FROM APARTHEID TO BATHO PELE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SERVICE DELIVERY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ATTERIDGEVILLE-SAULSVILLE

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Abstract

*The focus of the case study is public participation in the local government arena. The article examines the importance of public participation in the policy process and service delivery in Atteridgeville-Saulsville from apartheid times to post-apartheid rule. As a case study, public participation in the Tshwane Metropolitan Council (previously Pretoria City Council or Stadsraad) is traced back to the establishment of this "black township" (a black location in apartheid jargon) and investigated up until 2008. Public participation during the apartheid era was based on racial division. Black people were not allowed to participate in the decision-making processes that affected their locality. Democratic government since 1994, and more so since the acceptance of the democratic constitution, Act 108 of 1996, brought about an emphasis on equal citizen participation regardless of colour, status or geographical location. The Constitution enforces the responsibility of local government to ensure public participation in decision making. In democracies local government structures are traditionally seen as government closest to the people. The term **batho pele** strongly implies quality service delivery to human communities as well as accountability and transparency with a "human touch". Service provision should be informed by the needs and aspirations of the local communities, extracted from the community through participation. Making use of a qualitative approach, among others face-to-face interviews, the authors explore the case under review and how those who experience local government view the service delivery flowing from current policy and practice in contrast to that of the past.*

Keywords: Local government; *batho pele*; blockman; service delivery; public participation; Tshwane Metropolitan Council; location(s); Bantu Administration.

Sleutelwoorde: Plaaslike regering; *batho pele*; blokverteenwoordiger; openbare deelname; Tshwane Munisipale Raad; lokasies; dienslewering; Bantoe Administrasie.

1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic government, since the acceptance of the 1996 Constitution, stresses citizen participation in decision making regardless of colour, status or geographical

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location. Thus the responsibility of local government to ensure public participation became a constitutional imperative under the new dispensation. Local government structures are *government closest to the people*. Service provision and local government delivery are (or should be) informed by the needs and aspirations of local communities. Community or public participation plays an important role in this process. This case study demonstrates how those who experience(d) local government view current service delivery in contrast to that of the past. The selected case is Atteridgeville-Saulsville in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The authors also provide some pointers for future consideration.

2.   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In the realm of governance, the legitimacy and efficiency, and the resultant satisfaction of those at whom service delivery is aimed, are indicators of good local government. Local government, as *government closest to the people* in most societies, influences how national government is viewed and thus the impact of local government has wider implications than on the micro or community level alone. The term *batho pele* at heart also implies caring for communities in delivering services that benefit the quality of life for communities and individuals alike. Apart from the "human touch" *batho pele* implies accountable and transparent governance aimed at the citizenry on all levels especially on local government level.

It is rightly said that local government in South Africa is strongly associated with deepening democracy in state and society and the provision of instruments to affect this (*Delivery* 2009:4). The South African Constitution moreover stresses the notion of cooperative governance and identifies local government as one of the spheres of government crucial to service delivery. Informed observers point out that service delivery protests are becoming increasingly frequent. More protests were reported in the first half of 2009 than in any previous year, accounting for almost a quarter of all protests since 1994. The Western Cape and Gauteng were hardest hit (Powell 2009:12). Protests point to the failure of local leadership for various reasons. These may include lack of trust in local government (or at least distance from it), sub-optimum communication and lack of resources, or lack of capacity to exploit available resources optimally (Powell 2009:13-14).
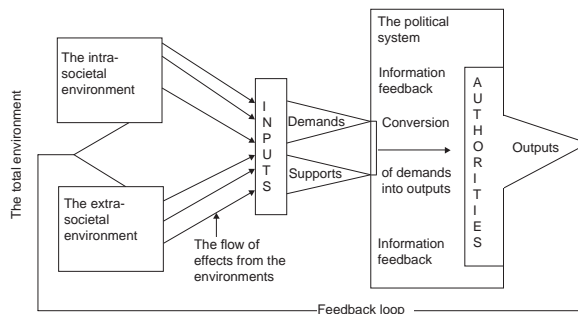
The Deputy Minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, in commenting on local government in distress, acknowledged that "there are many, many difficulties and the persistent service delivery protests are a glaring reflection of this" (Carrim 2009:17). Carrim points out that municipalities frequently became the soft belly of patronage and corruption and that things "did not turn out like we planned … and we must honestly admit this" in order to address future challenges (Carrim 2009:17).

