

**PROTEST AS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION -INVESTIGATING THE  
METSIMAHOLO DEMARCATION PROTEST OF 2013**

BY

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**DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work enclosed in the dissertation is my own original work, except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at university for fulfilment of a degree.

Kiewit Mphutlane Abraham Bofelo

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Date

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**ABSTRACT**

This mini dissertation investigates the political communication undertones of service demarcation protests in South Africa, with a focus on the Metsimaholo Municipality protests of 2013 in the Free State province, South Africa. This study is aimed at evaluating demarcation protests as a form of subaltern agency and political communication.

It argues that protests, represents a medium by which marginalised communities mount their reply to social marginalization and disenfranchisement by formal administrative structures and processes of service delivery, public participation and several issues that elicit their disenchantment and dissension. The research is a contribution to the study of rampant residents' protests in Metsimaholo Municipality and around the country.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC: African National Congress

CWPs: Community Works Programmes

CDWs: Community Development Programmes

COGTA: Cooperatives Governance and Traditional Affairs

EPWP: Extended Public Works Programmes

IDASA: Independent Democratic Alternatives of South Africa

IDPs: Integrated Development Programmes

LED: Local Economic Development

MDB: Municipal Demarcation Board

MLM: Metsimaholo Local Municipality

NLM: Ngwathe Local Municipality

MCA: Metsimaholo Community Association

MCR: Metsimaholo Concerned Residents (MCR)

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

### 1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Public protests in post-1994 South Africa are often generalized as service delivery protests. However, a closer look indicates a variety of types or categories of public protests in post-apartheid South Africa. Mathoho (2015) states that these include, protests in opposition to undemocratic laws, for example opposition to the information bill, protests related to socioeconomic policies and programmes such as land redistribution, demarcations protests, and protests that entail a combination of these issues. As indicated in the title; this research focuses on the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protests that were initiated by residents, refusing their municipality to be merged with the Ngwathe Local Municipality in the Fezile Dabi District of the Free State province. The residents of Metsimaholo embarked on a three-day violent protest demanding that the proposed merger be put on hold. Protesters barricaded the streets, torched government buildings, looted businesses in Sasolburg and pelted by-standers with stones. These led to the closure of shops and the suspension of the operations of businesses in the area. Subsequently, the Municipality Demarcation Board (MDB) withdrew the merger, stating that the process did not comply with the criteria set in legislation.

The main reason provided by the MDB for the merger proposal was that the merger would have long-term benefits for the residents of both municipalities (The Citizen, 2013). Mathoho (2015) states that the anticipation was that the merger would have assisted the ailing Ngwathe Local Municipality, by sharing resources with the relatively better off Metsimaholo Municipality. However, the residents of Metsimaholo, expressed a contrary view; a view that service delivery and socioeconomic conditions in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality (MLM) were being sacrificed to save the ailing Ngwathe Local Municipality (NLM). (Sparks. 2013, Mathoho 2015). The Metsimaholo residents also argued that demarcation process was being proposed to save the jobs of the cronies and relatives of the then Free State Premier, Mr. Ace Magashule, who hails from Tumahole-Parys in the Ngwathe Municipality. The complaint was that people in Metsimaholo were already prejudiced by the practice of preserving all municipality jobs, tenders, and senior positions in the Metsimaholo Municipality to individuals who are associated either with Parys or former Free State Premier Ace Magashule or his faction within the ANC.

The mass-action character and militant nature of recent anti-demarcation protests have put demarcation protests under spotlight. In particular, the massive and violent nature of demarcation protests in areas such Khutsong, Gauteng in 2005, Metsimaholo, Free State province in 2013 and Vuwani, Limpopo province in 2016. Although the violence associated with these protests have made them infamous, Mathoho (2015) states that the large number of people who participate in the demarcation protests raise questions about the formal processes of consultation and the lack of community inputs in reaching final decisions.

The communication breakdown that results in protest indicates there is a public participation gap and communication deficit in local government. In that regard, the research of the Independent Democratic Alternatives of South Africa (IDASA local government unit, titled "The state of local government and service delivery in South Africa: issues, challenges and solutions", state of local government and service delivery in South Africa research, states: "while the causes of the protests differ from one province to the other and from one municipality to the other, in all instances, people want to be heard and to be taken seriously.

The research found that the general feeling in the protest hotspots is that political leadership lack responsiveness to issues raised by communities; they are incompetent, prone to corruption and have a high degree of disregard for the communities (IDASA Local Government Unit, 2010.). The IDASA research also found that the other contributing factor to protest is the questionable effectiveness and usefulness of ward committees as channels for structured community involvement in local governance and spaces for public participation. In relation to the 2013 Metsimaholo anti-demarcation protests, then chairperson of the Municipality Demarcation Board, Landiwe Mahlangu asserted that “one of the most disappointing aspects in this chain of events has been failure by the local leadership to raise the level of awareness of the merger” (Mathoho, 2013).

## 1.2 Research problem

The call for effective consultative processes indicates that mass-action protests are not the only means available to communities to register complaints and objections on demarcation. Disputes on demarcation decisions in South Africa have also been registered via formal objections through the courts. However, a review of literature indicates that legal-constitutional routes available for raising concerns are often pursued by well-established civil society organizations who are situated in economically privileged communities, and are well-organized and resourced (Mathoho, 2015) In this respect, the community of Hartbeespoort, an affluent or well-to-do community had raised complaints on demarcation through the courts with the help of the Democratic Alliance (DA) in September 2015. The community went to the courts to raise their objection against a proposed amalgamation with surrounding poor areas, Mathoho, 2015). They served court documents to set aside the decisions of the Municipality Demarcation Board against whom they brought charges of undermining their boundaries (Mathebula,2019).

This example involving the Hartbeespoort community, demonstrates that access to material and technical resources necessary to register complaints and objections as well as to launch legal processes make it easier for rich and privileged communities to pursue the legal route or boardroom engagements. On the other hand, poorest communities who lack the means and the know-how required for taking the legal route are often left with unpleasant or unsatisfactory experiences with regards to the public participation processes. For instance, in the case of Metsimaholo, residents claim that their calls for a meeting were ignored. The Metsimaholo Concerned Residents’ Association testified that councillors snubbed meetings called by the community (Berkowitz, 2013). The question that this research seeks to address in this regard is the extend to which systemic, structural, and institutional barriers and deficits in formal public participation and political communication processes lead to marginalised and poor communities towards protesting.

This is informed by research that suggest that public cynicism and distrust of the process arise from a feeling that participation is not worth the effort because the decisions would have already been made where opportunities for public input are mere formality. (Khisty (2019). The implication of this suggestion is that residents would elect protesting once they have tried or lost hope in formal, government processes of raising complaints or after the dissatisfaction with public participation processes. This study seeks to test the hypothesis that protest is a form of political communication that the subaltern people resort to in response to a variety of factors that leads residents to protest.

The demarcation protests such as in Metsimaholo in 2013 provides a useful social milieu for a study of so-called service delivery protests as vehicles for protesting a public participation process and a political system that often fails poor communities. There are two key reasons that the Metsimaholo protests are worth studying today although they are represented in events that took place close to nine years ago. Firstly, many of the issues and concerns at the centre of the protests continue to bedevil the Metsimaholo Local Municipality which has since been twice placed under administration. Secondly, the advent of these community protests has altered the face of local government politics significantly. Issues at the centre of the protests have influenced the establishment of the Metsimaholo Community Association (MCA) and its subsequent decision to contest local government election.

The protest and the issues around it also influenced the decision by the South African Communist Party (SACP) in Metsimaholo to contest local elections independently of its political ally, the African National Congress. For the first time since the institution of the 1994 democratic settlement, the ANC in the Metsimaholo municipality failed to secure both a clear majority and to secure the position of the mayor in two successive elections. Importantly, the MCA and the SACP managed to secure the position of Mayor in 2016 and 2017, respectively suggesting that the political mood amongst community members has indeed been changing in search for alternative political representation. Most research on the Metsimaholo protest of 2013 protests have focussed on youth participation in protests and politics and its impact on the voting patterns of the Metsimaholo residents, particularly the outcomes of the elections that the MCA secured. However, there is a paucity of research that focuses directly on the nature of political communication and public participation implications of the protest as anticipated by the study herewith pursued and undertaken.

### 1.3 Research questions

In view of the problem explained above, the key research questions of this research are as follows:

- What are the specific failures in public participation processes that causes people to protest?
- What is the relationship between protests and political communication?

### 1.4 Aims and objectives of the study.

Background information on the Metsimaholo Demarcation protests of 2013 indicates that the deficiencies in consultation and public participation processes and in the way local government authorities and the Municipality Demarcation Board communicated the merger of Metsimaholo and Ngwathe influenced the negative response of the residents to the bid to merge the two municipalities. The resort to protests also suggests that the provincial and local government did

not satisfactorily address the residents' perceptions about selfish political and economic interests suspected to be behind the decision to effect a merger and fears that the merger will result in poor delivery of municipal services.

Based on this background, the aims and objectives of this study are:

- To investigate factors, causes and explanations behind the residents' choice of mass-action protests as a mechanism to register their concerns and demands.
- To study protest action as a form of Political Communication and as a development in expressing organic popular agency.
- To contribute to the development of a Political Communication perspective regarding community responses towards service delivery challenges in municipal and local government spheres of government.

#### 1.4 Theoretical framework

The research investigates the extent to which protests are an expression of popular agency and a form of Political Communication that citizens resort to owing to the deficit in formal processes and structures of public participation and political communication. The investigation attempt to locate the research within a Critical Research framework that highlights the presence of potentially alienating conditions in the municipal and local government tiers of government. It focuses on uncovering conducive conditions for inducing transformative change (Myers and Klein, 2011). According to Nikolai Brooke (2002) a critical research framework is defined more by its assumptions than by its methods. Arguing along similar lines, Schwandt (1990) and Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) state that the purpose of a critical research is to expose issues of structural asymmetry to enable emancipation. This is in line with the proposition by Young (2018) that the distinguishing feature of a critical research is the unity of its value positions with the transformative intent that allows it to inform emancipatory action (Howcroft and Trauth, 2005; Kvasny and Richardson, 2006; Young, 2018).

Based on this understanding of a critical research paradigm, this research draws on the Relative Deprivation Theory for the construct and explanation of public protests in post-apartheid South Africa, and on Subaltern Studies to theorize and conceptualize protest as political communication. According to Salgao (2013:16), the theory of relative deprivation is used to refer to the perception of a discrepancy between value expectations and value capability; with value capability reflected in the physical and social environment.

This denotes a situation where the living conditions and social reality of the residents do not correspond to their expectations of the quality of services that must be received from the government. The Relative Deprivation Theory proposes that when this gap between expectations and reality is longstanding, it results in strong feelings of alienation and frustration. This further suggest that protest is an expression of the gap between the expectations raised by electioneering pronouncements and the deprivation that communities continue to suffer after the elections. On the other hand, what makes Subaltern Studies relevant to this research is its focus on non-elites, that is, the marginalised and subaltern communities, as agents of political and social change. Cronin (2007) states that Subaltern Studies draw on Gramscian ideas on social history from below, and on bottom-up approach to the study of

people whose histories and experiences has hitherto been ignored. Accordingly, Subaltern Studies trace the roots of protest to systemic, structural, and institutional barriers that facilitate the exclusion and marginalization of specific communities and constituencies (Spivak, 2000: 324).

The primary task of Subaltern Studies is to expose and challenge pessimistic portrayal of the underclasses or the subaltern people; especially when it comes to describing acts of agency, independence, and resistance. (Spivak, 2000). This approach offers a useful framework for a critical engagement with the narrative of protesters as people who irrationally act out frustrations without pondering on the political ramifications of their action. A Subaltern Studies approach sees protestors not as ignorant of formal processes, incapable of using formal processes or as simply pawns in the political game, used by opportunistic politicians or a faceless third force. It perceives protestors as people exerting their agency and power outside of formal structures and processes whom they deem to be exclusionary and indifferent to their experiences. The Subaltern studies framework is helpful in locating protests within the various forms in which the marginalised and socially disenfranchised engage, contest, challenge and resist the status quo.

Conventional theories overemphasize opposition, violence and criminality as the motivators that drive resistance (Chandra, 2005). On the contrary, Subaltern theorists articulate a broad definition of resistance as enduring or withstanding the system to reorient the concept and logic of negotiation, (Chandra, 2005). This reorientation permits for the view of protest as an act of the marginalised negotiating their way and place in a socio-political and economic environment that puts them on the periphery. The construct of protest as negotiation and communication is underscored by the fact that the subaltern resort to protests out of their experience and knowledge of the different manoeuvres and rhetoric used by the powerful to renege on pre-existing commitments.

