

Political Trust and Protest Behaviour in Local Government in the Free State

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this study, submitted in fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Governance and Political Transformation at the University of the Free State, is my own work and that I have not previously submitted this work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at another university or at another faculty at this university. I hereby cede copyright of this work to the University of the Free State.

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Date: 30 November 2021

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ABSTRACT

Political trust is understood as an attitude that reflects citizens' basic evaluative orientations of the political system, its institutions and incumbent authorities. This attitude of political trust is also found to have a significant bearing on how citizens relate with and behave towards their local political institutions and incumbent authorities. This research report pays specific attention to how low and/or declined levels of political trust foments protest action at a municipal level. To be precise, the relationship between political trust and protest action will be examined in the context of municipalities in the Free State Province, South Africa. The theoretical proposition of this report is that citizens in the Free State demonstrate low and/or declined levels of political trust and as a consequence, local communities respond by means of endless protest action across local municipalities. The accuracy of this proposition may signify a more profound challenge of a poor, ineffective and inefficient local government system in the province. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these observations are not unique to the Free State, but seem to characterise most municipalities across the country. If left unabated, low levels of trust and rising protest action may pose a serious risk to the stability and legitimacy of the entire local government system.

The following keywords were used in the search strategy: political trust, service delivery protests, community protests, good governance, and local government.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

We are concerned as a nation about declining trust in doctors, lawyers, merchants, and priests, and in politicians, teachers and scientists. (Cook 2001:1)

Trust is an essential, yet highly contentious subject matter in the politics of contemporary democratic societies. Consequently, trust has emerged as a subject of intense debate and interest among academics, researchers and even politicians. This deep-seated interest in the area of trust is explicitly evident from the extensive, multi-disciplinary and complex literature on this topic. Overall, the scholarly literature distinguishes two main variants of trust, namely political and social trust. On the one hand, political trust refers to the attitudes of trust that citizens direct towards the political system, its institutions and incumbent authorities.

On the other hand, social trust refers to the attitudes of trust that citizens express towards one another in any given society (Morris and Klesner 2010; Kestila-Kekkonen and Soderlund 2016). The importance of trust to how the democratic political system, government, and society function cannot be overstated. A society that displays the simultaneous presence of high levels of both variants is said to be characterised by a general climate of trust (Lenard 2015: 353). This research report pays specific attention to political trust and how it manifests at a local government level in a democratic society.

The extant literature indicates that political trust and democracy go hand in hand and the former is often referred to as a 'pro-democratic' social phenomenon (Listhaug and Ringdal 2008; Bonner 2009; Van der Meer 2017). However, and more recently, scholars have vigorously begun to challenge this standard assumption. These scholars provide an alternative perspective and argue that citizens' political distrust and not trust should be more beneficial to democratic development and consolidation (Mishler and Rose 1997; Lewicki et al. 2008; Van der Walle and Six 2014; Ao 2019). The main submission of this perspective is that high levels of political trust are on their own insufficient to ensure democratic stability and legitimacy. Democracy also seems to require a level of scepticism and/or even distrust by its citizens to function effectively and efficiently (Van der Walle and Six 2014). The main implication of this view is that both political trust and distrust can co-exist in relation to the same object of trust. The

two phenomena could very well play a complementary role in democratic regimes (McKnight and Chervany 2001). Nonetheless, and this research reports, a significant part of the literature still insists that there is a positive relationship between political trust and democracy.

A fundamental way to illustrate and explain the positive link between the two phenomena is through invoking the concept of political trust as a basis for comprehending a wide range of other relevant and important phenomena to democracy. Political trust has been found to be closely related to concepts such as good governance, political support, and political participation. The combined and accumulative effect of all these phenomena is argued to be integral to the development of resistant, durable and stable democratic regimes (Blind 2007; Hetherington and Husser 2012; Landmark 2016). Specifically, it is the effect of the link between political trust and these phenomena that should form the basis of any legitimate democratic political system. The effect of this link is crucial at all levels of government, including at the local government level (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Eskridge and Key 2016; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016).

The specific location of local government at the 'coal-face' of state-citizen interaction should make it the most approachable and accessible sphere of government. The proximity of local government to communities enables citizens to interact with local political institutions and incumbent authorities on a more regular basis (Eskridge and Key 2016). The theoretical expectation is that citizens are more likely to trust institutions of government that are the closest to them (Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). At the local level, political trust effectively enables citizens and connect them actively to the various political institutions that are structurally established to represent their interests, meet their legitimate expectations, and promote meaningful political participation (Bauer and Fatke 2014; Kong 2014). A trusted and trustworthy local government is fundamental to the consolidation of citizens' support for the political system in its entirety (Chen 2017). By implication, citizens' trust in local government may be a useful and decisive predictor of their trust in other spheres of government that are not that close and near to them (Blind 2007).