For this very reason case studies of individual local governments may shed light on their shortcomings, the past legacies in which these took form and the weaknesses of current processes and structures. A case study such as this qualitative project on Atteridgeville-Saulsville, though generalisations cannot be made, provides important insights, lessons and pointers for future action to political leadership, agents of service delivery and communities alike. Moreover, the replication of this study in other areas may provide valuable data for future practice.

3.   THEORETICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As theoretical approach the researchers deployed the "Black Box" model (originally advocated by David Easton) where the social environment and the public reflect needs and pressures on governing structures and policy makers. These needs and pressures exert an influence on policy makers and "enforce" policy implementation with (supposedly) outputs that will benefit the community (Parsons 1995:23-26). The flow of effects from the social environment, translated into needs and demands (in themselves translated into support or non-support from the electorate), has to be converted to policy outputs that benefit the public, or at least carry their consent. The conversion of demands into outputs by authorities is of great importance; so is feedback from the people on local level, also referred to as *information feedback* or the *feedback loop* (see Fig. 1). The feedback loop can enhance services, or, if insufficient, may lead to sub-optimum delivery and public dissatisfaction. This article, against the background of this model, explores the views and practical implications of service delivery over the past decades in Atteridgeville-Saulsville.

Fig 1: The Eastonian Black Box of policy making

Notes:
The intra-societal environment
• ecological system
• biological system
• personality system
• social system

The extra-societal environment
• international political systems
• international ecological systems
• international social systems

Source: Adapted from Easton (1965:110)

Source: Parsons (1995:97).

Qualitative research methods for the collection of data were used. Secondary data such as books and articles, as well as media articles and reportages of public spokesmen were used. Primary sources consisted of original documentation and selected documents collected at the Archives and Record Services. The researchers in addition deployed a qualitative approach using face-to-face interviews with six respondents. Respondents were selected from the ranks of councillors and people/citizens in Atteridgeville-Saulsville who are supposed to have benefited from the change in structures of participation and service delivery.

The theoretical focus is mainly on public participation and its resultant effect on service delivery. The researchers contend that the apartheid system deprived blacks in the townships of their right to self-determination by not involving them in the decision-making process. Services provided to the black townships were based on the interests of the white minority appointed to administer such townships in a mostly top-down fashion.

The apartheid rule was in sharp contrast to the current Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which advocates the right of all South Africans to participate in the decision-making processes on national, regional and local levels. The Constitution of South Africa not only allows citizen participation, but also makes it the responsibility (if not an obligation) of government to ensure public participation. The Constitution also regards local government as the government closest to the people. This implies that service provision should be informed by the needs and aspirations of the local communities. These needs should be reflected through public participation processes that result in satisfaction for the community in terms of policy outputs (read: service delivery).

4.   THE EARLIER HISTORY: FROM SETTLEMENT TO "LOCATION"

The establishment of Pretoria is associated with the political and constitutional development of the Voortrekker state north of the Vaal River. The British authorities recognised the independence of the Voortrekker North in 1852, but the Voortrekker/Northern Frontier community was divided into four distinct communities, each with its own leader. The first group settled in the southwestern area near the current Potchefstroom and Rustenburg and was led by Andries Pretorius. Another group settled in the far north under AH Potgieter. This group settled in the Soutpansberg area with Schoemansdal, currently known as Makhado, as its centre. The eastern group settled in the areas of Ohrighstad and Lydenburg. The fourth and smallest group chose Utrecht as its communal centre. This group favoured the idea that government should settle in the southeast along the Buffels River. When MW Pretorius took over the leadership of the southwestern group from his father, Andries Pretorius, in 1853, he decided to buy part of the farms Elandspoort and

Daspoort along the Apies River. The aim was to establish a centrally situated capital. Pretoria was established as a town on 16 November 1855 and recognised as capital in 1860. The city acquired municipal status in 1903, while city status was conferred in 1931. It remains South Africa's administrative capital (Heydenrych & Swiegers 1999:10-17; Kirkaldy 2005:20).