## 1.6. Research Methodology

Research methodologies or approaches are guides or roadmaps that shape the motives and analytical interests of a research, (Creswell, 2008). This includes the planning process, data collection, data analysis, and the final presentation of the results, (Marczak, De Matteo and Festinger, 2005). According to Collis & Hussey, (2003:55) a methodology is the overall approach and perspective that informs the purpose for the collection of certain data, the type of data collected, where the data is collected and how the data is collected and presented. In other words, a research methodology defines the boundaries of a research activity.

It outlines the applicable methods, the measurements used and the means of communicating the results, (Clarke,2005). This implies a relationship between a research paradigm, theory, and methodology and the choice of methods or instruments used to collate, analyse, interpret, and present the data.

### 1.6.1 Research paradigm

As indicated, this study applies subaltern theory to theorize protest as political communication and explore the characteristics of public participation processes that may influence the public to resort to protest to communicate and engage with the authorities or the political system. This

locates this study within the Critical Theory research paradigm. Critical theory research paradigm is based on the idea that realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant inter-influence and that reality is socially constructed and by power relations from within society. (Clarke, 2005). Thus, Critical Theory applies the methodologies of critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography, action research, ideology and critique and the methods of ideological review, civil actions, open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, and journals, (Clarke, 2005)

### 1.7 Limitation of the study

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:2) defines research as a systematic way of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to enhance an understanding of a phenomena. The constraints of time and the restrictions placed on movements by the Covid 19 realities requires minimal use of methods that require face-to-face contact. Therefore, this research shall not involve direct interaction with participates but shall rely on extensive literature review, documentary evidence, qualitative content analysis and ideological criticism to collate, analyse and interpret data. This limitation may be addressed in future research about this research subject.

### 1.8 Chapter outline

Chapter 2, **Conceptual Framework**, provides a definition of the key concepts and theories used in the research and a review of the literature on the study of public protests, public participation, and political communication. The chapter further examines literature on protest as an integral part of the spaces and ways of participation and agency that people engage in which could be considered a form of popular political communication.

Chapter 3, **Methodology**, explains the research methods used in the research to answer the research question. This chapter explains the nature of the study and the reasons for investigating the 2013 Metsimaholo Local Municipality demarcation protest as a case for protest as political communication. Additionally, the chapter describes the design of the research and the methods of sampling, data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a reflection on ethical considerations pertinent to the research.

### Chapter 4, **Research Findings and Analysis**

This chapter provides a presentation and analysis of the research findings reached, focusing on developing a political communication approach to service delivery and demarcation protests in South Africa.

### Chapter 5 **Conclusion**

This conclusion provides a summary of the arguments in the dissertation and how it tackled the research question. It begins with a precis of the key findings on how protests express

popular agency and alternative political communication of the subaltern who are excluded by formal public participation and political communication structures and processes. Furthermore, the chapter provides evidence of how the language, ways, and spaces that people use to participate in protest illustrate that protest is popular political communication and/or subaltern agency in action.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

Post-apartheid South Africa has experienced public protests in response to either specific laws and policies of the government or specific actions and practices of government institutions at local, provincial, or national level (Botes et al, 2008). The militant tactics employed in some of the protests have included burning of the houses of the councillors and public infrastructure, poo-throwing, and road blockages. The wave of protests particularly in the municipalities since 2004, has led to protests in South Africa being generally associated with concerns and demands around the delivery of social services at local and government level. Consequently, concepts and terms such as ‘service delivery protests’, ‘rebellion of the poor’, and ‘municipal revolt’, have been employed to describe militant popular protests in the second decade of post-Apartheid South Africa (Saba and Van der Merwe, 2013, Heese, 2011, Cronje, 2014, Patel, 2013, Isaacs, 2013).

This framing and conceptualization of protests implies that the key factors behind public protests and public discontent in post-1994 South Africa are poor delivery of services, incapable and underperforming municipalities, resulting in the marginalization of the poor. Building on this conceptualisation of protests, the section that follows examine public protest as subaltern agency and a form of political communication, and provides definitions of subaltern studies, political communication, and the Relative Deprivation theory.

### 2.2 Public protests as subaltern agency and a form of political communication

As it is the case with most concepts and phenomena, the definition of protests is shaped by the worldview, circumstances, and concerns of the writers. Therefore, there is no single definition of protest. According to Sidney Tarrow (1989) protest events include strikes, demonstrations, petition, delegation, and violence but exclude contentious behaviour which reveal no collective claims on others. As a result, Tarrow (1989) defines a protest event as “a disruptive direct action of collective interests, in which claims are made against some other group, elites or authorities.”

This definition of protest events resonates with the definition of protest as “joint (i.e., collective) action of individuals aimed at achieving their goal or goals by influencing decisions of a target,” (Opp, 2009). Alexander et al (2018) agree with the emphasis of Tarrow (1989) and Opp (2009) on collective action and planning but argue that the requirement that the goal can only be achieved by influencing others is insufficient to explain the South African experience of protest. Alexander et al (2018) point to the fact that protests in South Africa include phenomena such as land occupations, collective conflict with bailiffs and looting. Karl Von Holdt (2011:15) also approach the definition of protests with specific consideration of local concerns, focusing on the fact that public protests in South Africa are predominately undertaken by poor and underprivileged communities and take a variety of forms and direction based on several circumstances. Therefore, Von Holdt (2015) states:

*Subaltern protest took the form of crowds that shifted shape as the forms of direct action shifted from public meeting to marches to street battles with police to the burning down of selected targets or the looting of foreign-owned shops, (Von Holdt, 2015:5).*

Seeking to differentiate protests from other gatherings that people negotiate in terms of Regulation of Gathering Act, Duncan (2014) defines protests as “expressive conduct that conveys a particular grievance, with the intention of drawing attention to the grievance and having it addressed.” (Duncan, 2014:122). Drawing on this vast literature on protests and their view of public perception in South Africa, Runciman et al (2018) conceptualise protests as “A popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance”. On the other hand, Martin (2007) states that a public protest such as a rally, march or public meeting is the most common image and method of activism. This locates public protests within the realm of activism.

Brian Martin (2007) defines activism as “action on behalf of a cause that goes beyond routine conventional politics and is “typically energetic, passionate, innovative, and committed and ‘includes neighbourhood organizing, protest marches and sit ins” (Martin, 2007). Martin (2007), further states that “activism is typically undertaken by those with less power, because those with power and influence can usually accomplish their aims using conventional means.” Therefore, public protests can be perceived as activism from below or grassroots activism (Martin, 2007). This is because most protests and much activism is by groups that are subject to disadvantage or discrimination or marginalization such as women, ethnic minorities, the poor, and people with disabilities. (Martin, 2007). For instance, most of public protests on social services, rights and resources in South Africa takes place in poor and working-class communities.

This research draws on the above cited literature and discourse on protests to define protests as direct and collective action that is an expression of a fight, advocacy or activism for a specific cause or opposition to specific events, policies, conditions, or situations, and that is aimed at influencing, enacting, or enforcing the desired change. This definition supports the view of Subaltern Studies that social protest is a vehicle for democracy and a tool used by the marginalised to accomplish equality and justice and to generate political ends. Subaltern Studies states that protests could be viewed as both a call for democracy, inclusion, equality and social justice and a barometer of levels of democracy, inclusivity, equality, and justice within a political system. The utilization of the Subaltern Studies to theorize protests as subaltern agency in action or as a form of political communication is intended to locate the protest events in broader socio-political context that shape governance and in particular, the local government environment in South Africa.

### 2.3 Defining Subaltern Studies and its link to Political Communication.

Subaltern Studies advocate for the search for alternate sources to locate the voice of the marginalised or the subaltern in the historical context of unequal power and social relations. Therefore, Subaltern Studies advocate for critical reading of official records and elite narratives to read them against the grain (Maggio, 2007). In other words, the construction of subaltern history and narratives is aimed at uncovering and exposing the histories and events purposefully covered, ignored, hidden, and undervalued by dominant narratives and elite or official records.

Implicitly, Subaltern Studies seek to examine and articulate the power, agency, voice (language and communication) of the marginalised or the subaltern beyond official, formal, and institutional platforms. (Maggio, 2007).

In this way, Subaltern Studies draw on the Gramscian notion of the subaltern as the subjected underclass on whom the dominant power exerts its hegemonic influence to speak to and recognise the historical subordinate position of various groups of subjugated and dehumanised people, and to reclaim and reassert their voice and agency. (Maggio, 2007). This provides a broad definition of the subaltern as those who are located or positioned, portrayed, and treated as being of subordinate and of inferior status, rank, power, authority and action and whose histories, narratives, experiences and traditions or practices are regarded as too ordinary, average, substandard and low to be part of the so-called “big history” or the mainstream. (Masiero, 2018).

The origins of Subaltern Studies are in a series of articles published in 1982 by Oxford University Press in India, articulating the voices of Western-educated Indian scholars seeking to reclaim their history from elite histories, Eurocentric narratives, and Imperial bias. (Guha, 1988). As a counterculture to the elite-centred Cambridge school that it perceived of upholding the colonial legacy, the Subaltern school focus on the subaltern in terms of race, class, gender, culture, and language with the goal of retaking history for the underclasses and hitherto unheard and silenced voices. (Masiero, 2018). Accordingly, Subaltern Studies draw on deconstruction, Marxism and Feminism to argue that elite and imperial history deny the agency of the people of the South by presenting them simply as colonised and dominated subjects.

Importantly, Subaltern Studies portrays the subaltern as not merely people who experience colonial and neo-colonial domination and other forms of marginalization but as social actors who are constituted of individuals and collectives that may endorse the status quo and those that resist it. The act and goal of reclaiming a popular history and giving a voice to a subjugated people amounts to the construction of a history that is made by the people on their own, independent of the elites. (Ludden, 2002). Therefore, Subaltern Studies assert that political dominance is not entirely hegemonic.

Subaltern Studies argues that the subaltern has an agency that enable them to find their own ways of navigating around and exerting themselves above the structures of domination to develop a language and social practice informed by their lived experiences. Consequently, Subaltern Studies are typified by perspectives that are underpinned by a focus on “history from below” (Guha, 1988) and giving the subjected people back, their voice and agency.

Locating the voices of the subaltern people historically requires alternative sources. It also requires critically interrogating imperial, official and elite records and reading against dominant and established orthodoxies, hierarchies, and canons. It is for this reason that this research enlists the voices and narratives of civic leaders and activists who were involved in the protest against the merger of Ngwathe Local Municipality and Metsimaholo Municipality and utilises critical discourse analysis to analyse official documents and the literature on public protests and the 2013 Metsimaholo anti-demarcation protest. Partha Chatterjee (2004) argues that while originating from the South Asia centred collective, subaltern studies focus on popular politics affecting “most of the world” that is affected by postcolonial and neo-colonial structures.

Chatterjee (2004) attributes the dichotomy between the elite civil society of equals that can establish dialogue with the state and the poor and marginalised political society that is estranged from the state to colonial and post-colonial institutional arrangements.

The point made in this research is that in South Africa, more affluent communities tend to raise protest on demarcation issues through legal-constitutional processes whereas poor and underclass communities tend to resort to militant and even violent protest, supports the assertion by Chatterjee (2004) that the structures of domination make it possible for civil society elites to interact with the state, in processes that exclude the poor and objectified masses from any dialogical interaction with it. Put, differently, the division between elite civil society and subaltern political society are derived from intrinsic and structural barriers and forms of marginalization that throttles the voices of the subjected people or the subalterns (Spivak, 1988), a condition by which they are de facto excluded from participation in the development interventions meant for them. Consequently, Spivak (1988) argues, marginalization subjects the subaltern to the “rough and tumble worlds” of exclusion and violence, often being denied basic civic and human rights. (Spivak, 1988). This exposure to social exclusion and structural violence, state violence and denial of basic civic and human rights inform how the subaltern view the state. Research that cites residents’ perception of political and governing authorities as inconsiderate and incompetent, among the causes of protests in South Africa, support the notion of Subaltern Studies that “the state” is not an abstract entity but should be actively “seen” and experienced in its physical manifestations, through the embodiments (bureaucrats, state agencies, security forces) that subjects encounter in their daily lives. (Corbridge et al, 2005).

Chatterjee (2004) argues that encounters by subaltern communities with state apparatuses; their interface with state bureaucracies or service providers is often characterised by alienating behaviours, systemic exclusion, inferior treatment, and structural violence, (Chatterjee, 2004). This view is supported by the observation by Rose, (1999) that the violent and dismissive encounter between the state and the subaltern is both structured and structural in that it is informed and buttressed by a host of technologies of rule, meaning all institutions, practices and classification techniques through which government is performed (Rose, 1999). Corbridge and Srivastava (2013:456) add that “such technologies are applied for the purpose of disciplining the political society, whose “dangerous classes” need a form of control and domination.” (Corbridge and Srivastava, 2013: 456.).

