member did use the opportunity to raise an objection related to an education project, stating that “you [the ward councillor] indicated that there are five high schools in the ward, when in fact one of the schools is not a public school, but a private school of which majority of its students are bussed in from other areas.”⁴⁰⁹

Although the ward councillor was aware of this, the councillor pointed out to ward committee members that no school was going to be discriminated against even if it was a private school.⁴¹⁰ In ward C, when a member wanted to deliberate about an issue to do with a project, a conflict developed, because the member was dissatisfied by the councillor’s decision to pilot another project in a specific area. In challenging the councillor’s decision, the member said, “I cannot for the life of me understand why this particular area is always being looked at first, when no representative of their association ever attends meetings yet their area is chosen or preferred above other areas.” The ward councillor’s response was that “the decision was made between me and the sub-council manager.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁶ *Participant observation of ward E*, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

⁴⁰⁷ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C, and E*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

⁴⁰⁸ *Participant observation of ward A and B*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

⁴⁰⁹ *Participant observation of ward E* (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Participant observation of ward C*, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)

Nevertheless, although members' input is sought, it takes place after the project has been chosen. Furthermore, even though some members use the opportunity to raise objections while others do not, the fact of the matter remains that ward committee members at meetings do not deliberate about the choice of project or the planning of a project. On this issue councillor's across wards A, B, C and E stated that if members did in fact put forward proposals, which they had not yet done in their wards, they would need to motivate and identify the benefits of such a proposal, and, after it has been discussed amongst members, assume that members would arrive at a consensus. They were of the opinion that conflict would not really occur because they were working with mature, experienced individuals with similar issues and concerns and who would thus choose to move in a similar direction to the councillors to address those issues.⁴¹²

From my observation this was evident in ward D, the only ward where members put forward proposals. Members did debate with their councillor and authentic deliberations took place when proposals were put forward, and arguments presented by members, either for or against the proposal, and thereafter members reached a consensus and the proposed initiative was adopted.⁴¹³ However, no proposals were put forward by members from wards, A, B, C and E.⁴¹⁴ From my observations across wards A, B, D and E, and according to the explanation given by councillors of those wards, ward committee members had not reached the stage where there might be a conflict of interest between themselves and their ward councillors over certain decisions made or issues raised.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² *Interviews with councillors from wards A, B, C, and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)*

⁴¹³ *Participant observation of ward D, (Sub-council office, June 2012)*

⁴¹⁴ *Participant observation of wards A, B, C and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012)*

⁴¹⁵ *Participant observation of wards A, B, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June 2012); Interviews with ward councillors A, B, D and E, (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)*

Ward councillors from wards A, B, C, D and E confirmed that they assumed that any conflict that might arise could be as a result of limited funds for their wards and what projects would be allocated that funding.⁴¹⁶ However, only in one ward, ward C, from my observation was there tension between the councillor and a ward member. The ward committee member had already questioned the ward councillor's decision-making practice as it related to the allocation of a pilot project in a specific area; and the situation was made worse when the ward councillor did not seem eager to attend to the representative's issues and concerns about prostitution in her area. As a result the member threatened the councillor, stating that, "I am giving council 10 days to solve this issue; if the matter is not resolved I will be taking this matter to the newspapers and E-TV."⁴¹⁷ The councillor's comment on this kind of conflict and his response was:

when members consistently attack or challenge me in meetings, my instinct is to get defensive. I do try to encourage constructive and a free flow of information and debate and discussion between myself and members. I have however, reached a point where I have ignored the member's emails or have stopped emailing her because every response is that I have failed as a councillor. I have tried on numerous occasions to correct this but to no avail and as such I choose to bypass this member.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Interviews with ward councillors A, B, C, D and E (Sub-council offices, June and July 2012)

⁴¹⁷ Participant observation of ward C, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

⁴¹⁸ Interview with ward councillor C, (Sub-council office, June 2012)

Fung and Wright indicate list numerous factors that could facilitate or impede deliberations in a deliberation solution generation process, including ward committee members' skills and resources or lack thereof. However, what Fung and Wright indicate is that even though these factors may exist, they could actually act as a motivation for ordinary members to deliberate. Thus participants in a deliberation process do not have to have absolute equality of power but there should be at least a rough equality of power in evidence.⁴¹⁹

From my observations a rough equality of power was more apparent in high income wards such as wards A, C and D, because members were properly resourced in that they received agendas and chairperson's reports before meetings, and members submitted their own written reports as they related to their designated sectors and on which they could deliberate.⁴²⁰ Consequently, in middle-income wards such as wards B and E, the fact that members did not submit written reports, or have the necessary agendas and chairpersons reports in front of them, did in fact restrict their opportunity to deliberate and facilitate deliberations about their constituents' grievances. Thus a rough equality of power did not essentially exist in these wards.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Fung and Wright,24.