The former black townships in Pretoria were not meant to become viable townships or cities, but rather to act as dwellings that could supply a reservoir of cheap labour to the nearby city. The temporary nature (or envisaged temporary nature) of these geographical localities can be seen in the notion of "locations" (Afrikaans: *lokasies*) under British and later Afrikaner minority rule (Thornhill 1995:13; Potgieter & De Kock s.a.:22).

Atteridgeville was the first black township established by the municipality of Pretoria under the Native Land (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 (Potgieter & De Kock s.a.:22). The township was established under the direct jurisdiction of the Pretoria Municipality. The plan for the establishment of Atteridgeville was finalised in 1936. On 26 May 1940 residents of Marabastad, Bantule and Hove's Ground were relocated to Atteridgeville (Potgieter & De Kock s.a.:22). These three residential areas were located on the land currently occupied by the Marabastad Business Centre, Tshwane National Produce Market and Tshwane University of Technology. Lady Selborne was a unique residential area in Pretoria, as it was the only urban area where black people owned land. The present Suiderberg is situated in the former Lady Selborne area (Mananyetse & Modiba 1998:np; Atteridgeville Soul City 1999:1-3; Heydenrych & Swiegers 1990:18 and 21; National Archives and Record Services NTS: 87/313N; Smith 1992:187).

Saulsville was established in 1931 as a "whites only" area and was named after Messrs Saulsville Estates (Pty) Ltd, the registered owners of Saulsville Township (NTS:87/313, letter from Podlashuc, Mentjies, Liepson & Klagsbrun to the Secretary of Native Affairs 30 April 1946). The area was later allocated for residential purposes and formed part of Atteridgeville in the 1950s when it expanded to accommodate residents from so-called "black spots" (land owned or occupied by blacks in the white areas) such as Mooiplaas and Lady Selborne, who were evicted under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Atteridgeville Soul City 1999:3; Heydenrych & Swiegers 1999:21; Thompson 2001:193).

The township was established on a portion of the farm Elandsfontein, as indicated in a letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Provincial Secretary dated 11 December 1952: "In furtherance of my Minute No: 87/313N (3) of the 4th December, 1952, I have to advise you that the local authority has now applied for the establishment of a location and Native village on the above farm. This area adjourns the Atteridgeville Location and was approved by Honourable the Minister for the use of a location" (National Archives and Record Services, file 87/313N

[3]). Saulsville forms part of the present Brazzaville, Phomolong, Mshengu and Vergenoeg informal settlements. Many, if not most, of the houses ("shacks") erected there were informally occupied by the early 2000s (Hlahla 2003:5).

With the passing of the Group Areas Act of 1950, the apartheid government enforced strict residential segregation. The Act was a key piece of legislation that instituted residential segregation and hence compulsory removal of blacks to "own group" areas. It resulted in the demarcation of separate residential and commercial districts and the restriction of property ownership to the race groups to which the area had been assigned. The Act subjected blacks to living in townships owned and administered by white elected city councils (White Paper on Local Government 1997:3; Heydenrych and Swiegers 1999:21; Smith 1992:27).

In 1971, the government passed an act to establish the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAAB) run by white officials to administer black townships. According to the apartheid government, black people were to remain temporary residents of "white" South Africa. Thus, the administration of townships became the responsibility of Bantu Administration. The BAAB took over the responsibility that was previously assigned to local authorities. Twenty- two administration boards were created throughout the country in 1972. The source of revenue for these local authorities came from rent, profit from "Bantu" beer and labour fees (Heymans & Tötemeyer 1999:96; Giliomee 1979:227).

Atteridgeville-Saulsville was transferred from the Non-European Affairs Department of the then City Council of Pretoria to the newly formed Bantu Affairs Administration Board. In 1983 it was proclaimed as a "formal black local authority". The township was finally integrated into the Central Pretoria Metropolitan Substructure in 1994. This body served all the residents of greater Pretoria for an interim period until democratic local government elections were held in 1995 (Oliveira 1995:15).