Nicholas. B Dirks (2001) states that the technologies of rule in India includes the Census which inscribes individuals into colonially established tribes and categories. In South Africa, the example of violent and dismissive encounters supported by the technologies of rule is the way the authorities attempt to use the Public Gathering Act to level the militancy of protest marches and to contain the number of public protest marches. In this regard, Trevor Ngwane (2017) mentions that the provisions of the Public Gathering Act, has the potential to neutralise and deactivate protest action as the requirements it places on protestors to apply, fill a form, write letters of notification to their target, attend meetings with the police and national intelligence operatives and to plan the route and time of the protest action jointly with the police. (Ngwane, 2017). Ngwane (2017) further observes that, some authorities go out of their way to exploit these limiting technologies of rule to make a public march to be as short, invisible, and non-threatening as possible. Additionally, some communities have accused senior officials of simply ignoring the marches.

This is further underscored by research suggesting that memoranda submitted by the marchers were not seriously considered. (Ngwane, 2017). In other words, the violent and dismissive nature of these technologies of rules effectively seek to turn these protests into chaperoned protest and to limit their capacity to elicit positive policy change from government and to effect changes in their socioeconomic realities. Thus, Ngwane (2012) argues that public protests articulate the revolutionary dynamic of the working class, and that protest is the subaltern in action and an expression of the agency and self-activity of the working-class and its tendency to respond collectively to common problems. The issue of contesting political messaging informed by different social interests and agendas brings political communication at the centre of issues related to governance, service delivery and protests related to governance and service delivery. Political communication can be defined as the ways and means of expression that are of a political nature, purposive communication about politics (McNair, 2018) or an interactive process about the transmission among politicians, the media, and the public. (Norris, 2001).

This implies that political communication is about how social and political actors communicate their message to influence and shape political culture and public opinion about socio-political and economic realities and to respond to perceptions that others have about them. Accordingly, Political communication is “a process that includes political institutions and actors, the news media and, importantly, citizens.” (Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the European Union, 2016). In other words, political communication occurs in and through a variety of formal or informal, private, or public forms, sites and medium and through mediated or unmediated content.

Brian McNair (2018) states that political communication entails (1) all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, (2) communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists, and communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussions of politics. This suggests that communication flows or moves in many directions; downwards from governing authorities to citizens, horizontally between political actors, including news media, and upwards from citizens and groups to the political institutions, (Norris, 2001). In this regard, expressions and actions of the public, citizens, or residents that are aimed at registering or communicating their views, concerns and demands to the political institution may be regarded as political communication. This conceptualization of political communication supports the postulation of Subaltern Studies that protest is a form of political communication that socially disenfranchised, excluded, marginalised, and alienated groups or the subaltern resort to, either as an alternative to or to augment formal political processes, particularly formal public participation processes.

#### 2.4 Unpacking the theory of Relative Deprivation.

The notion of protests as ‘political communication from below’ echoes the perspective of the Relative Deprivation Theory that service delivery protests results from longstanding disjuncture between service delivery promises and the experiences and conditions of poor communities, (Hough, 2004). Therefore, the section that follows expound on the theory of Relative Deprivation.

In social science studies, the term Relative Deprivation is used to describe conditions of economic, political, or social deprivation. It denotes a relative rather than an absolute condition of deprivation, (Townsend, 1979). In this sense, the term Relative Deprivation is linked to terms such as poverty and social exclusion.

According to Walker and Smith (2001), Relative deprivation specifically refers to the lack of nutrition, adequate means of livelihood, reasonable quality of life and amenities that an individual or group is used to or that is widely encouraged or approved or considered to be of desirable standard in the society to which the individual or group belongs. While Relative Deprivation serves as an objective comparison of the conditions of an individual or group and the rest of society, it may also emphasize discontent of the individual or group when deprived of what is believed it is entitled to. Hence, Walker and Smith (2002) define Relative Deprivation (RD) as a judgement that individuals or group they belong to is relatively disadvantaged than the rest of the people or groups in society which are ventilated through acts of anger, resentment, and entitlement that this judgement evokes in disadvantaged individuals and groups.

According to the Institute for Security Studies (2009), the use of the theory of relative deprivation to explain the causes of social and political unrest and protests is traced to the views expressed by American sociologist James Davis in the article, "Towards a theory of revolution". Davies (1979) explained it as the position or situation wherein the pace of the reality of an individual or group is not in keeping with the expectation of the individual or group about how much better off the individual or group should be, (Institute for Security Studies, 2009). The Institute for Security Studies (2009) states that circumstances such as economic downturn and \or socioeconomic inequalities widens the gap between expectations and reality, thereby resulting in frustration and discontent. Davies' theory of relative deprivation postulates that these frustrated expectations are a cause of social unrests and increase in the potential for political unrests. (Institute for Security Studies, 2009).

Examining the theory of relative deprivation as one of the constructs that explains service delivery protests in South Africa, Hough (2004) describes relative deprivation *as the perception of a discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities, with the latter being found largely in the physical and social environment. Relative deprivation is linked to concept of frustration and alienation.* (Hough, 2004). Roelofse (2009) observes that while it is the normal political strategy to create expectations, there is often a scarcity of resources for the realization of these promises. This explains the increase in the number of protests after elections, thereby giving credence to the theory of relative deprivation as an explanation of protests in South Africa. This theory suggests that the residents do not only contrast their deprivation with lofty election promises but that they also compare their situation relative to the situation in the towns and suburb in the same municipalities that they are in and with the opulent lifestyles of the counsellors and social and political elites associated with the ruling party.

The theory explains the apparent irony of the high prevalence of protests in urban areas that are relatively better off than rural areas. It suggests that the huge number of incidents of protests in the urban townships is because residents of these areas compare their deprivation not with their rural counterparts, but with the relatively developed towns and suburbs in their municipalities. (Allan and Heese, 2011).

Explaining the violent nature of some of the service delivery and demarcation protests, Hough (2008) asserts that the more severe and widespread the deprivation, the greater possibility for violence. Hough (2008) further argues that in South Africa, the relative deprivation and the frustration and discontent arising out of it is increased by the notion of white privilege and black deprivation, the wealth gap between the townships and the cities, and the glaring contrasts between lack of services in the informal settlement and townships and the availability of services in predominately white neighbourhoods.

This point is emphasised by the observation by Salgado (2013) that service delivery protests are “the product of frustration by poor residents who are marginalised on the doorsteps of South Africa’s wealthiest cities and are competing for their share of municipal services” This implies that relative deprivation and frustration and discontent is heightened by racial and class inequities and the socioeconomic distance between the social and political elites. Therefore, Smith and Like Subaltern Studies, the theory of Relative Deprivation attributes the prominence of protests in the informal settlements and townships of South Africa, in contrast to recourse to legal and judiciary means in affluent suburbs areas, to the fact that spatial and socioeconomic arrangements in South Africa still reflect racial and class inequities.

## 2.5 Conclusion

A review of literature on community protests in post-1994 South Africa indicates that the key causes and reasons for protest is residents’ disenchantment with both the quality of services and the genuineness and fairness of formal structures and processes of public participation and communication between municipalities and communities. The prevalence of protest after local government elections (Roelofse, 2017) supports the notion of protests as the outcome of the deficit between the promises of political parties and people’s expectations of better delivery of social services and socioeconomic conditions on one side, and the lived experiences and socioeconomic realities of the residents on the other.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter aims at presenting the scientific and analytical framework for the study. Thus, the approach and methodology adopted and used for the study are discussed. The research design adopted, and the processes used in undertaking the research are also presented and discussed. The chapter also presents the data requirements, forms and sources, data collection and analysis tools and instruments used as well as method of presentation and reporting of findings.

The process for this research shall begin with the theoretical phase in which a comprehensive literature review is undertaken with the aim of establishing a basis for theorisation of protests as political communication and as an expression of subaltern agency. In addition, the literature survey examined several studies relating to the voices and perspectives of residents who participate in service delivery and demarcation protests. It is envisaged that the data collected in the literature review will provide insights and understanding of the research questions and further, provide the necessary background information which guide the empirical process of the study (Marczyk, Matteo and Festinger, 2005:48).

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

The concept research paradigm is used to refer to the worldview, perspective, school of thought and set of beliefs that informs the meaning and interpretation of data. (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The key aspects of a paradigm are its epistemology (its assumptions about the construction of knowledge and the role and purpose of knowledge), its ontology (its assumptions about the nature and essence of natural and social phenomena), its methodology (the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used) and its axiology (the ethical issues that need to be considered when planning a research proposal). Burke (2007:477), states that once a research paradigm is chosen, it acts as a “set of lenses” that allows the researcher to view the fieldwork within a particular set of established assumptions, thus merging the abstract usefulness of the paradigm with the practical application of conducting rigorous research.

In other words, a paradigm defines a researcher’s philosophical orientation and provide beliefs and dictates, which influences what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted. (Kivunja, 2017). This research applies Critical Theory research paradigm. Critical theory research paradigm is based on the idea that realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant inter-influence and that reality is socially constructed and is shaped by power relations from within society. (Clarke, 2005). This paradigm is relevant for this research because this research takes cognisance of the role of social and power relations in access to social services and public institutions and influencing participation in formal political and public structures and processes. The Critical paradigm situates its research in social justice issues and seeks to address the political, social, and economic issues that leads to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur. Because it seeks to change the politics to confront social

oppression and improve the social justice in the situation, it is sometimes called the Transformative paradigm.

This paradigm assumes a transactional epistemology, (in which the researcher interacts with the participants), an ontology of historical realism, especially as it relates to oppression; a methodology that is dialogic, and an axiology that respects cultural norms. Critical Theory applies methodologies of critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography, action research, ideology and critique and the methods of ideological review, civil actions, open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, and journals. (Clarke, 2005). In this study, the researcher had to resort to document evidence and thematic analysis.

### 3.3 Research Method: Qualitative enquiry

The two major research methods in academic research are quantitative as well as qualitative research. Bless & Higson-Smith (2000) and Rubin & Rubin (2005) observe that Quantitative research depend on measurement to compare and analyses different variables, whereas qualitative research allows the researcher to understand people's experiences and to reconstruct events from the insiders' perspective. On the other hand, Paton (2002) states that the distinctive characteristics of the two methods are the fact that qualitative research uses relatively small samples that are deliberately chosen, while quantitative methods rely on larger samples that are randomly selected.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003) the goal of the qualitative researcher is to describe and understand rather than explain and predict human behaviour. Arguing along the same lines, Labra et al (2019) state that qualitative methods allow researchers to transmit people's ideas, perceptions, and opinions by analysing and disseminating participant discourses. Labra et al (2019) argues that this "speech act" aspect of qualitative research is in conformity with the values of respect for personal and collective rights and recognition of the need to perceive and understand human beings as constituents of an interdependent system that carries the potential for change. Hence, Labra et al (2019) aver that the significance of qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis is that these approaches can also serve to promote social justice and combat inequalities.

A qualitative research approach is followed to obtain an understanding of the way in which the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protests of 2013 can be viewed as political communication and expression of subaltern agency in response to poor service delivery and skewed formal public participation processes. The focus of this study is such that it requires a scientific investigation of the nature of public participation and public protests and the circumstances in which they take place. It requires a critical analysis of the narratives of the key role players in protests and public participation. Therefore, the appropriate research method for this research is qualitative research, as it deals with and analyses subjective data from the narratives of the protestors as captured in the literature on the views of the protestors. This method is chosen for this research because it provides an opportunity to elicit in-depth information about the situation and from the point of view of key actors involved. On the other hand, Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as a process of inquiry, of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture. It analyses words, reports detailed views of

informants, and conducts the study in natural setting, (Creswell, 1998: 5). In other words, qualitative research considers the lived aspects of individuals 'social, political, historical, and cultural lives, subjects are not studied in isolation from reality. This definition presents qualitative research as essentially methodological, naturalistic in its enquiry, capable of producing complex data. Therefore, this definition fits in with the notion that qualitative content analysis represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. It also highlights that the dominant methodology of qualitative inquiry is to discover these meanings and interpretations by studying cases intensively in natural settings and by subjecting the resulting data to analytical induction. This is manifested by the fact that the key traditions of qualitative inquiry are Biography, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, and Case Study. (Creswell, 1998). Among the five key traditions of qualitative inquiry, Case Study is more appropriate for this research, as it aimed at attaining a deeper analysis of the Metsimaholo Municipality protests of 2013 and by extension similar protests. Creswell (1998) describes a case study as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents, and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes.