A significant part of the scholarly literature on political trust developed in reply to empirical observation and evidence that citizens' trust in government was on a steady

decline across many established democracies. These observations were first made in the United States (U.S.) in the 1960s and later across several countries in Europe (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974a; 1974b). Not surprisingly, scholars have also recently established that political trust in less developed democracies across the globe is also on a steep and rapid decline (Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Godefroidt et al. 2015; Matebesi 2017). The decline in political trust has been described as a “democratic malaise and/or a democratic disorder” (Tanguay 1999; Catterberg and Moreno 2006; Newton 2006). In light of the imperative role that local government fulfils as part of the overall system of government, the decline in political trust at this level emerges as a cause of concern.

The fomentation of citizens’ trust in local government may be affected and influenced by an interplay of several individual and contextual factors (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). This as may be, there is a common set of characteristics which seem to re-occur as decisive in the fomentation of citizens’ trust in local government across many democracies. This set of factors is best understood through two distinct and divergent approaches based on cultural and institutional theories respectively. Most scholars opt to explain political trust by using either one of the two theoretical approaches, but there are several exceptions (Mishler and Rose 2005; Godefroidt et al. 2015; Chu and Shen 2017; Donga and Kubler 2018; Matebesi 2017). A comprehensive understanding of how political trust foments requires the concurrent cultural and institutional approach. To explain this approach, Mishler and Rose (2005) refer to what they term as the ‘developmental or lifetime learning model’ to political trust.

The effect that political trust has on citizens’ political behaviour and participation is the most commonly studied aspect of the consequences of political trust in the political and social sciences (Gamson 1968; Gurr 1970; Muller et al. 1982; Dalton 2004; Norris et al. 2006; Braun and Hutter 2016; Landmark 2016; Matebesi 2017). The literature distinguishes two forms of political participation, namely conventional and non-conventional participation. Across many democracies, empirical evidence has pointed out that there is a widespread decline in conventional forms of political participation such as voting (Levi and Stoker 2000). However, and in contrast, the levels of citizen participation in non-conventional political activity such as protest, has been on a dramatic increase (Parvin 2018). Low voter turnout in elections and the emergence of

social movements, coupled with a rise in protest action, are critical symptoms pointing out citizens' loss of trust in government (Gray and Caul 2000; Levi and Stoker 2000).

Protest has been a focal area of systemic research since the 1960s and various factors have been found to play a critical role in its fomentation in different societal contexts. These factors are many and diverse, but may at best be understood from the perspective of an integrated application of three dominant approaches based on the Grievance, Political Opportunity Structure (POS), and Resource Mobilisation theories (Tarrow 1998; Mayer 2015). An interesting observation emerging out of a close analysis of these theories is that the factors that stimulate protest action are, more often than not, directly linked to the individual and contextual factors which are responsible for the decline in political trust. To this end, Braun and Hutter (2016) advises that a full and proper understanding of the relationship between political trust and protest action depends on an analysis of both cultural and institutional factors.

This research report pays specific attention to how low and/or declined levels of political trust foments protest action at a municipal level. To be precise, the relationship between political trust and protest action will be examined in the context of municipalities in the Free State province, South Africa. The theoretical proposition of this report is that citizens in the Free State demonstrate low and/or declined levels of political trust and as a consequence, local communities respond by means of endless protest action across local municipalities. The accuracy of this proposition may signify a more profound challenge of a poor, ineffective and inefficient local government system in the province. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these observations are not unique to the Free State, but seem to characterise most municipalities across the country. If left unabated, low levels of trust and rising protest action may pose a serious risk to the stability and legitimacy of the entire local government system.

1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement

1.2.1 Rationale

The South African society emerged out of centuries of authoritative colonial apartheid rule and made a historical transition to a new democratic dispensation in 1994. Prior to transition, most citizens had become justifiably sceptical and distrustful of the apartheid state and its government machinery. As a consequence, the era of transition was characterised by an immediate and urgent task of transforming society in general