Black people in the former Transvaal were not represented on the municipal council or any other local authority. Black people were not part of decision-making processes nationally or on local government level. Decisions were taken by mostly white state-appointed officials. The Urban Bantu Councils Act, Act 9 of 1961, however initiated a process in which blacks had limited representation. The aim was to empower urban local authorities to establish urban councils in the townships under strict qualifications. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act, Act 76 of 1963, described these limited powers. However, by 1971, only 23 urban councils had been established throughout the country. The third Bantu Laws Amendment Act, Act 9 of 1979, determined that members of the councils would have to be nominated through the election process. Elections were to be held through secret ballot (Horrel 1971:28).

During the apartheid era, community members were not allowed to participate in decision-making processes such as the local planning, development and management of the Atteridgeville-Saulsville township. Instead, the Pretoria Municipality would mandate appointed officials to plan, develop and manage programmes and projects on behalf of the citizens of the townships. The township citizens were not allowed to generate income through their participation in business activities. In reality black people were not allowed to participate in the financial realm and this contributed to a lack of capacity to generate any income and any means of economic self-sufficiency. In this regard, the livelihood of black people was inhibited to the extent that the majority faced hunger, substandard housing and poverty (Stals 1998:13).

5.   DEMOCRATISATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE AND ITS EFFECT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In February 1990, President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and other subsidiary organisations, including the United Democratic Front and the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). On 11 February 1990, eleven days after the unbanning of the ANC, Mandela was released unconditionally after 27 years in prison. The government named its negotiation team on 29 March 1990. The ANC had its first meeting with government on 11 April 1990. The government and the ANC representatives met for the first time at Groote Schuur in Cape Town on 4 May 1991 (Meer 1993:23-27; Thompson 2001:246-247). In mid-May, the government conceded to "transitional arrangements" and a multi-party cabinet (Meer 1993:33). The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) started on 20 December 1991 in the World Trade Centre, Johannesburg. Codesa One failed owing to political conflicts taking place throughout the country and an impasse between the negotiators (Liebenberg 1996).

Codesa Two was convened on 15 May 1992, five months after Codesa One. By 5 March 1993 Codesa Two could not demonstrate a political breakthrough. Negotiations deadlocked once again. Negotiations between the government and the ANC resulted in an agreement to form a new Multiparty Forum on 1 April 1993. In June 1993 the Multiparty Forum set the date for the election of the new legislature as 27 April 1994. The white-dominated parliament created the Transitional Executive Council, which became the *de facto* government of South Africa until the elections. The Independent Electoral Commission was responsible for organising the elections (Meer 1993:231; Liebenberg 1996; Thompson 2001:255-256).

The government of South Africa passed the Act on Interim Measures for Local Government, Act 128 of 1991. The main reason for the Act was to facilitate

dialogue and to introduce a new form of local government in South Africa. The Act faced resistance from South African National Civil Organisations and the ANC. The two organisations objected strongly and insisted that the legislation lacked legitimacy (Mashumi 1997:56). As a result, the government, in consultation with the two organisations, established the Local Government Negotiating Forum on 22 March 1993. The decision to transform local government in South Africa was reached at a summit on local government on 20 January 1994. The summit resulted in the introduction of non-racial and democratic local government in South Africa and the creation, for the first time, of a system of metropolitan government for major urban areas (Havenga 2002:176; Mashumi 1997:57).

Metropolitan councils were established in large urban settlements characterised by high population densities, complex and diversified economies and a high degree of functional integration. South African cities, until the implementation of the Local Government Transitional Act (LGTA), had no metropolitan government and were governed by several racially based municipalities. As a result, urban areas suffered under uneven structures and inequitable development. Urban apartheid provided a legal framework aimed at serving the white municipalities while simultaneously excluding the black majority of the urban poor (Mulaudzi 2010). The establishment of metropolitan government was therefore intended to address the dynamics of inequality and to ensure that every person who contributes to the tax base benefits from it (Green Paper on Local Government 1997:40). The LGTA Second Amendment Act, Act 97 of 1999, also adds an extra criterion: that "the demarcation process [of the metropolitan areas] should also consider the will of the people". This view was also emphasised in the white paper on local government, where it is indicated that other possible approaches to demarcation include consideration of criteria such as "the will of the community [which can be conceived as an expression of community identity – how a community sees itself or how groups of people in a particular area utilise the space], and the need for municipal justification to facilitate community access to, and participation in, the affairs of local government" (Havenga 2002:162; Green Paper on Local Government 1997:57).

6. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The electoral system of South Africa is structured in such a way that voters express political preference for a party rather than for candidates. Parties are allocated seats proportional to the votes gained. The same applies to metropolitan council seats. The electoral system stresses *representation, concentration, participation* and *accountability*. The requirement for representation focuses on the representation of all, including different and minority groups, and representation of parties and

candidates according to the share of votes received. Concentration focuses on the aggregation of social interests and political opinions in a way that enables political institutions to act. Community participation ensures the involvement of ordinary members in the formulation and implementation of decisions taken. These decisions should be based on the needs of the local community. In turn, local representatives and councillors should be accountable to the ordinary members of the community (Thornhill 1995:16-19). Again *batho pele* as an intended policy approach is strongly implied here.

7.   LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN TSHWANE

The non-racial transitional council for the greater Pretoria area was formed at a plenary session of the Greater Metropolitan Negotiating Forum on 2 December 1993. During this period, forum members agreed that the establishment of the Greater Pretoria Transitional Metropolitan Council and primary local councils should start on 1 February and be finalised by 27 April 1994 (Havenga 2002:186). On 22 August 1994 parties in the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Negotiating Forum approved and signed an agreement on the new non-racial local government structure for the greater Pretoria area. The area was divided into central, northern and southern substructures of governance (Havenga 2002:190).

The central substructure was named the City Council of Pretoria, the southern substructure was known as Centurion Town Council and the northern substructure was named Tswaing Town Council. The greater Pretoria community elected their political representatives for the metropolitan council during the first local government elections held on 1 November 1995 (Havenga 2002:198).

Fig 2: Municipal Electoral Wards in the Tshwane Metropole
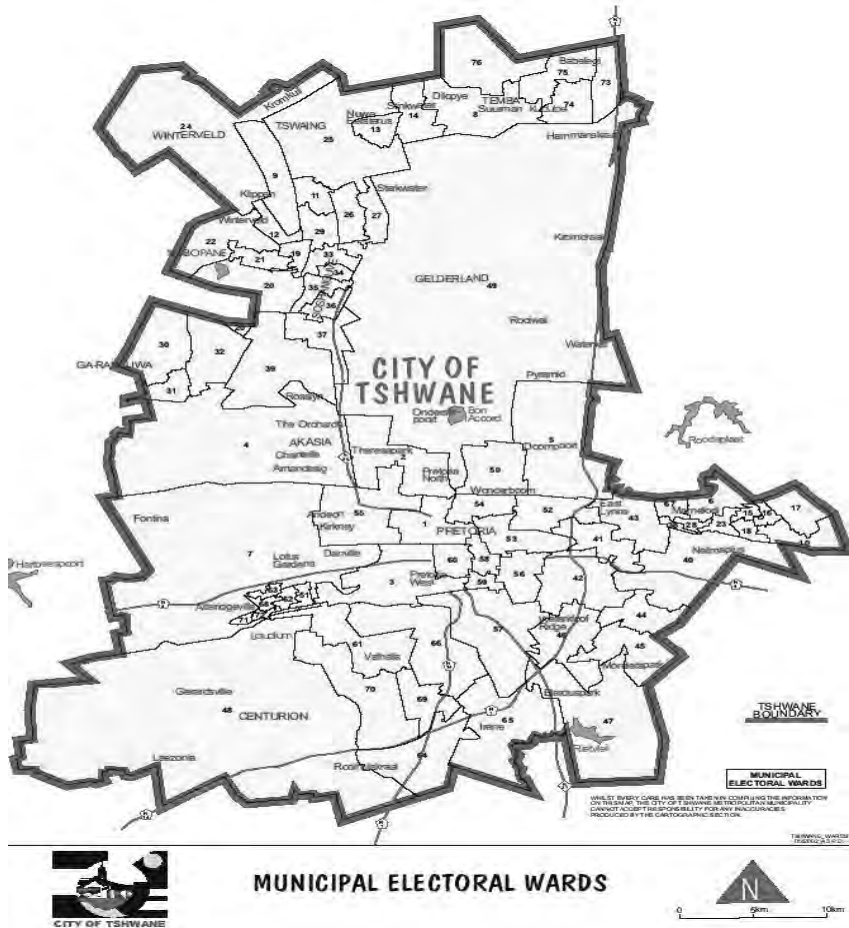
Source: Pretoriana Room, Tshwane Community Library, Pretoria