In this study, the researcher shall directly collect the data in the form of documentary evidence concentrating on the 2013 Metsimaholo Municipality and analyse the data inductively, focusing on data that express the voices and perspectives of the protesting individuals and groups, and that is related to the connection between service delivery and demarcation protests, public participation, and political communication.

### 3.4 Research Approach: Case Study

The realities of Covid 19 and the timeframe within which this research is conducted make it difficult for the researcher to directly interact with the participants or to use methods that require direct engagement with protestors. Therefore, this research shall elicit the voices and perspective of protestors through writings in which their voices can be gleaned. Accordingly, the research applies documentary evidence and thematic analysis to collate, analyse and interpret data. The current environment in which the research is conducted creates several barriers to face-to-face interaction with participants. As a result, this study makes extensive use of information available from various articles and research reports on the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protests of 2013 and the history and traditions of protests in the area.

The research extensively uses information from books, research reports, newspaper articles, and blogs on public protests in the municipalities, focusing on service delivery and demarcation protests and subaltern protests, public participation, and political communication. The researcher focuses on an analysis and interpretation of the protestors framing and conceptualization of protests in the way they reason their resort to and participation in protest and for the peaceful protests turning violent. This helps the researcher enlist the voices and perspective of the protestors in exploring the idea of protest as a form of political communication and/or subaltern agency.

The analysis focuses on the language and practices of protestors, with specific attention on the Metsimaholo Municipality 2013 Demarcation protests. The study seeks to gain deeper insights into public participation processes and political communication issues at the centre of the protests. A thorough grasp of these issues is critical to proving or disproving the notion of protest as an expression of subaltern agency or a form of political communication that marginalised groups use in view of the marginalisation of their realities, experiences and voices by formal systems, structures, institutions, and processes. Thus, the researcher applies a case study, as it is the most appropriate approach to use in a study that focusses on one or few research units with the intention of attaining in-depth information, (Descombe, 2003).

The researcher chose to apply the research tradition of a Case Study, which is a research strategy\design, evaluation method and a reporting mode applicable where the units of research can easily be bounded and seen by the researcher as a case, (Stake, 1994:236). This allows the researcher to understand the complexity of a case in the most complete way possible and for the attainment of the richest possible data using multiple methods. In this case, the researcher shall use purposive sampling to source and analyse readings that focuses on the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protests of 2013 and the views of people and organizations who were actively involved in the protests. Overall, the analysis and interpretation is guided by a critical theory paradigm, and specifically, Subaltern Studies.

The fact that case studies are concerned with how and why things happen enable the examination of contextual realities and the differences between what was planned and what happened. Consequently, case studies are useful where one needs to understand a specific problem or situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich with information. On the other hand, Noor (2008), observes that a case study is not intended as a study on an entire organization or phenomena but rather to focus on a specific issue, feature, or unit of analysis. This understanding has been applied to this study, in seeking to address the question of how and why service delivery and demarcation protests take place and the specific causal factors for the 2013 Metsimaholo Municipality protests.

The focus on Metsimaholo Municipality protest also resonate with the observations of Noor (2008), cited above, about the intentions and focus of a case study. The case study method is useful for trying to test theoretical models by using them in real world situations to examine whether the scientific theories and models work in the real world. The advantage of the case study method is that a researcher can identify one single unit or more of such units or a situation for comprehensive and intensive study, enabling a full understanding of the behaviour pattern of the unit under study. Therefore, this method can save social researchers and scientists from being bogged down in general picture by improving the understanding of a specific case to ensure a more holistic approach to research. Through the case study method, a researcher can track the natural history of the social unit and its relationship with the social factors and the forces involved in the surrounding environment. The case study method helps in formulating relevancy hypothesis along with the data that may aid to test the hypothesis. In this way, case studies enable the generalised knowledge to get richer. It allows use of different methods such as documents, reports of individuals, letters and interviews and questionnaires. Importantly, a

case study method is helpful as a technique used to suggest measures for improvement in the context of the environment of the concerned social unit.

### 3.5 Research Instruments: Data Collection and Data Analysis

#### 3.5.1 Data Collection: Documentary evidence

McDonald and Tipton (1993) define documentary evidence as the use of documents in social research to provide a record of the social world. In other words, the researcher uses socially produced documents that reflect a society at the time of their publication. This correlates with Bowen's (2009) description of document analysis as a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment of a topic. This research use documentary evidence, concentrating on the documents that reflect both the situation at the time of the Metsimaholo Municipal demarcation protest of 2013 and the views and opinions of the residents, particularly the protestors before, during and after the protest.

The researcher accessed archives in the Sasolburg library which contains information on the history and politics of the area. This includes a mini dissertation on the history and development of Zamdela and a large file of newspaper articles documenting service delivery protests that occurred in the area since 2009. This documentary evidence includes several articles that have been written on the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protests of 2013, including a mini dissertation by Rampedi (2013) focusing on youth participation in the Metsimaholo Municipality protest of 2013. The researcher analysed these articles and research reports on these protests and related events. Additionally, the researcher perused and analysed articles, and research reports on service delivery and demarcation protests in South Africa broadly.

#### 3.5.2 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The choice of data analysis method in this research is informed by the fact that the key subjects and themes of this study (i.e., protests, public participation, and political communication) are largely centred around concepts, discourse, and practices. Therefore, the researcher finds it appropriate to apply thematic analysis with reference to subaltern theory. Thematic analysis is related to but should not be confused with content analysis. Content analysis is a generic term for a variety of strategies used to analyse text. (Powers and Knapp, 2006), and thematic analysis is an independent qualitative descriptive approach. (Vaismoradi et al, 2013). Bloor and Wood (2006) state that the purpose of content analysis is to describe the characteristic of a document by examining who says what, to whom, and with what effect. In other words, researchers use content analysis to find out the purpose, message and effects of a text and make inferences about the producers or audience of the text.

Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, (Braun and Clark, 2006). Content analysis and thematic analysis share the aim of analytical examination of narrative material from life stories. Both achieve this by breaking down text into relatively small units and submitting them to descriptive treatment, (Sparks). Both are suitable for answering questions such as the concerns of people about a specific event, issue or phenomenon and their reasons for doing or not doing something.

However, while content analysis is suitable to reporting common issues mentioned in data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in an exploratory work in an area where much is not known (Braun and Clarke, 2006), thematic analysis is proposed as a flexible and useful research tool for a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data, (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While content analysis is descriptive in its coding of data and interpretation of qualitative counts of the code, thematic analysis provides a purely qualitative, detailed, and nuanced account of data (Morgan, 1993). Hence, Vaismoradi et al, (2013) assert that thematic analysis is a descriptive method that provides core skills to researchers conducting other forms of qualitative research. Therefore, Vaismoradi et al, (2013), argue that qualitative researchers should be familiar with thematic analysis as an independent and reliable qualitative approach to analysis. In essence, thematic is a research method that identify patterns in recorded communication by systematically collecting data from a set of written, oral, and visual texts such as newspapers, books, and journals, speeches and interviews, web content and social media posts, photographs, and films. In this research, the focus will be on books, journals, research reports, newspaper articles and other readings related to service delivery and demarcation protests in Metsimaholo Municipality and other areas, with a specific focus on those that examines the nature of and the issues and reasons behind the protests, and the views of the protestors.

**The researcher followed the following steps in conducting the thematic analysis:**

***Familiarization***

The researcher familiarised himself with the data by reading through the text, going through the data to know it, and taking initial notes. The objective of this was to have a thorough grasp and overview of all the collected data before analysing individual items.

***Coding***

The researcher highlighted certain sections of the text such as phrases and sentences and develop shorthand labels (codes) to describe their content.

***Generating themes***

The researcher identified patterns within the codes he has created and develop themes around them.

***Reviewing themes***

The researcher read through the data again and compared the themes he had developed against the data. The aim of this was to check if the themes developed are appropriate and are a useful representation of the data. The researcher, accordingly, developed a clear and easily understandable name for each theme.

***Defining and naming themes***

The researcher formulated what he means by each theme and examined how it explains the data or enhance the reader's understanding of the data.

***Writing up***

The write-up starts with an introduction that establish the research question, aims and approach. It includes a methodology section that describes how the data was collected and how the thematic analysis was conducted. This is followed by the results or findings section that addresses each theme. The write-up ends with the conclusion and recommendation section that delineate key lessons and how the analysis has answered the research question.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

According to Resnik (2015) the importance of ethics in academic research is that they protect the aim of the research such as truth. For instance, prohibition of fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation of research data help to ensure the truthfulness and integrity of the research. The ethics are helpful in ensuring the values such as trust and accountability, which are necessary for collaborative work and serve to protect both the participants and the public and to get public support for the research, (Resnik, 2015). The key basic ethical considerations in scientific research work include voluntary participation, and informed consent. However, a notable exception to the principle of informed consent is that in observational research where it is generally accepted that behaviour performed in public domain may be observed and researched without consent to ensure that the behaviour is observed in context, uncontaminated by the researcher's aims and objectives.

While this study does not entail direct observation, it uses documentation evidence that captures mostly already publicised opinions and actions of the protestors and other social actors whose perspectives are key to answering the research question. In the case of such text, the issue of consent and privacy does not arise that much. The views and identities of the individuals who may be cited in the secondary sources used in this study would already have been published with either their consent to be identified or anonymously. However, the researcher seriously examined and considered whether the documents he uses were solicited, edited and \or anonymous, considered the original purpose and target audience of a document and whether the author was first-hand witness or second-hand sources. (Bowen, 2009).

The researcher made effort to avoid the use of confidential documents or be cautious in using information from such sources. The challenges that may emanate in document evidence are mainly around the credibility of the data collected and the biases in both the authors of the text that is being analysed and the researcher's engagement with the text. To deal with these challenges the researcher ensured that he acknowledges and addresses the biases and focusses on information published in well-recognised or credible print and electronic media, newsletters, academic journals, and research reports. The researcher also ensured that the texts are accessed with attention to linguistic and cultural barriers. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that he is clear about the information that he seeks to collate, analyse, and interpret; carefully evaluate the quality of the documents, and plan a clear process to avert both credibility and ethical issues.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a presentation and analysis of the research findings. This data shall be analysed through the lens of Subaltern Studies and Relative Deprivation theory. The chapter begins with an analysis of the literature on the constructs and reasons for service delivery and demarcation protests in South Africa and their escalation from peaceful beginnings and ends to violence. It then concentrates on the analysis of the data from media and research reports and articles on the Metsimaholo Municipality protests of 2013 as well as the press statements and other writings of civic and socio-political formations on the protests and the issues behind the protests.

The analysis of the findings focuses on the extent to which the reasons provided for resort to violence and for escalation thereof into violence corroborate the conception of protest as subaltern agency and/or political communication from below. The chapter utilizes thematic analysis to delineate the key themes emerging from the narrative of the Metsimaholo Municipality demarcation protest of 2013. Furthermore, the chapter compares the themes emerging out of the narratives on these protests with those emerging out of the literature. To locate the analysis of the data to the research question, the chapter also draw on research and discourse on the construct and function of communication, ideology, agency, and violence in protests.

### 4.2 Data on the Metsimaholo Municipality Protests of 2013

Media reports, research reports, writings, and public pronouncements of Metsimaholo civic groups; Metsimaholo Residents Association, the Metsimaholo Community Association, indicate that the 2013 protests in Metsimaholo were ignited by a combination of interrelated factors. These factors ranged from concerns and complaints about the deficit and deficiency of communication and consultation on the merger, fears, and perceptions that the quality of municipality services and the quality of life will deteriorate under the merged municipalities, and a pervading and deep-seated mistrust and seething anger towards a municipality perceived to be riddled by poor governance, maladministration, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, and hometown favouritism. (Rampedi, 2015, Sparks, 2013, Patel, 2013, Municipality Data and Intelligence(undated), Mde (2013).

An examination of the voices and perspectives of residents as gleaned from documentary evidence indicates that Metsimaholo residents protested to an array of complex factors that includes lack of consultation, dismal responses to community requests for meetings, provincial factionalism, and fears that a larger amalgamated municipality would compromise service delivery because of the inferior status of the Ngwathe municipality. The data on the issues and reasons provided by the residents of Metsimaholo for their resort to protest and the outburst of violence are corroborated by research findings suggesting that key causes of protests are marginalization and exclusion, general desperation of services and lack of information from municipalities, rumours of mismanagement, corruption and nepotism often providing grounds for the initial spark of protest. (Allan and Heese, 2011).