⁴²⁰ *Participant observation of wards A, C and D*, (Sub-council, June 2012)

⁴²¹ *Participant observation of wards B and E* (Sub-council, June 2012)

5.4) Conclusion

Although the wards selected for this research cannot be said to be representative of all wards in the city of Cape Town, from observations in the five selected wards in diverse socio- economic areas in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, ward committee members appeared to be moderately empowered in cases where they were informed and consulted. From observations of ward committee meetings in these selected wards showed that members in these wards have not progressed to a high level of empowerment where members, in conjunction with ward councillors, are able to define, plan and decide what projects will benefit their lives directly, besides ward members in ward D who put forward proposals and provided arguments for and against such proposed initiatives'. As a result participation by members in these wards has not to any significant extent taken the form of delegated power because authority still lies in the hands of ward councillors.

Although, the office of the speaker is required to manage and supervise wards, from the observation of the selected wards it would seem that there needs to be a means of monitoring and evaluating of the ward committee system if it is to work effectively. In addition, ward councillors need to make ward committee members aware of, and clarify their specific roles and functions if they are to take full advantage of this system. Citizens will remain disempowered if there is no full representation of ordinary citizens encompassing wards, such as the required number of members for ward committees and ward forums; or clear deliberative guidelines for deliberations.

Thus, in terms of meaningful public participation within local government structures, it would seem to be of importance that the powers and functions of ward committees be viewed in terms of members being able to extend their roles beyond simply making recommendations. Ward committee members need to have the power to affect the decisions of council and to tie action to these decisions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The foundations for this study were laid by exploring the literature pertaining to public participation and public empowerment in particular the emergence of participatory governance at local level as a result of a democratic deficit that emerged in both northern and southern democracies during the course of the twentieth century. Like many democracies, South Africa recognised that public participation was a fundamental component of democracy; especially since in terms of the Constitution (1996), local government had been delegated the crucial responsibility of supplying basic goods and services to its constituents.

However, until then citizens had not been involved in the decision-making processes at local government level, prompting the South African government to pass various pieces of legislation to create an institutionalised space, the ward committee system that would give citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns and grievances to the officials they voted into power. However, based on studies conducted by numerous researchers, the ward committee system seemed flawed in terms of its design and implementation, particular, since the idea of public participation had now gone beyond being an activity where citizens were only involved in decision-making processes.

It had also led to their desire for empowerment in the sense of citizens who were members of a ward committee being provided with the opportunity to use information gathered from their constituents in ways that would improve their lives.

This was envisaged in terms of committee members seeing decisions taken up and members being involved in all stages of the decision-making process from the conception, implementation through to the monitoring and evaluation of development projects thus ensuring ownership of these decisions and the concrete implementation of these decisions. In this context the study was intended to investigate whether ordinary citizens are, or have been, meaningfully empowered to the point of actively participating in and planning of local government projects.

As part of the process of establishing whether members of ward committees have reached this level of participation and empowerment the study presented various theoretical approaches that could be applied to the ward committee system as a means of investigating the extent of citizens' empowerment at local government level. Various models of deepening participatory governance structures were presented, ranging from representative democracy, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy to empowered participatory governance (EPG). Given that the EPG model encompasses elements of the other three approaches, it was used as a model that could be applied at ward level to because Fung and Wright supplied three institutional properties necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the ward committee system. These included (1) devolution of power; (2) centralised supervision and coordination; and (3) a state centered, rather than a voluntaristic structure. The model suggested that three design principles are required at ward level to ensure that wards functioned effectively. These are (a) practical orientation, (b) bottom-up participation, and (c) deliberative solution generation.

Five wards were explored in the southern suburbs of the city of Cape Town applying these criteria. These wards represented a range of diverse socio-economic areas: three wards were from high income areas, while two wards were from middle-income areas. The data was collected between June and July 2012 using data collection methods that included participant observation and semi-structured interviews with key informants such as ward councillors and a representative from the office of the speaker.