8.   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Public participation is about the involvement of people in decision-making processes at all levels and all forms of political, economic and socio-economic activities. In the context of planning, public participation is about the involvement of citizens in expressing, through needs, support and demand, their preferences and choices to enable the implementation of programmes. (Consult Fig. 1 on the pressures, output and feedback loop.) "Public participation is therefore an end

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goal of development as well as a means of attaining more equitable development" (Lisk 1985:15-17). This view is shared by Burkey (1993:56): "Participation is an essential part of human growth that is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility and cooperation." When people participate in the decision-making processes, they are able to contribute/assist in their own community development and projects with the aim of creating sustainable livelihoods for their communities. People within communities are also empowered to work together with government institutions towards the development of their area.

Equitable development through public participation can add value to service delivery as a result of the community-needs-input-output framework, we contend.

"The Preamble of Act 32 of 2000 requires local government system[s] to engage communities in the affairs of the municipalities of which they are integral parts … It also requires municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system" (Cloete & Thornhill 2005:122). This argument indicates that local government in South Africa is entrusted with the responsibility of promoting the participation of communities in decision-making processes. In essence, it means that members of the public have the responsibility to participate in community structures and should inform the decisions and outcomes of such structures. Public participation should not end with voting, but should be part of an integrated process in all decisions. This implies, among others, that there should be regular *fora*; meetings and exchanges of information between public representatives or councillors and the public, the last mentioned being what we referred to as *the feedback loop*. Community members should be able to present their needs and demands through these meetings and exchanges taking place in the political system and publicly (Ismail *et al*. 1970:10). Apart from formal institutional approaches the *feedback loop* is of the utmost importance; consciously utilising it can impact on transparency, accountability and satisfaction with services rendered. The feedback loop, needless to add, is also of importance when it comes to the setting of milestones, benchmarking and performance evaluation.

According to McLaverty (2002:40): "Local government sees building local democracy as a central role of local government and states that municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups." In this regard, municipalities are required to involve civil society organisations in budget formulation and in planning processes (McLaverty 2002:40; Lisk 1985:15; Houston 2001:13).

9. WARD COMMITTEES AND THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS

Public participation in local government is stipulated in the Municipal Structures Act of 1998. According to Cloete and Thornhill 2005:102: "To promote community participation in local governance provision is made in the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) for the establishment of Ward Committees." The view is further expressed by Hollands (2003:21): "Although Ward Committees are not the only vehicle for community participation in local government, they exist currently as the most broadly applied and accepted model. Ward Committees exist to ensure participation in local government and as such they are key mechanisms for communication with the public" (Hollands 2003:21). Ward committees are meant to enhance the beneficial interface between community members and the local authority. In other words, they act as facilitators between the public and the municipality as represented by the councillors.

The ward committees' greatest challenge is lack of support from municipalities. Ward committee members are not paid for their participation in council planning. Some ward councils are exploited for political support by councillors who undermine their authority (Atkinson in Daniel *et al.* 2003:136).

The main responsibility of an elected councillor is to take decisions according to the needs and demands of the community. This means that councillors are elected by the community to represent them in the decision-making processes. As a result, they are required to take a leading role in the initiation process of the integrated development plans of such a community within the greater metropolitan area and in consultation processes in order to ensure that community needs are optimally integrated in the planning processes. It is their responsibility to interact with the various stakeholders, including political parties, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations. Through these interactions, the councillor should be able to understand the needs of such communities, integrate and communicate their demands, and determine measures to be taken in addressing service delivery (Gotz & Wooldridge 2003:16-17; Cloete & Thornhill 2005:124-125).

10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ATTERIDGEVILLE-SAULSVILLE: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Six face-to-face interviews were conducted in the course of the project. These interviews involved people from civil society, councillors and municipal officials (one from the apartheid era). We will discuss the data obtained under the headings (1) establishment of the township, (2) public participation, (3) role of civil society, (4) communication, including references to service delivery, and (5) decision-making processes.