In this regard, Allan and Heese (2011) suggests as a solution a communication strategy that involves communities in informal settlements and in the deliberative processes of council thereby bring to the centre stage the voices of people in planning processes. The observations and findings of Allan and Heese are agreeable to the findings of other research (Lancaster, 2018) that protests are an outcome of collective disaffection with a given political system, and therefore, a form of political participation. In the case of Metsimaholo Municipality, the researcher clustered all data that relates to consultations and the social distance between local government authorities and residents under “Public Consultation” and all that alludes to dysfunctionality, poor delivery of services, poor infrastructure, and corruption under “Service Delivery”. Furthermore, the researcher clustered all that data that make reference to residents’ comparison of the quality of governance, service delivery and socioeconomic conditions between the Ngwathe local Municipality and the Metsimaholo Municipalities “Relative Deprivation”, all data that indicate localistic favouritism and perceptions such as that Parys and Tumahole received undue preferential treatment under “Localism” and data that relates to the perspective of the residents on violence in protests under “Protest Violence”. Through thematic content analysis process, the researcher decoded the key messages from the voices of the residents. These are captured in the sub-section below.

#### 4.3.1 Public Consultation

Municipality Demarcation Board’s policy for determination and redetermination of municipal boundaries provides for The Board to initiate the process of determining or redetermining municipal boundaries either on its own initiative or on request of the Minister or MEC or on request by a municipality. (Municipality Demarcation Board, n.d). The policy states that the request of a Minister or MEC for determination or redetermination mainly occurs when existing boundary inhibits the provision of services and the broader development of a municipality. It further states that the request for a determination or redetermination by a municipality occurs where the boundary creates misalignments, impacts on communities or constraints development of one of both municipalities, and creates access for communities to services with minimum challenges. (Municipality Demarcation Board, n.d)

The policy stipulates that where the initiative of the Board for a determination or a redetermination is on receipt of a request by a member of the public, the Board may require that the member of the public furnish it with necessary information and that the Board must verify that the member of the public consulted community or communities of the municipality or municipalities concerned and the MEC for local government in the concerned province. Furthermore, the Board must solicit the views of the MEC for local government, each affected municipality, the magistrate concerned, and the provincial House of Traditional Leaders. The policy states that when the Board considers the determination or redetermination on its own initiative or on receipt of a request by member of the public:

*Where the Board has solicited the views of the MEC for local government in the province concerned, each municipality that will be affected by the Board’s consideration of the matter, the magistrates concerned if any magisterial district is affected and the local and provincial House of Traditional Leaders , the Board does not need to publish a determination, hold a public hearing, conduct a formal investigation or hold a hearing and conduct of formal investigation. (Municipality Demarcation Board, n.d)*

What can be inferred from these is that there is an assumption that stakeholders mentioned above, whose views the Board would have solicited, would have appropriately consulted with their constituencies and the public in the respective municipalities and districts. Taking away the obligation of the MDB to engage communities directly based on this assumption ignores a possible communication deficit between these stakeholders and their constituencies and communities. Not having evidence that the stakeholders that the Board has engaged have consulted their constituencies and communities, present a gap in the public consultation process where a determination and redetermination is on its own initiative or on receipt of a request by a member of the public. The policy stipulates that when the Board makes a determination, or redetermination on request by a Municipality, the Board may require that municipality provides it with relevant information, including evidence of concurrence with other affected municipality or municipalities and evidence of consultation with other affected municipality or municipalities. Furthermore, the policy stipulates that before the Board considers any determination of a municipal boundary, it must publish a notice in the newspaper circulating in the concerned area, stating the Board's intention to consider the matter, and inviting written representations and views from the public within a period of not less than 21 days. (Municipality Demarcation Board, n.d).

The merger of Ngwathe and Metsimaholo municipalities was proposed to the MDB by the then MEC, Xoli Mlamli. As required by law and its own policy, the MDB published notice in papers that it is considering the merger and inviting written representations and views. The notice was met with an angry response from the residents who indicated that the Municipality did not consult with them on the proposed merger. Metsimaholo resident, Boyson Buang, who was amongst the protestors, support the view that the local government authorities did not directly engage and inform the community about the proposal to merge the municipalities well in time and that when the call for submissions were made it was through inadequate platforms:

*We only got to know about this when someone heard about demarcation and googled it...It was already in the papers and some leaders had commented. The date for us to submit our opinions was closed.... One of the notices was placed in the business section of a certain newspaper – we only read soccer and some other things, not business, it was hidden from us. (Patel, 2013).*

The idea that the Municipality did not consult the community about the merger proposal made by the MEC to the MDB is articulated by observations of Luck Malebo, a civic activist from the Metsimaholo Concerned Residents (MCR), which was at the forefront of the protests:

*The anger comes from the fact that we were never consulted...They failed to consult with us. The first time we heard about the proposed merger was from the. We do not know who made the proposal and what was the motivation...Before the submission to merge the municipalities we were supposed to be consulted, by law. That first step was violated and the whole process falls apart.... We do not want the merger and it will never happen\ Residents have not been consulted. The first step was incorrect because we were never consulted... (Patel, 2013)*

Another resident of Metsimaholo, Seabe Maboe raises the issue of the failure of the municipality to notify the residents of the proposal to merge the municipalities:

*The Municipality Demarcation Board was supposed to have notified residents of the intended merger in writing before December 2012. On 10 January (2013) we submitted our objections.*

*We have received confirmation from the board that it has received our objections. We will now embark on a process of public engagement and protests to oppose the move. (Xaba, 2013)*

Maboe's remarks indicate there was an expectation and a willingness to dialogue, that there were efforts by the residents to raise issues through public engagements processes if properly and timeously conducted and that protests are seen as inseparable from public engagement, but they function to augment efforts of residents to be heard. This is also echoed by the statement of another resident of Zamdela, Thandiwe Sekete:

*Government has neglected us. This thing could have been avoided if they came to us in time. They just had to listen to us and communicated to us. (Patel, 2013)*

It is apparent that the residents believed that only their continued protest on the street will force the authorities to keep to their promises and consider residents' submissions seriously. There is a high likelihood that the scepticism is informed by the experiences of lack of public consultation and government responses to previous demands. This is highlighted by one of the protestors, Tladinyane Kgodumo:

*Government has been undermining this community for too long. We are not listening to their empty promises. We will continue fighting until they listen to us, (Mail & Guardian, 2013).*

The fact that lack of public consultation and public participation was a longstanding issue even before the 2013 is reflected in the assertion of the Metsimaholo Community Association (MCA), that since 2000 "Community concerns were dismissed and petitions and memorandums by community structures were not responded to and Community participation structures like Integrated Development Programmes (IDPs) ; Local Economic Development (LED), Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWP), CWP and CDWs became ANC processes." The MCA further alleges that from 2000 onwards:

*during public meetings, the councillors, led by Mr Brutus Mahlaku, treated residents with disrespect and lied all the time, promises were not kept. Instead, Executive Mayor boisterously told people that 'the ANC will rule until Jesus came and those who are not happy should rather establish their own parties and topple the ANC or accept and rather join them if you can't beat them'. The attitudes of municipal officials towards the people became arrogant and levels of despondence, frustration and hopelessness within the residents became overwhelming. (MCA, 2016)*

The opinions and comments of the residents and protestors indicates lack of consultation as a key causal factor for the protests. What emerges is that whilst the Metsimaholo municipality leadership and administration had received information on the proposal made to the MDB by the Free State government and the Fezile Dabi Region, it had not engaged in any information-giving and public awareness initiatives on the merger by the time news of the merger became public knowledge. The negative reception to the merger also indicates that the Free State Government and the Fezile Dabi region hardly canvassed the opinion of the residents of the two municipalities before making the proposal. An analysis of the views of the residents of Metsimaholo as expressed and captured in interviews with various journalists and researchers reveals a narrative of communities abandoned by officials meant to serve them and who feel that their needs and opinions are jettisoned and rebuffed by politicians and government processes. (Patel, 2013). Patel (2013) remarks that the residents of Metsimaholo felt that "they had been robbed of a right to have a say in decisions that dictate their lives".

Residents who spoke to the media stressed it was lack of consultation with the community that angered them. (Patel, 2013). The narrative of the residents that the protest was fuelled by lack of consultation – coupled with concerns on prevailing service delivery issues and possible adverse impact of the merger on service delivery is supported by observations of the Municipal Demarcation Board that local government officials failed to consult the residents and inform them properly about the merger. That, the residents are generally receptive to raising and resolving issues through engagement and dialogue is illustrated by the fact that they initially raised their protest through a formal submission, repeatedly called the municipal officials to public meetings to discuss the issue, used mass meetings to discuss the demarcation amongst themselves and immediately committed themselves to the formal public consultation process after the merger was halted.

#### 4.3.2 Service Delivery

The key messages emerging out of the residents' perspectives on service delivery in Metsimaholo Municipality and its impact in fuelling the protests is that they are victims of inept and unscrupulous local government politicians and officials, have dilapidated infrastructure and poor services; and the merger will worsen their already untenable conditions. This message is clearly communicated by the Metsimaholo Community Association, which was launched in the aftermath of the protests, in its account of “the compelling reasons that became the driving force behind the need for the establishment of a non-political community driven civic association that will be the voice of the people of Metsimaholo.” (MCA, 2016). The MCA states that during the period from the early 2000s:

*infrastructure deterioration started, “municipal equipment and vehicles began to break down and not serviced.”, and “poor service delivery to the community was exacerbated by the demoralized municipal workers. (MCA, 2016)*

The MCA blames the deterioration to the fact that Metsimaholo Local Municipality became a site of territorial battle for control between warring factions of the ANC:

*Many local people working for the municipality who were not supportive of the ‘new regime’ were dealt with. Others were expelled. Others were suspended. Others were overlooked for promotions. ANC comrades from other towns in Fezile Dabi were brought in to bolster support to the powerful faction in the region to fill in vacant positions in the municipality”. (MCA, 2016)*

In his reflections on the Metsimaholo protests of 2013, Metsimaholo resident, Sam Mdlamafa Mthembu claims that the failure of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality (MLM) to fulfill its mandate to govern in the interest of the local community make it guilty of dereliction or abdication of the powers of local government and its duties to the residents. Mthembu (2020), states that this is a result of the fact that:

*incompetent candidates have always been imposed on the community for councillor positions by political parties, the worst being the ruling ANC. The so imposed councillors with no requisite skills will sooner than later abandon duty and responsibilities only to be usurped by the province and the regional political structures. The province abducts these powers, and the is then remotely run at the expense of the rate payers.*

*The Metsimaholo Local Municipality has been and still is a classic case of such hostile takeovers proliferating our country, with the Free State taking the crown when it comes to consolidated/centralized power.*

Mthembu (2020), further alleges that the day to day running of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is either through an instruction from the Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) or the Regional Executive Committee (REC) of the African National Congress, and that, if the dysfunctional council does not carry out the instruction, the instruction goes directly to “the Administration staff who are perennial beneficiaries of cadre deployments”. The result of this, according to Mthembu and other residents of Zamdela is maladministration, poor services and collapsed infrastructure. For an example, the Regional Secretary of the South African Communist Party in the Fezile Dabi region, Paki Letsie, who resides in Zamdela, cites the condition of the Moses Kotane stadium - which was the meeting place and centre of residents’ protests - as the perfect microcosm of the neglect and collapse of infrastructure on which millions have been spent on. “This Municipality collapsed under the ANC, unfortunately! If you want to get an idea of how, you just have to look at Moses Kotane stadium, in Zamdela. It has come apart brick by brick”, states Letsie, (Mde, 2017).

The other sign of infrastructural neglect that residents of Metsimaholo cited in their conversations with journalists and in their meetings is the township roads leading to the town of Sasolburg, which are covered with potholes and faded lane lines and surrounded by unkempt pavements and uncut grass. The significance of the road infrastructure is highlighted by the fact that the road infrastructure of Sasolburg is “the only unifying factor between the affluent suburbs and town centre, still largely lily White, and the black townships”. Echoing the residents’ sentiments about the poor road infrastructure, Mde (2017), states that “in Sasolburg, the roads are atrocious wherever you are.” A common refrain for Metsimaholo residents is that preoccupation with the merger of Ngwathe Local Municipality and Metsimaholo Local Municipality made the municipality to completely neglect service delivery.