What the data revealed was that power had not been devolved to ward committee members in all the selected wards because the final authority still lay in the hands of ward councillors and municipal officials. Yet, according to legislation, ward committee members can only make recommendations and thus change at policy level is required. Nevertheless, ward committee members could put forward projects and proposals and justify such projects. However, the decision to accept a project depended on whether there was funding available. Yet, when funding did become available members of the committee were merely informed about which projects ward councillors had decided to spend the allocated money on. Councillors did not deliberate with ward committee members on the choice of projects. Instead, ward committee members could only raise objections or make suggestions about these projects and were required to support projects decided on by both the ward councillor and municipal sub-council managers. Ward committee members thus served in accordance with policy as an advisory body, limiting their role and function to reporting on major service delivery issues and making recommendations.

They were thus not involved in projects from conception to implementation and monitoring and evaluating. Thus, in terms of meaningful participation and empowerment within local government structures, it would seem to be of utmost importance that the powers and functions of ward committees be reviewed in terms of members being able to extend their roles beyond simply making recommendations. Ward committee members need to have the power to affect the decisions of council and to tie action to these decisions.

Nevertheless, the ward committee system does form part of the municipality, which is a state-centred local governance structure, and incorporates civic based organisations such as residents' associations that would usually fall outside of the formal institutions of the municipality. This is an indication that government is serious about seeking the input from all citizens, given that they are all working towards the same goal. Similarly, ward committees have access to state resources and state information and their members are provided with a monthly stipend to carry out their duties. However, the office of the speaker as a centralised body has not monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of the ward committee system. However, recognising this flaw, the office of the speaker is in the process of reviewing the extent of its responsibilities. Another deficit in the participation and functioning of ward committees is that, although ward councillors are working together as a coordinating body, information is being disseminated via inter-ward committee meetings or policy caucus meetings.

Consequently, this information is not being filtered down or across to committee members for them to use in handling practical problems in their areas by themselves and collectively with their constituents. If information did however filter across to committee members, the ward committee structure could in turn be used by ward committee members for more pressing matters which they are not able to handle through the official channels.

Ward committees are representative of ordinary citizens and report on practical problems that these citizens can relate to and identify with. Although, full representation of ward committee members on ward committees and ward forums is a factor, this also depends on whether organisations put forward their nominations or not, and thus ward councillors cannot be held solely responsible for the lack of representation on their ward committees.

Nevertheless, information is coming through from the bottom-up and information as it relates to the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process, and council decisions are being disseminated from the top down. However, both ward councillors and ward committee members require training despite ward councillors on the job experience or lack of experience, especially given that policy does not clearly indicate how ward councillors and ward committee members are required to deliberate. Guidelines for deliberation will need to be looked at where policies on ward committees are concerned. In addition, ward committee members require the necessary training in terms of their roles and functions so that they can take full advantage of the ward committee structure for public participation.

However, it cannot be denied that at this present moment, given the data collected from a small number of selected cases, participation at ward level constitutes a moderate level of empowerment, where participation takes the form of informing, consultation, placation and or partnerships. The ward committee system is therefore not a structure that gives citizens the ultimate level of empowerment and one that takes the form of delegated power. Since the ward committee system has not yet allowed citizens to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on the state and define, plan and decide what projects will benefit their lives directly, citizens remain moderately empowered.

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APPENDICES

[Appendix A]

List of criteria to be observed at ward committee meetings

General things to take note of

- Venue: where is the meeting held?
- Time of the meeting and end of meeting
- Weekday/weekend

Practical orientation and bottom-up participation

1) Representation (do a head count of the number of members)

- Number of members on the ward committee
(10 members + 1 councillor= ward committee)
(20 members+ 1 councillor=ward forum)

Look for:

- Gender representation: Equal representation of both men and women
 - Racial make-up: (number of coloureds, Indians, Blacks and whites)
 - *Make informal notes as to the diversity of the ward if it does arise*
- 2) Structure and Procedure of meeting
- Observe procedure pertaining to minutes of previous meeting, whether key issues are resolved/not.
 - How is the agenda of the meeting structured e.g by portfolio, sub-committee etc?
 - What is the role of sub-committees? How are they constituted? How do they report on service delivery issues/specific issues
 - How many issues are raised that are not on the agenda? And what are these issues?
- 3) Role of councillor
- Record how the ward councillor chairs the meeting. What style of chairing is evident?
 - How would you characterize the interaction between members of the ward committee and the ward councillor? (*Observe whether the councillor encourages feedback from all members and gives everyone of the members a chance to speak and provide their suggestions instead of them just filling a space.*)
 - How would you characterise the participation of ward committee members, i.e.) dominated by a few members or is there a broader contribution by members?
 - What issues and information does the ward councillor relay to members about matters being considered by council?
 - What issues are ward committee members tasking the councillor to take to council?

Deliberative solution generation

- How structured is the agenda?
- How are projects and proposals put forward?
- How do both the ward committee members and the ward councillor arrive at resolutions about particular issues e. g) by means of command or *control*, *aggregative voting* or *strategic bargaining* etc
- What in your observation were the points of disagreement or points of clarity that arose? How were they resolved
- What appears to be the motivating factors behind disagreements?

[Appendix B]**List of criteria to be observed at ward committee meetings****General things to take note of**

- Venue: where is the meeting held?
- Time of the meeting and end of meeting
- Weekday/weekend

Practical orientation and bottom-up participation**1) Representation** (do a head count of the number of members)

- Number of members on the ward committee
(10 members + 1 councillor= ward committee)
(20 members+ 1 councillor=ward forum)

Look for:

- Gender representation: relative representation of both men and women
- Racial make-up: (number of coloureds, Indians, Blacks and whites)

2) Structure and Procedure of meeting

- Observe procedure pertaining to minutes of previous meeting, whether key issues are resolved/not.
- How is the agenda of the meeting structured e.g. by portfolio, sub-committee etc?
- What is the role of sub-committees? How are they constituted? How do they report on service delivery issues/specific issues
- How many issues are raised that are not on the agenda? And what are these issues?

3) Role of councillor

- Record how the ward councillor chairs the meeting. What style of chairing is evident?
- How would you characterize the interaction between members of the ward committee and the ward councillor?
- How would you characterise the participation of ward committee members, i.e.) dominated by a few members or is there a broader contribution by members?
- What issues and information does the ward councillor relay to members about matters being considered by council?
- What issues are ward committee members tasking the councillor to take to council?

Deliberative solution generation

- How structured is the agenda?
- How are projects and proposals put forward?
- How do both the ward committee members and the ward councillor arrive at resolutions about particular issues e. g) by means of command or *control, aggregative voting or strategic bargaining* etc
- What in your observation were the points of disagreement or points of clarity that arose? How were they resolved
- What appears to be the motivating factors behind disagreements?

[Appendix C]**Questions to ward councillors**

- (1) How long have you been a ward councillor?
- (2) Have you previously been a councillor on other wards?
- (3) How is the membership of a ward member determined?
- (4) How would you describe the attendance of committee members at ward meetings?
- (5) What role and responsibilities do committee members have in setting or structuring the agenda for discussion?
- (6) How would you describe your working relationship with committee members?
- (7) Is it difficult to achieve consensus or minimize conflict amongst members or do you find it to be a problem?
- (8) Are you able to maintain a balance amongst the interests of committee members in relation to proposals made?
- (9) How do you seek consensus or minimize conflict among members?
- (10) How does your ward share information or obtain information about similar issues affecting other wards?
- (11) How much authority does your committee have in putting forth proposals or projects or recommendations to the municipal council?
- (12) Do you feel that projects or proposals or decisions taken are supported by the municipal council?
- (13) Is your ward committee properly resourced?

[Appendix D]**Questions to the office of the speaker**

- (1) How do you keep informed about the overall functioning of ward committees?
- (2) What are the common problems affecting the functioning of ward committees?
- (3) How do you monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of wards?
- (4) What is your understanding about the role that ward committees should play in facilitating public participation?
- (5) What has the city of Cape Town put in place to ensure that there is effective public participation through wards?
- (6) What resources and information do you as the office of the speaker supply to wards to enhance their effectiveness?
Has the office of the speaker conducted any research into the functioning of the ward committee system? If yes, what were the findings of the research?