10.1 Establishment of Atteridgeville-Saulsville

The township was established as a labour reservoir for various government institutions. This came out in an interview with Respondent Two from the Tshwane Metropolitan Council: "Atteridgeville was surrounded by various government institutions and residential areas for the Indian community." On the western side, the township was bordered by the South African Defence Force shooting range, on the eastern side by the South African Police Dog Squad and on the southern and the northern sides by the Indian communities of Laudium and Lotus Gardens. This resulted in the township having limited land for expansion, as the larger part of the area is dolomitic. Respondent One from a community-based organisation supports this view: "In Atteridgeville, for instance, there are no spaces where we can build houses because the only portion that is left is dolomitic." The view is further supported by Respondent Two, who indicated that: "About 95% of the informal settlement is on a very dangerous soil condition that is dolomite."

10.2 Public participation in Atteridgeville-Saulsville during apartheid

Participation in local government prior to 1994 was based on a racial divide. During the period preceding the creation of the black local authorities, white administrators were appointed as administrators for black townships. According to Respondent Two: "The officials of the administration offices in the black township of Atteridgeville-Saulsville and the superintendent were all white." However, community members appointed blockmen who acted as their community leaders. According to Respondent Two: "[A blockman] was a community leader appointed by community members to represent them. He was not elected but appointed by the community and functioned under the Development Board of Central Transvaal. The Development Board of Central Transvaal officials often consulted them for advice."

The role of the blockmen was limited to an advisory capacity rather than playing a role in the decision-making process. Respondent Two states: "In many of the cases when we would like to change the ownership of a house, we asked advice from blockmen because they knew the community and family. Now we ask the blockman – let's call him a councillor, community leader – his advice on this. The blockman was never consulted or ever participated in the decision-making process even though they represented the community." According to the respondent: "Some of the decisions were taken without the knowledge of the blockmen."

According to Respondent Two, community participation during the apartheid government was non-existent: "It was just a notification of what we are going to do. Decisions were made at one level and nobody on the ground was advised, inputs asked or whatever." This stance resulted in the downfall of many projects owing to lack of ownership. This is because citizens were not consulted on the decisions

taken or to be taken: "Although most of the projects were beautiful, the community did not take ownership of the project because there was never consultation." The township management and service delivery took place through the office of the superintendent.

10.3 Role of civil society organisations in local government during and after apartheid

Civil society organisations, because of the vacuum that existed between the government and community members, were seen as the voice of the black people. Respondent One from a community society organisation indicates: "Public participation that used to take place prior to 1994 compared to now, is different in the sense that before the democratic local government we were the sole voice of the community in terms of projects and in terms of whatever needs [those] communities identified."

10.4 Communication

Respondent Four mentioned that through community meetings, they are able to provide feedback in terms of council decisions and also ascertain issues from the residents. In contrast, Respondent Six suggested that in some cases, the ward committees may not be communicating effectively with the public, and as a result, these areas may require improvement: "We must communicate more than what we are doing now. I'll tell you, even if you call meetings, I can assure you that it is not everybody who is a resident who will attend these meetings." The respondent mentioned that the solution to the problem lies with the development of a strategy that will facilitate access to information even by those members who do not necessarily attend community meetings: "So we need to find a way to ensure that even those who do not attend meetings, do find information through pamphlets, fliers, radio, electronic and print media. We don't have that money in the council and my ward to do all those kind of things. You know I am not empowered. I am not empowered as a councillor to be able to effectively communicate with my community."

10.5 Decision making

According to Respondent One, community participation in the decision-making process is critical for development. The respondent stated that: "In the Tshwane Metropolitan Council, public participation in the decision-making process is regarded as a critical feature." Respondent Four also raises this view, that the municipality emphasises the mandate of the people. The respondent says: "There is nothing that we should do without the people's mandate. It is the community

that needs to come out with the decision and we compile them into the Integrated Development Plans." This view is disputed by Respondent One: "In terms of decision making we are not involved. Communities are not involved. They are told of decisions. They are told that the councillor has decided on this … not having the background." The respondent highlighted the cause of the problem as public participation being coordinated by an established structure known as the ward committee. The councillor is the chairperson of the ward committee and convenes ward committee meetings. The solution to this problem, as indicated by the respondent, lies in "de-institutionalisation of public participation". According to the respondent, this empowers or authorises other members of the committee to convene such meetings and will open an opportunity for members of the public to participate in the planning and implementation of projects and programmes. Conceivably "de-institutionalisation" may open up avenues for better communication and allow for extension (and deepening of) social interaction with regard to community needs.