For an example, speaking in the aftermath of the protest, on the eve of the 2016 local government elections, Armstrong Dikobo of the Zamdela branch of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) stated: “We need roads, we need infrastructure”. “We need permanent jobs”. “Service delivery basically stopped when they started discussing the merger with Parys.” The observation of Dikobo fits with the observation made in a pamphlet announcing the establishment of the Metsimaholo Community Association as a response to the social distance between the residents and political parties, specifically the ruling party, the African National Congress:

*Since the fateful year of 2013 protest, the community of Metsimaholo has witnessed the collapse of proper governance and service delivery and this has left our community to suffer under the self-serving leadership that does not care, but account to itself. (MCA, 2016)*

The perception that the collapse of infrastructure and poor service delivery in Metsimaholo is the outcome of poor governance resulting from a weak, and corrupt leadership, prevailed among the residents and community organizations before, during and after the protests. This comes out clearly in the messages from a pamphlet announcing the decision to establish the Metsimaholo Community Association and exhorting residents not to vote for the African National Congress in the 2016 local government elections.

The pamphlet claims that the “weak and corrupt leadership at the Metsimaholo Municipality” does not show signs of responsibility towards its community, and that “a lot of things at the municipality had been deteriorating since the current Mayor and his councillors took over in 2011”. The pamphlet further put blame the situation in the municipality on the fact that the ward councillors and the mayor do not account to the community but to the political party because “politically chosen people will do anything to protect their political party interests at the expense of the suffering community”. Even though the merger had been halted at the time of the release of the pamphlet, it still referred to the merger in its lists of issues that shows the weakness of the leadership of Metsimaholo Municipality and its disloyalty to the people of Metsimaholo:

*As we speak now, these government departments; Dept of Education, Dept of Labour, Dept of Health are moving to Parys as part of underground Demarcation process that is (still) continuing. We expect other departments including the Fezile Dabi District offices to follow, especially after 2016 local government elections should the ANC win the local government elections at Metsimaholo. (MCA, 2015).*

It is apparent in the sentiments expressed by Letsie of the SACP, Dikobo of EFF and the pamphlet from the MCA that before, during and after the January 2013 protests, the Metsimaholo municipality was perceived or portrayed as inept, corrupt and indifferent and unresponsive to community concerns and demands. In other words, the demarcation issue may be viewed as the spark that ignited an explosion that was waiting to happen. This is articulated very well by a 29-year-old male resident, Sehloho, in an interview with Rampedi (2015):

*It was not only demarcation. Hence, I said you should go inside the township until the end of it and you will see that this place is not good. It does not show to be under a good company like Sasol. It is worse than most small places in the Free State. That is why people protested. There were so many things that the people protested for. (Rampedi, 2015)*

The concerns over lack of public consultation and fraudulent public participation processes were exacerbated by fears that the merger would worsen the delivery of services, considering that budgetary constraints of the Metsimaholo municipality at that time were already a barrier to provision of adequate services to Zamdela, Orangeville, Refengkgotso such as water, subsidized electricity, and housing. Clearly, the scepticism of the people of Zamdela and other parts of Metsimaholo about the idea that sharing and redistribution of resources between Ngwathe and Metsimaholo would benefit the two communities were informed by their observation of poor delivery of services in the two municipalities and their view that both municipalities were riddled by poor governance, maladministration, incompetence, and corruption. This is illustrated by the observations of the youth from Zamdela, Sylvester, who was 28 years at the time of the protest:

*People ended up protesting because the people coming from Zamdela have few opportunities anywhere in Sasolburg and that is affecting people. There is always a place without electricity, air pollution is too much and then in January this year we were affected by a tornado. It blew away houses and the people that suffered were not really helped; they were left like that. So, Zamdela protests too much because people want to be well off, but they cannot because of things like these and because of these political parties”, (Rampedi, 2015).*

The narrative of residents who spoke to Sparks (2013) underscore that resistance to the merger because of lack of consultation and fears of the merger worsening service delivery in Zamdela was informed by pre-existing dissatisfaction over maladministration, corruption, collapsed infrastructure and lack of service delivery. Hence, Sparks (2013) states:

*Zamdela residents have had many grievances with their own municipality, its politicians, and officials: There have been sit-ins at municipal offices, protests, and arrests before. Residents who were cut off from the flow of local ANC patronage in Zamdela remark bitterly about corruption, about the rows of luxury German vehicles parked in the underground garage of the municipality building in Sasolburg, about treacherous local councillors who leave the township for upper middle-class Vaal Park or Sasolburg.*

It makes sense that the conversations of the residents of Zamdela would be replete with reference to the conspicuous consumption and opulent lifestyles of Metsimaholo municipality politicians and officials as indicators of the use of government resources for personal enrichment and illegal diversion of public money into private pockets. The sudden possession or display of vast amount of wealth and power is likely to be more visible and “in-your face” in smaller towns such as Sasolburg where people know each other’s personal histories (Ngwane, 2018) and in which the general conditions of the under-classes are more pronounced. In other words, the display of superfluous wealth and conspicuous consumption as a signature of power, rank, and status by beneficiaries of ANC patronage increases public resentment of municipality politicians and officials as well as the decline in the legitimacy of the local government. It is, therefore, not surprising that the residents and protestors in Metsimaholo Municipality listed corruption - alongside maladministration, collapsed infrastructure and poor service delivery – as primary causes – other than lack of consultation, that sparked the 2013 protests in Metsimaholo municipality.

#### 4.3.3 Localism: The Parys Factor

The residents of Zamdela portrayed then Premier, Ace Magashule as personally behind the merger and calling the shots for the MDB. They depicted Parys as a personification of Ace Magashule. This was symbolized in posters such as “To Hell with Parys. To hell with Ace.”, “Say no to ParAce”. This was sparked by allegations that the merger is part of a plan to make Parys, the hometown of Ace Magashule, the capital of Free State and to create a powerful position of power for Ace Magashule beyond his tenure as the Premier of the Free State province. This is summed up in the allegation by Charles Rampai Mabitsela, who was involved in the protests:

*The resolution to merge the two municipalities had the political motive of forming or establishing a Metro Council clandestinely. The intention was that the Metro would be led by Ace Magashule as its Executive Mayor. All these rigmarole of negotiations happened behind and outside the formal sittings of Metsimaholo Local Municipality and without the knowledge of communities constituting it, (Mabitsela, 2020).*

The perception that the merger would consolidate regional and political favouritism that is detrimental to the residents of Metsimaholo was armed by the popular belief amongst residents that Parys, the hometown of Ace Magashule that is alleged to be one of the bastions of his political collection, will be the headquarters of the merged municipality. (Sparks, 2013).

The belief that the merger would result in Parys being the centre of local government amenities and services is captured in the view of the residents of Metsimaholo like Jabu, who was 23 years old at the time of the protest. In an interview with Rampedi (2013, Jabu states

*That guy (Magashule) wanted to put Sasol under Parys with everything in Sasol will also belong to Parys.*

The belief amongst the residents of Metsimaholo that the merger will relocate centres of service delivery from Sasolburg to Parys is echoed by Joel Moshabe, who sustained injury on his shoulder after the police shot him with rubber bullets. Moshabe states: “We will have to pay R50 for taxi fare if we have to travel to Parys to access services.” The prevalence of allegations of patrimony and favouritism against Ace Magashule and the allegation that the Metsimaholo municipality was staffed only by his cronies made the prospects of a municipality headquartered in Parys too ghastly to contemplate for many residents of Metsimaholo. According to Xaba (2013) protestors accused Magashule of imposing anarchy by employing people from Parys to run the Metsimaholo Municipality. Xaba (2013) reports that residents who preferred to be anonymous, stated that the Free State province was taking the residents of Metsimaholo for a ride because plans were already in place to move Sasolburg’s social development to Parys. These allegations echo the sentiments of residents who told Sunday Times’s journalist, Prega Govender, that Ace Magashule was mastering the merger for his own financial gain. It is an agenda to make Parys, a relatively low-income area to govern Sasolburg, a relatively prosperous industrial area, (Govender, 2013).

The notion of Parys and Ace Magashule as the common denominator behind poor governance and service delivery and the woes of the residents of Metsimaholo, came to be referred to as “the Parys Factor” within civil society circles in Zamdela and other parts of Metsimaholo, such as Refengkgotso and Orangeville. The Parys Factor became the rallying point and mobilizing plank for individuals and community-based organizations against the proposed merger. Effectively, the Parys Factor was used to refer to the narrow localism or hometown favouritism, which in their experience is symbolised by the domination of the people from Parys in their municipality and what they saw as an attempt to develop Parys at the expense of neglecting other areas. In its broadest sense localism refers to a variety of political philosophies which prioritize the local by supporting local production and consumption of goods, local control of government, and the promotion of local history, local culture, and local identity. However, in its narrowest sense, localism refers to preference of one’s own geographic area or region at the cost of prejudicing, marginalizing, and neglecting other areas or region, thereby placing a bias and limitation on one’s outlook and social agenda.

The kind of localism referred and objected to by the people of Metsimaholo through the notion of the Parys Factor is the one wherein an area or region from which a head of government or leading political figures hails, is turned into an enclave of development and empowerment while the rest of a country province or other regions and areas are neglected. According to the MCA this localism was associated with ANC factional battles which started in the early 2000s. Regarding this, the MCA states:

*The community started seeing outside contractors being given priority above local business. Only local ANC members loyal to the ‘powerful’ faction were considered for small opportunities to gain their patronage and continued support. (MCA, 2016)*

The notion of the Parys Factor is\was informed by the comparison that Zamdela residents – and the residents of Orangeville, Dennisville, - make between what they perceive as rapid and high level of local economic and infrastructure development in Parys and Tumahole and the lethargic and pathetic levels of development in Zamdela and Sasolburg , which has hitherto been perceived by poor working-class migrants from across Southern Africa as the centre of opportunity, slightly lesser than Witwatersrand (Sparks, 2013). In other words, the residents of Metsimaholo employed the term the Parys Factor in the opposition to the merger to refer to a tendency or practice that one can refer to as hometown favouritism. Metsimaholo resident, Sam Mdlamafa Mthembu believes that regional and political favouritism is directly related to the agenda of self-enrichment and corruption, results in municipality officials completely detached from the experiences and conditions of the residents. This, argues Mthembu, cause a social distance between municipal and residents, thereby creating public discontent that gives rise to protests:

*Both party and individuals benefit from the coffers of the municipality by having their own cronies next to the kitty. In the post 1994 no local person has held a position of Municipal Manager let alone a divisional Directorship (all have been out of town cadre deployees). Whose interests are these people serving? Whatever discomfort and inconvenience suffered by this community after hours does not come to bear on theirs and family lives. For a community to feel outright rejection and marginalization it takes what an outsider will view as an inconsequential act. (Mthembu, 2020)*

Mthembu (2020), cites two outstanding examples of how the municipality rebuffs local experiences. Firstly, is the fact that “there is not even “brownish signboards” in recognition of martyred Zamdela activists even though Zamdela has always been at the forefront of protests in the Vaal and as far as Bekkersdal. This contrasts with a few struggle martyrs from Tumahole in Parys who have streets named after them in Zamdela.” Secondly, Mthembu refers to an incident that occurred in 2010 where a public viewing arrangement for the people of Zamdela was moved to Parys. Such incidents caused estrangement between residents and the municipality and gave credence to the notion that the merger was a project aimed at consolidating the position of Parys and enriching the political and family connections of Ace Magashule:

*In the minds of the Metsimaholo community everything was being done to have all their official government engagements moved to Parys without any consultation. Rumour will have it that our municipality equipment and vehicles were on loan to neighbouring municipalities while our service delivery was suffering. There will be dubious robberies and loss of Municipal funds and instead of some form of consequence management involved, people will either be moved to the Fezile Dabi District or any of the smaller sister municipalities. (Mthembu, 2020)*

Based on interviews with the residents of Zamdela and observations of demarcation and service delivery protests around South Africa, Sparks (2013) provides a lengthy and succinct description of the role that the sentiments of the residents against regional and political favouritism play in fuelling demarcation. protests:

*Residents in the Vaal- like all of us- are acutely attuned how flows of financial resources to politically connected can have in daily life and are sceptical of regional and political favouritism. Neighbouring townships are subjected to inventories: How many houses are being built in X township? Are roads being paved? Are parks being upgraded?*

*Who is getting the tenders? It is widely assumed that merit and procedure have little to do in the way “service delivery” happens. Political connections to the ANC patronage machine provide explanations of sudden flow of financial resources.*

In the main, the key message that comes out of the narratives of the residents is that service delivery and quality of life is better in Metsimaholo than in Ngwathe Municipality, that their conditions and situation under the Metsimaholo Local Municipality is better than the situation would be if we merged with Ngwathe. In other words, the underlying theme that comes out of the narrative of the residents of Metsimaholo on the merger and their protest it is that their socioeconomic circumstances and living conditions would be worse under a merged municipality with Parys as the epicentre. The main reasons cited by residents was that at the time of the proposed merger, Ngwathe was a dysfunctional municipality that has received successive negative audit reports, owed Eskom R 9.2 million and had bank overdrafts whereas the Metsimaholo municipality had no bank overdrafts and was slightly better governed than Ngwathe municipality.