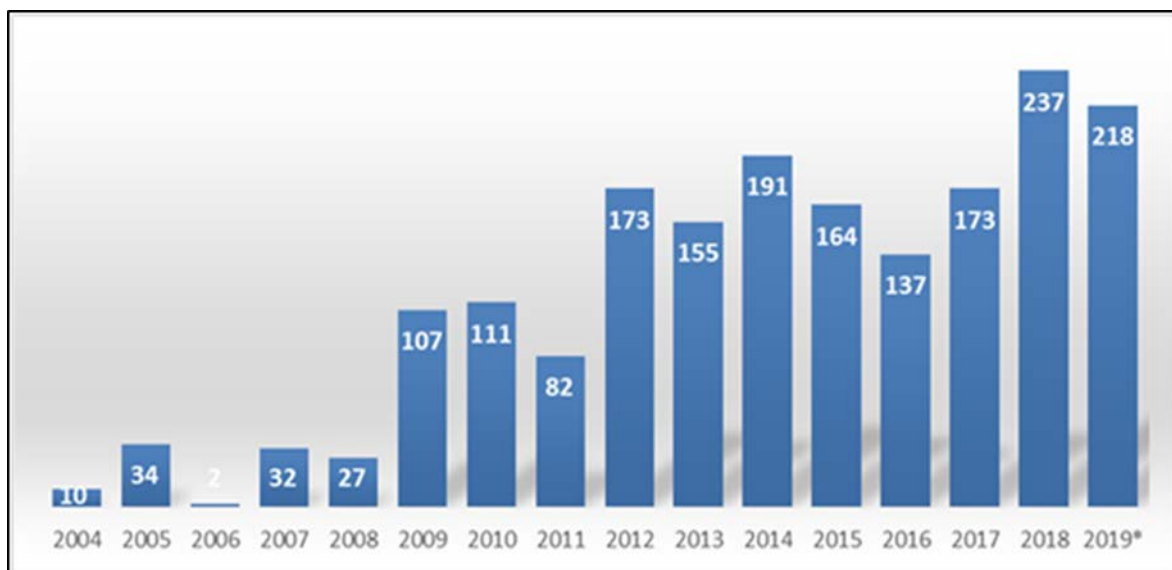
and the state in particular. To alter the status quo, the newly formed Government of National Unity (GNU) led by the African National Congress (ANC) had to undertake a complex and demanding task of state building. This task was to be carried out in synergy with democratic legal precepts, principles, aspirations, and values enshrined in the new Constitution adopted in 1996. A key and important aspect of state-building was the reconfiguration of local government into a single and unified system of governance, as opposed to the racially divided and fragmented system under apartheid (RSA 1998; Presidency 2014). Local government had to be transformed from a “racist, subservient, exploitative and illegitimate system into a people oriented” and developmental local government system (De Visser 2005:58).

Over the years, the ANC-led government registered significant progress in the overall transformation of the state and society. Despite these efforts, the sphere of local government is presently faced with a plethora of critical challenges. Almost daily, the media reports on the poor state of local government, which may be observed through the adverse audit findings and outcomes of municipalities as communicated by the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA/AG). To be precise, the conclusion of these audit reports points out an undesirable state of affairs in local government, which is generally characterised by an embodiment of ineffective, inefficient and dysfunctional municipalities. The challenges confronting local government have paralysed the capacity and ability of municipalities to fulfil inherent constitutional and developmental objectives (Madumo 2015). These challenges are complex, manifold, and structural and systemic (Marais et al. 2008).

Municipalities in South Africa have an inherent responsibility to respond to the historical and persistent structural problems relating to the so-called ‘triple challenges’ of unemployment, poverty and inequality. In addition, municipalities are simultaneously characterised by a combination of several systemic challenges which include, inter alia; maladministration; lack of transparency, accountability and responsiveness; inadequate provision of basic services; non-compliance with law and policy regulations; poor financial management and fiscal control; low revenue collection; real and/or perceived corruption; poor political oversight; skills shortages; perceptions of incompetent and incapacitated bureaucracy; perceived and/or real undue political interference in decision making; ineffective political participation; and

inefficient and distant ward councillors (Marais et al. 2008; Nleya 2011; Madumo 2015; Matebesi 2017).

The cumulative effect of these structural and systemic challenges at municipal level points to a fundamental problem of poor governance. It seems that local communities have responded through endless protest action. The extant scholarship illustrates that protest activity in the country had subdued in the first decade of its democracy but later re-emerged in the early stages of the second. At present, it would not be far-fetched to describe many townships as indefinite scenes of intensified protest action (Marais et al. 2008; Ngwane 2011; Nleya 2011; Matebesi 2017). From 2004, protest activity over a wide range of service delivery and governance concerns began to emerge in several communities. As indicated below (Figure 1.1), between the years 2004 and 2019, the country had experienced over 1 800 major protests linked to service delivery and governance issues.