Councillors, in consultation with ward committees, are mandated to convene ward committee meetings. The challenge is that councillors may not be interested in calling public meetings because issues for discussion affect them in one way or another. The weakness is that other members of the ward committees are not mandated to convene the meeting without the approval of the councillor. The appointment of community development workers (CDWs) in the wards could benefit community members. The problem, however, is that CDWs are identified by councillors. According to Respondent One, "they are appointing their friends. They have to be limited. They have got too much absolute power." In essence, the respondent indicated that the councillors are practising nepotism and corruption in the appointment of the CDWs. According to the respondent: "The other problem that affects the wards is that participation in the wards is politicised, since if the ward belongs to one political organisation or party even members of the ward committee are from the same party." The respondent advocates that, "public participation should be depoliticised". This will enable members of other political organisations and parties to participate in the decision-making process.

11.   FINDINGS

During apartheid times decision making remained in the hands of white officials appointed to manage black communities. The establishment of black local authorities did not guarantee black participation in the decision-making process. Black people had no meaningful say in the planning of their own locality or the development and management of their own townships during the apartheid era. Public participation during this period was based on racial lines or divisions. The

appointment of blockmen as community leaders did not lead to the realisation of the community's wishes, as the blockmen were only used by the Black Administration Board for advisory purposes on matters that had little to do with the socio-political wishes of the community in question. Decisions were taken without inputs from the community and this resulted in choices being made against the will of the community. In terms of the Eastonian Black Box from which we take our cue, this situation was far from optimal and to the detriment of the communities involved. This in turn led to apathy or alienation, and eventually resistance, which coincided with national developments between the 1960s and the 1980s.

The establishment of democratic local government since 1994 has resulted in the creation of local government structures to facilitate public participation in decision-making processes. Through the establishment of these structures, such as ward committees, members of the public are able to participate in the formulation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and other policy processes. The success of these structures is measured by their ability to render basic services to the communities. The study found that public participation in the democratic era needs to be de-institutionalised and opened up, allowing for a more fluid or "freer" communication process in explaining the nature of contextual needs.

The current frameworks provide councillors with power to convene public meetings and if issues for discussion affect them, they tend not to convene such meetings. Thus the (in) action of councillors hampers public participation in the areas under consideration. Public participation should be deepened in such a manner that even ordinary and poor members of society can easily express their views without fear or marginalisation.

12. INSIGHTS GAINED FROM THE STUDY

The case study provided important insights. The findings may not provide for unqualified generalisations, but do provide some pointers for future consideration. Replication of the study in others areas may add valuable data that could have an impact on policy to be considered for the future.

Public participation should provide a platform for all members of society to influence the policy processes. It is important that all community structures play a role in the agenda-setting and implementation of policies and programmes. When these structures participate in the decision-making process, they have a right to hold the government accountable for policies and service delivery. The participation of community structures enables government to communicate or provide information to the public as well as coordinate policy processes without difficulty. It is important for the Tshwane Metropolitan Council to ensure that community members are involved in every process, such as IDPs, by involving them in the identification of

priority issues, available options, resources to carry out the decisions and making final choices. In essence, all decision-making processes should be people-centred and people-driven. In other words, community members should be involved in the policy initiation or agenda-setting, formulation and evaluation of the decision making and implementation.

13.   CONCLUSION

The study found that some of the decisions made during the past decade undermined democratic decision-making processes. Public participation influences the delivery of services. This is because the needs and demands of the community filter into the political system as inputs that should be processed and released as outputs or services. The study found that during the apartheid era, black people were not allowed to participate in the decision-making processes. It concludes that public participation during this era was based on a racial divide, while the new democratic era has tentatively facilitated citizens' participation in decision-making processes. However, there is a need to deepen current public participation in a manner that allows ordinary people to have much more participatory input in policy processes.

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