This view is captured by the statement of Sam Mthembu:

*The Ngwathe municipality has run itself into the ground and we, as residents of Metsimaholo do not want to be associated with those thieves. Corrupt people occupy the council and corrupt people occupy the provincial government. They only look after themselves and do not care about Zamdela.* (Mail and Guardian, 2013).

The observation of Mthembu resonates with the view expressed by another resident of Metsimaholo, Seabe Maboe who states:

*Ngwathe Municipality currently owes ESKOM R118 million, the merger will mean we will inherit the debt, which means our municipality will collapse. Service delivery in Ngwathe is very poor.* (Xaba, 2013)

The residents also compared the fact that the budget of Metsimaholo municipality was R803 million whereas that of Ngwathe municipality was R 478 million. In addition to the fact that the Department of Water Affairs had declared Parys water undrinkable and the water in Metsimaholo drinkable, the Metsimaholo municipality was offering free 50 kilowatts of electricity to its residents, whereas Ngwathe was offering residents only 15 kilowatts and was planning to reduce the allowance by 5 kilowatts annually starting in 2013, (Govender, 2013). The residents expressed fear that most of the resources in the merged municipality will go to servicing the Ngwathe debts, thereby affecting delivery of basic services. For instance, Zamdela resident, Sam Mthembu expresses the view that the merger will affect services in Metsimaholo adversely because Ngwathe has a higher levels of dysfunctionality caused by unscrupulous and corrupt officials: The prevailing attitude that Parys was being given preferential treatment made the residents to perceive the merger not as an intervention aimed at amalgamating the municipalities to create a more strong, efficient, and better functioning municipality that can offer improved services but as a ploy to move amenities, resources and services from Sasolburg, Dennisville and Orangeville to Parys. Hence, the outburst of a resident in an interview with Prega Govender:

*They want to take way our free water and electricity. Over my dead body will I allow that.* (Govender, 2013)

In the main, the residents reasoned that corruption and maladministration were worse off in Ngwathe than in Metsimaholo, that Metsimaholo is comparatively wealthy. They calculated therefore that merging it with Ngwathe and adopting its debt, R100 million owed to Eskom alone, would spell greater ruin, (Municipality Data Intelligence). In this way, the residents of Zamdela, in making a comparison between the levels of dysfunctionality; lack of services between Ngwathe and Metsimaholo and levels of development between Parys and Tumahole and that of Sasolburg and Zamdela is somewhat like the comparison that residents in informal settlement communities in Johannesburg make between their situation and that of their counterparts in the neighbouring leafy suburbs. While the general quality of life and delivery of services in the Metsimaholo municipality is better than in Ngwathe municipality, the residents of Zamdela believe that Parys and Tumahole are (getting) better off than Zamdela and Sasolburg because of localistic and political favouritism. This accounted for the belief of the residents that their conditions would worsen under the merged municipality, which they perceived as part of the plot to bail out Ngwathe and turn Parys into the capital” of Northern Free State. This was further exacerbated by their view that there was little consultation on the merger as well as the experience of their requests for meetings being repeatedly snubbed by local municipal politicians and officials.

#### 4.3.5 Protestor violence as subaltern agency against structural violence

One feature of the escalation of protest in post-1994 South Africa that has interested researchers is the violent nature of some of the protests, often in the form of the destruction of public and private property and confrontations between stone-throwing protestors and state police, (Lancaster, 2018). The voice and perspective of the protestors in Zamdela, as garnered from documented evidence, is replete with the narrative that their violence is constructed by the structural violence of a non-responsive and non-delivery state and the socioeconomic violence unleashed by lack of services delivery on the community. The key message emanating out of the voices and opinions of the residents who either participated in violent acts during the protest or justify the resort to violence is that residents would not have taken to the street had the government listened to us and communicated to them. Furthermore, the messaging of the residents suggests that they do not prefer disruptive and violent protest but resort to it because it seems to get the attention of government. For instance, speaking next to a smouldering tyre and egged by fellow protestors, Tladinyane Kgodumo, an unemployed resident of Zamdela, told the Mail and Guardian (2013) newspaper:

*We understand that it is wrong (to protest violently) but how will they hear us? If they (government) only come when we march and toyitoyi then that is what we must do.... If we need to burn down this place, then it is fine. The government has been undermining this community for too long. We are not listening to empty promises, and we will fight until they listen.... Corrupt people occupy the council and corrupt people occupy the province. They do not care about Zamdela, so we do not care what they want. This is the only way they listen to us.*

The idea that some of the violent acts were unplanned action that amounted to frustrated venting-off of public rage after residents' have been snubbed by the authorities in their efforts to engage, is expressed in the account of Kenny, a youth from Zamdela who participated in the looting of Zio Food, a retail and wholesale business in Sasolburg, during the protest.

*The reason we decided to download (sic) Zio is that Richard Baloyi said we will get our answers at the police station. We did not get the answers when we went there so we decided to go to the police station in town. When we go there, we hear that Baloyi is in the location (township). Now we ended up looking stupid and we decided to enter Zio, open up and load everything and go back. (Rampedi, 2013)*

The notion that the violence is ignited by the unresponsiveness of the state and the assertion that government seem to jump into action as soon as there is protest or violent protest, is echoed by other residents such as Sebe Maboe who declares:

*We have studied what happened to Khutsong, which led to people boycotting elections. If Magashule does not listen to us, we will see another Khutsong here. (Xaba, 2013)*

The notion of protestor violence as a response to the structural violence of an unresponsive, non-delivering government finds resonance in the sentiment expressed by another resident of Zamdela, Nelson Maduna:

*Our leaders are afraid to see us and talk to us because they know they are wrong. So, we are going to carry on like this until they listen. (Mail and Guardian, 2013)*

Another resident of Zamdela, Thandiwe Sekete, stressed that violence in Zamdela could have been avoided with better engagement from the local government (Patel, 2013):

*Government neglected us. This thing could have been avoided if they came to us in time. They just had to listen to us and communicated to us.*

Lucky Malebo, one of the leaders of the MCR, which was at the centre of the protests, also blames the resort to violence on the response of the local government to calls for social dialogue:

*We did not advocate for riots or damage to property.... It was worsened in the following days; meetings were called. The council never pitched up. The minister never pitched up. It spiralled out of control. (Patel, 2013)*

The sentiments of the residents cited above vindicates the observation by Bohler: Muller (2017), that the South African public is becoming more receptive to disruptive and even violent protests in South Africa because of growing belief that it yields results than peaceful protest. It is also important to note that, as Bohler: Muller (2017), observes, the escalation of peaceful protest to disruptive and/or violent protest is largely prescribed by when and how the state responds. A case in point is Zamdela, Khutsong, Vuwani and other areas, where serious response and intervention by government only came after the protest spiralled into disruptive and violent action. It can be argued that the employment of transgressive and disruptive tactics employed in such protests may be the result of deliberate and purposeful choice of tactics that amplify the possibilities of getting desirable response and intervention from government. This militates against the view of protests as merely a product of collection of emotion-driven psychobiological responses elicited by subjective experiences, (Frijda 1991, Breakfast, 2019).

It reflects protest as a conscious act, which, at the level of boardroom engagement, they are unable to because of power-relations and structural and institutional barriers or constraints. The view of transgressive, disruptive, and violent protest as an expression of civil disobedience and subversive people's power in the face of exclusionary and unresponsive formal structures also comes out in the quotes of civil leaders gathered in the fieldwork of Matebesi (2013) in the Northern Cape:

*We don't have the luxury of public facilities here...Our only weapon, as destructive as it may seem to outsiders, was to forcefully shut down schools, you may call it intimidation, we call it community power.....*

*We never planned a violent strategy. We explored all public spaces of dialogue and they failed us. The community and not us (leaders) decided to shut down schools. Well, in any case, violence seems to be the only language our government knows. (Matebesi, 2013)*

The notion of a resort to disruptive protest is further emphasized in the pronouncements of a protestor who participated in the Khutsong protest:

*We wanted to teach Mbeki that he must not, once he has been put in power by the people, start to see himself as God; you are the government of the people, you must listen to what people say. (Ngwane, 2011)*

Incidents abound where the government stopped demarcation decisions because of protest action, particularly protests characterised by disruptive and violent action, that this form of expression of popular power or popular agency or people's force bears results. This is underscored in the remarks of a protestor interviewed by Ngwane (2011):

*And the community is happy that they are back where they belong, that the Freedom Charter has been adhered to by the ANC that the people shall govern. (Ngwane, 2011).*

Some of the residents have expressed the view that even without visible immediate results, the value of protest lies in the awareness it raises and in being able to show that citizens or residents can challenge the excesses of the state, (Ngwane, 2011). This suggests that protestors view their subversive and disruptive forms of protest as an act of reclaiming and rearming their agency and exerting their power on the state or the authorities. It is for this reason that it makes sense to view protests and the collective leading the protests as part of a counter-hegemony and the individual leaders of the protest as organic or grassroots intellectuals facilitating grassroots action aimed at building people's power outside of conventional, formal, and even legal modes.

The view of transgressive, disruptive, and violent or forceful protest as subaltern political communication is eloquently articulated by Daily Maverick journalist, Khadijah Patel (2013) in her characterisation of Zamdela as the failure in public participation and a demonstration of the failure of democracy in South Africa:

*Like service delivery protests, the demonstrations in Zamdela were directed against the perceived self-serving of a municipality and the street action stems from frustration with channels available for engagement with government. People feel cut from the structures governing their lives and when that disconnectedness is made apparent like in Zamdela, violence becomes a means of communication.*

It is noteworthy that the looting of shops in both the township and in town, is specifically seen as the act that caused dominant narratives on incidents of violence in the Metsimaholo protest to be branded as the case confirming infiltration of the community protests by criminal elements. The embellishment of criminality as the sole cause of acts such as looting glosses over the socioeconomic conditions within which the looting takes place. It misses the fact that the protests take place in communities battling with the bare necessities of life. While there is significant research and discussion, globally, on the applicability of the necessity defence for acts of looting during natural disasters and state of emergency (Hamrick, 2007), not much attention has been paid to the applicability of the necessity defence in communities that are ravaged by lack social services and unemployment to the extent that necessities of life have been stripped away. The sole focus on infiltration by criminal elements does not consider that big business is considered by most citizens to be exploitative, unsympathetic to the cause of the deprived and the marginalised, and to be partners with government in acts of corruption and in the use of the state as a point of accumulation of private wealth. This view also fails to consider looting and other violent acts as an angry, response to the disparaging remarks of the political and social elites and some within the business sector about protest action and their general disregard for the plight of the deprived and marginalised communities. This implies that commentators and researchers who exaggerate infiltration by criminal elements assume that the subaltern do not have the critical consciousness and agency to view looting as a subversive act of making big business and the social elites to feel the brunt of protest violence so that they can exert pressure on the government to intervene quickly to end the protest.

#### 4.4 Discussion the Constructs of protests in South Africa

The university of Johannesburg Research Chair in Social Change (2014) lists the issues and grievances of protests recorded between 2004 and 2013 as service delivery, which has to do with, housing, water and sanitation, representation, electricity, corruption, municipal administration, roads, unemployment, demarcation, land, health, and crime. As argued in the preceding columns, Langa and Van de Holdt (2011) state that in urban townships poor service delivery is manifested by issues of housing and sanitation, representation, and demarcation. The correlation between the delivery of services in all the issues listed here is such that it is plausible to suggest that service delivery deficit is the main motive for protest by various communities in South Africa. (Rampedi, 2015).

The escalating number of public protests or what are mostly referred to as service delivery protest in South Africa is reflected by the fact that between 2009 and 2019 an astounding number of between 105 and 111 protests were recorded respectively in all provinces except Limpopo, Managa (2012). Furthermore, the Municipal IQ, an independent monitor of service-delivery protests and trends reports that a staggering 584 protests between 2009 and August 2013 with 2012 recording the highest number, accounting for 173 service-delivery protests. This phenomenon of a rise in protest has elicited several studies on the construct of public protests in South Africa. Causal factors cited in most of these studies include poor governance, social distance, miscommunication and mistrust between authorities and citizens as well as skewed processes of public participation, engagement, and consultation. The factors prevailing in the background includes high levels of poverty, unemployment, and persistently high levels of inequality.