[Appendix E]**RE: LETTER OF CONSENT-MASTERS RESEARCH ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Dear [customise it by person]

My name is Cheryl-Anne Smith and I am currently carrying out research as part of my Masters dissertation at the Department of Political Studies, at the University of Cape Town. I am under the supervision of Dr Vinothan Naidoo, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Studies. The subject of my dissertation is, **Public participation processes at local government level**, and the aim of my research is to examine the role and functioning of ward committees as structures of public participation at a municipal level.

I am seeking your co-operation in being able to attend, as an observer, the proceedings of your ward committee meeting as this would provide me with insights into the participatory processes. My observations will be kept confidential outside of the primary purpose of my research, which is to complete my Masters dissertation and possibly contribute to a future academic publication. I will also employ anonymity in how I present my observations, meaning that neither the ward committee nor any of its members will be identified by name.

If you have any questions or queries about my research, please don't hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Vinothan Naidoo (vinothan.naidoo@uct.ac.za: 021 650 3383).

I thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,
Cheryl-Anne Smith
Cell: 071 229 4135
Email: cherylanne64@hotmail.com

Name: _____

Date: _____

Designation: _____

Signature: _____

[Appendix F]

Date:

RE: LETTER OF CONSENT-MASTERS RESEARCH ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dear [customise it by person]

My name is Cheryl-Anne Smith and I am currently carrying out research as part of my Masters dissertation at the Department of Political Studies, at the University of Cape Town. I am under the supervision of Dr Vinothan Naidoo. The subject of my dissertation is, **Public participation processes at local government level**, and the aim of my research is to examine the role and functioning of ward committees as structures of public participation at a municipal level.

I am seeking your co-operation in being able to attend, as an observer, the proceedings of your ward committee meeting as this would provide me with insights into the participatory processes. My work is strictly for the purpose of completing my Masters dissertation, and I will employ anonymity in how I present my observations, meaning that neither the ward committee nor any of its members will be identified by name. I would also greatly appreciate it if members of the ward committee are made aware of my presence at the meeting. This would serve as a means of keeping with the ethical protocols of the University when conducting field research.

If you have any questions or queries about my research or do not want to be included in this study, please don't hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Vinothan Naidoo (vinothan.naidoo@uct.ac.za: 021 650 3383).

I thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Cheryl-Anne Smith
Cherylanne64@hotmail.com
 Tel: 071 229 4135

Name: _____

Date: _____

Designation: _____

Signature: _____

[Appendix G]**ETHICS CLEARANCE**

CHERYL-ANNE SMITH (SMTCHE007)

MASTERS (CAND.), POLITICAL STUDIES

SUPERVISED BY DR. VINOTHAN NAIDOO

Title of the Proposal:	Public Participation and Public Empowerment
Research Question:	What do the processes of public participation reveal about public empowerment in municipal government in South Africa?
Request:	I would like to request clearance to conduct my primary research in ward committees in the city of Cape Town
Informants:	I intend conducting participant observation in four ward committees in the City of Cape Town, key informant interviews with ward councillors, and aim to organise focus group sessions with ward committee members.
Anonymity:	In my dissertation write-up, participants, including the wards from which they derive will remain anonymous. Ward committees will be represented as <i>Ward A, B, C and D</i> instead. The information obtained will be used specifically for the purposes of completing my Masters research.
Sample Questions:	<p>Questions that I will pose in my participant observation of ward committees, including ward councillors and focus group sessions will originate from my specific theoretical framework that I am using to understand the role of ward committees in public participation. The theoretical framework that I am using to generate questions about public participation includes 2 or 3 thematic areas in the Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) framework. For example:</p> <p>(1) <u>Practical orientation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do wards focus on specific issues or problems? • What is the role of sub-committees? How are they constituted? How do they report on service delivery issues/specific issues <p>(2) <u>Bottom-up participation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How representative are wards in terms of the number of members that make up the ward committee, gender representation, youth, religious groups, sports etc? • Do ordinary people encompass the most number of members on the ward i. e) not linked to a formal position in the municipality? • What issues are ward committee members tasking the councillor to take to council? • What issues and information does the ward councillor relay to members about matters being considered by the Council? <p>(3) <u>Deliberative solution generation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How structured is the agenda? • How are projects or proposals put forward? • How do ward committee members arrive at resolutions about particular issues e. g) by means of command or control, aggregative voting or strategic bargaining
Funding:	Travel costs of this research are self-funded by the researcher.