Additional to this background are perceived acts of appropriation of legitimate concerns, demands and needs of communities by agents of intra-party skirmishes and inter party contest for power and resources. The disparities between the promises by government and political parties on the one hand, and the experiences, realities, and conditions of citizens generate perceptions of marginalization on the other, produces levels of disenchantment by deprived and marginalised communities particularly when viewed against the quality of life of the privileged few and the unmet promises for a better life for all. The permeating theory in most of the studies is the Relative Deprivation theory.

The theory of Relative Deprivation explains service delivery protests as a product of the disaffection, disenchantment, and discontent resulting from a series of unfulfilled promises and expectations as successive political government administration fail to translate “a better life for all” into a reality. According to Managa (2012), political parties generate more disquiet with electoral promises that raise public expectations, creating false perceptions that, following the election, communities will receive the services promised. Managa (2012) argues that the community resorts to protest a poor service once these bags of promises are not fully met. Therefore, the Relative Deprivation theory asserts that protests are fuelled by the contrast between the quality of life in underprivileged communities and the ‘Better life for all’ promises as well as the opulent lifestyle of the privileged communities.

Research indicates that most protests are not necessarily fuelled by political factions but are the results of inefficient and inadequate responses to the needs of citizens and a perceived culture that is not conducive to effective service delivery within municipalities, (Managa, 2012). Managa (2012) further asserts that these factors are compounded by an intergovernmental system that is unfavourable to local municipalities and the fact that most municipalities are forced to carry the burden of failed policies. Added to these factors is the mixed reactions of role-players to the protests, which ranges from an acceptance of responsibility to a total disregard for the relevance of the demands made by protesters, (Marais, Matebesi, Mthombeni, Botes and van Rooyen, 2008; Atkinson; 2007).

Managa (2012), states that “most protesters have indicated that their actions are because of lack of services and their exclusion in the decision- making processes in their municipalities.” Furthermore, communities placed blame on local municipalities for being unresponsive to their demands, citing corruption, unfulfilled promises, nepotism, exclusion, and failure to address inequalities and unemployment (Nleya, 2012; Sebugwawo, 2012; Hough, 2008). The report of Lancaster, “Unpacking Discontent: Where and why Protest happen in South Africa”, (2018) on where and why protests happen in South Africa, identified that two-thirds, i.e. 67% took place in the metro area, 17% and 16% in urban and rural areas respectively. It delineates types of protests that occurred in South Africa between 2013 and 2017 as follows:

- Labour protests (818 incidents)
- Protests on crime and policing (689 incidents)
- Municipal services protests- (681 incidents)
- Education protests (520 incidents)
- Political and election protests (466 incidents)
- Housing and land protests (374 incidents)
- Socioeconomic (212 incidents)
- Transport (184 incidents)

- Xenophobia (129 incidents)
- Protests on corruption and governance (118 incidents)
- Protests on business practices (83 incidents)
- Protests on international causes (82 incidents)
- Demarcation protests (95 incidents) (Lancaster, 2018)

However, a scrutiny at protests that were ignited by a decision or proposal to merge municipalities or to re-demarcate municipal boundaries, indicates that there is often an intersection between the issues at the centre of protests. Clearly, some protests are a combination of factors even though one issue may be the spark that cause the protests. A typical example are protests that are a combination of municipality service delivery issues and discontent caused by a proposed or re-demarcation decision or action.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

The case study of the Metsimaholo Municipality protests of 2013 affirms that most protests in South Africa are galvanised by greater and desperate need for services and inadequate access to information which facilitate the spread of perceptions of favouritism, corruption, and mismanagement. (Allan and Heese, 2011, Lancaster, 2018). The experiences and narrative of the residents of Metsimaholo regarding resorting to protest because of lack of consultation and non-responsiveness of the authorities echoes the findings of some research that protest are elicited by the failure of the state to respond positively to community demands. (Ngwane, 2011). In the cases he studied, Ngwane (2011) states that these communities resorted to protest after repeated attempts to engage authorities. Ngwane (2011) lists several official channels or formal processes and platforms of participation that residents engaged in with the hope of influencing or shaping the policies and programmes of government such as voting, attending meetings, filling government forms, participating in imbizos and ward committees, community policing forums, community meetings, integrated development plans. Importantly, the data emerging out of this case study confirms the notion that social unrest build up over time and are often preceded by action on the part of the protestors and inaction on the part of officials\authorities\government, and that events escalating from protest to violence usually result from the turning down of request to protest resulting in the police's use force, (Lancaster, 2018).

It also vindicates research that shows that perceptions of political legitimacy changes as satisfaction with state change and that as citizens find peaceful protest and voting ineffective, they develop the belief that militant protest yield more successful results, (Lancaster, 2018). Consequently, preference for formal forms of participation can transform to preference for unconventional forms of participation. (Lancaster, 2018). This implies that protest cannot be simply explained as mob passion or a combination of psychobiological factors driven by emotions and subjective experiences and perceptions but also as a conscious and political act of communicating dissent, opinion and demands outside of formal processes after pursuing such to no avail.

This is vindicated by data garnered from documental evidence on the 2013 demarcation protest in Metsimaholo, which suggest that the announcement of the merger served as spark and explosion of popular rage against a non-delivering and non-responsive local government that impacted adversely on the quality of life of the residents. The idea that the protest was an explosion of tension and frustration that built up over a long period of time due to the social distance between residents and municipality and feelings of being ignored is summed up by the assertion of the MCA that since the early 2000s:

*The attitudes of municipal officials towards the people became arrogant and levels of despondence, frustration and hopelessness within the residents became overwhelming.*

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The immediate result of the Metsimaholo Protest of 2013 was the halting of the process by the Municipal Demarcation Board, with the announcement that it will investigate and institute public hearings to provide residents further opportunity to make inputs. The MDB indicated that the final pronouncement will be based on consideration of stakeholder views. The Metsimaholo Concerned Residents questioned the independence of the Municipal Demarcation Board. It pointed out that the announcement to stop the merger was made by the minister without an independent statement from the Municipal Demarcation Board. However, the MRC committed itself to participating in the board processes and stressed that it never advocated violence, but the residents were forced to the streets by the desperation of having their concerns and voices being rebuffed by the authorities. This further underscores the proposition of Patel (2013) that an analysis of the narrative of the residents she interviewed indicates that the protests were an outcome of a failure in public consultation processes. This is summed up by Malebo's explanation of the rage of the residents: "the anger comes from the fact that we were never consulted".

The objective of this research was to investigate the Metsimaholo protest of 2013 as a case study of protest and as subaltern political communication. It is ignited by the experiences and realities of socio-economic and political marginalization, relative deprivation, exclusionary and alienating formal structures and processes of public participation and public political communication. This chapter attempts to draw conclusions and to make recommendations based on the findings of the research. The dissertation was structured in five chapters in pursuit of the objectives of the research. Chapter one introduced the subject, theme and focus of the research, enumerate key issues and questions as well as the aims and objectives of the research. Additionally, the chapter provided an overview of the research theory, paradigm, and method that the researcher chose to apply in the research.

Chapter two clarified the key concepts applied in the research, namely, protests, political communication, public participation, subaltern studies, and relative deprivation in the context of the research topic. Chapter three elaborated on the methodology, explaining critical theory, case study approach, document evidence and thematic analysis, the paradigm, approach, data collection method and data analysis method applied in the dissertation. Chapter four discussed and analysed the findings of the research and chapter five, the present chapter, draws conclusions and provide recommendations.

### 5.2 Research conclusions

The dominant narrative whereby protest is seen merely as the function of mob passion or the result are a collection of emotion-driven psychobiological factors based on subjective assumptions fails to see or highlight the role of inequitable power and social relations, the deficit in formal processes and structures of public participation and political communication and the role of ideology and agency inherent in popular protests.

However, the information elicited from secondary sources on the Metsimaholo Municipality protests of 2013, demonstrates that poor governance, poor delivery of services, poor communication around governance and administration of local delivery of services as well as poor public participation processes, represents some of the key issues behind protests by residents. Moreover, this case study on the Metsimaholo 2013 protests indicate that residents were not unaware of formal structures and processes of public participation and public consultation nor formal processes and structures of political engagement and political participation. On the contrary, like most residents across the country, the residents of Metsimaholo put their faith in formal processes and structures such as voting, petitions, submissions, public hearings, ward committees, public meetings and imbizos until their experiences lead them to the conclusion that these processes and structures are inadequate, ineffective, barren, and irrelevant. These findings support the theory that most of the time residents participate in protest as a deliberate political act of:

- (a) Challenging and exposing the deficit and injustices in formal structures and processes of local government politics and public participation
- (b) Communicating their concerns and demands
- (c) Applying pressure on the municipal and local government to deliver the services they desire.

These research findings suggest that protests in local government need to be understood as subaltern agency in action and is a form of political communication by communities whose voices and perspectives are throttled and muted by formal political and governance structures.

### 5.3 Research Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions of the research, the researcher recommends the following:

Municipalities, provinces, and the national government should conduct extensive and comprehensive research and public engagement to canvass the opinions of residents or civil society in the initiation stages before proposing or embarking on an intervention that will have far-reaching and substantial consequences on communities. The protocols, procedures and progressions of the public consultations, engagement and participation processes as well as appropriately determined deadlines should be explained in detail and communicated well in advance to communities through a variety of platforms and in all the widely spoken languages in the specific community or constituency. Public communication instruments such as charts or bulletins detailing planned community engagement, public consultation and public participation policies, programmes and processes should be published in public places such as municipality offices, government departments, libraries, theatres, and schools, business centres and shopping centres.

The Municipality Demarcation Board should embark on a critical review of its public consultation processes and develop improved principles, processes, and practices, informed by

a clear understanding of the deficit in its current principles, processes and practices. Municipalities should conduct an extensive research and critical review of its service delivery models and its community engagement mechanisms for effective public consultation, and public participation. Municipalities should use information derived from the research and review process to design models of service delivery and community engagement, consultation and participation that is attuned to local realities. Capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation should be embedded in all the stages of the service delivery model of a municipality. The local government should provide for and facilitate social dialogue on service standards, social accords on indicators of progress and community involvement in the evaluation and review of performance. Municipalities should work with section 21 institutions and civil society organizations to conduct public seminars and community workshops on the public consultation, engagement, and participation processes. Cooperatives Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) department and all relevant government departments, section 21 institutions and civil society organization should work on a critical review of local government public participation provisions with the view to enforce and improve public participation structures, processes and platforms currently provided by the regulatory and policy framework.

Based on this critical review of policies and programmes on public participation and community engagement, COGTA should develop guidelines in the form of a Guidebook of principles, processes and practices of community engagement and community participation in local government. This Guidebook- or charter or manifesto - should have clear implementation, monitoring, evaluation, assessment and review standards and performance indicators. Amongst others, this should include developing processes and practices that democratize structures such as ward-committees to be turned into genuine and credible community platforms and not party-political platforms. The local government, local businesses and community organizations should explore and experiment with innovative ways of resourcing and rolling out political literacy or civic education that is aimed at educating citizens about how various political systems, structures, institutions, and processes work and what their rights and responsibilities are.

There should be ongoing education and training that builds the capacity of community, civic, and social movements to independently and efficiently enact campaigns that build, advance, and protect genuine public participation and hold municipality leaders and officials accountable. Relevant Section 21 institutions and other democracy supporting institutions should design and facilitate political conscientization programmes aimed at arming citizens with the analytical tools to critically interpret and engage the statements and actions of various socio-political actors and the underlying ideo-political messages behind the conduct of socio-political actors at local government level.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

The important finding of this case study is that lack of consultation and public mistrust of public participation processes are cited by the protestors and the community organizations in Metsimaholo Municipality among of the key causes of the protest. The findings also indicate that resistance to merger with Ngwathe Local Municipality was also fuelled by the fact that Parys was viewed as the epicentre of the political and regional favouritism that cut out the

residents of Metsimaholo from municipality services, jobs, tenders, and other opportunities. Moreover, the residents of Metsimaholo assumed that the new municipality emanating out of the merger would be headquartered in Parys, a cite replete with controversies centred around the distribution of public power.

It is clear from the findings that the authorities' proposal for a merger took place in an environment characterised by social distance between the residents and the Metsimaholo Local Municipality. This social distance was accompanied by allegations of maladministration and corruption against the municipality, which the residents saw as the cause of collapsed infrastructure and poor service delivery. It was further exacerbated by the non-communication or miscommunication by the municipality on the merger and the fact that previous peaceful protests on service delivery yielded no positive response or results.

What is deciphered from the narrative of the residents is that they viewed protest as the most effective means of communicating their demands and needs and their political message to the government. This is underscored by several statements of the residents that suggest that the violence used in the protest was the outcome of the structural violence of an inept and non-responsive local government. In other words, the findings of the research affirm the notion of Protest as a political communication of the marginalised and estranged residents.

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