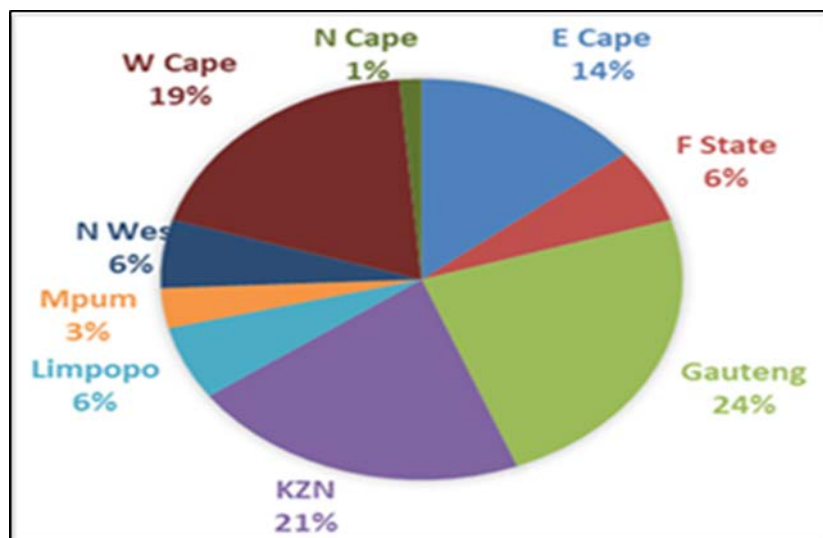
Source: Municipal IQ (2020)

Figure 1. 1: Major Service delivery protests, by year (2004–2019)

Figure 1.1 indicates that except for 2011, the country experienced at least over 100 protests each year in the last decade, with an overall average of 175 protests a year. The year 2018 reached an all-time annual record of 237 protests. It can be seen that in 2018 and 2019, the number of service delivery protests doubled to over 200 protests each year, respectively. Based on these statistics, between the periods January 2018 to September 2019, there was an average of approximately 19 major service delivery protests each month. This indicates a consistent and persistent trend in the

popularity of protests as a mode of participation for expressing political preferences, demands and dissatisfaction.

Some of the country's first service delivery protests took place in the Free State at Intabazwe and Phumelela in 2004 and 2005, respectively (Atkinson 2007; Marais et al. 2008; Twala 2014). A glimpse at various media, academic and organisational reports indicate that municipalities in the Free State have had their fair share in local community protests in the past decade. Most of these protests take place in black townships and have often turned uncontrollable and violent. In some cases, the South African Police Service (SAPS) has resorted to the use of force to control these protests and at times leading to fatalities (Sowetan 2011; SABC 2018a; 2019a; News24 2020). In 2018, the Municipal IQ reported that the Free State recorded the highest number of major service delivery protests in the country (Municipal IQ 2019; Bloemfontein Courant 2019a). The reasons for these protests are diverse, but are mainly mobilised around the failure of municipalities to respond adequately to the normative expectations of local communities. Figure 1.2 below, indicates the percentage of service delivery protest incidents by province in 2019.



Source: Municipal IQ (2020)

Figure 1. 2: Service delivery protests, by province 2019

Figure 1.2 indicates that the Free State accounted for 6% of the overall protests around the country in 2019 and this recorded a 4% decrease from the statistics recorded for 2018 (Municipal IQ 2019; 2020). The increased incidents of service delivery protests in the Free State can be observed across the five regions of the province, namely the District Municipality, Thabo Mofutsanyana District and Fezile Dabi District Municipality.

These regions comprise a total of 18 local municipalities and one metropolitan municipality.

1.2.2 Problem Statement

The importance of this research report arises under two critical conditions which seem to characterise local government in the Free State. Firstly, the voter turnout of the ANC as the ruling political party in local government elections (LGEs) has been on a decline in many municipalities across the province. Secondly, the Free State has experienced endless local community protests across all its regions. This characterisation of the Free State could be prima facie evidence of low and/or declined levels of political trust at the municipal level. These conditions raise critical concerns about the state of the province's local government, which seems to be characterised by poor, ineffective, inefficient and dysfunctional municipalities. In the latest reports of the AGSA on local government, municipalities in the Free State were described as having reached a stage of total collapse (AGSA 2019; 2020). To this effect, several municipalities in the Free State have been placed under administration in terms of section 139 of the Constitution as a reaction to these municipalities failing to execute their constitutional and legislative mandates. The latest municipality to add to the list of those placed under administration is the only metropolitan municipality in the province, Mangaung (Sowetan 2019). Poor performance, financial mismanagement, maladministration and the lack of service delivery have been cited as the most pervasive and persistent challenges.

1.3 Aim and Objective

This research report's main aim and objective is to describe how political trust foments protest action in a municipal setting. This report seeks to establish whether the increased incidents of community protests directed at municipalities across the Free State are an indication of a decline in citizens' level of trust in local government.

The following hypotheses were central to this report:

Hypothesis 1: The more citizens are dissatisfied with the functioning of a municipality, the less trust they have in local political institutions and incumbent authorities.

Hypothesis 2: The less trust citizens have in a municipality, the more likely they are to engage and participate in protest action.

Hypothesis 3: The increased incidents of protests in local communities across the Free State are an indication that citizens' trust in the municipality is low and/or in decline.

1.4 Research Questions

In pursuit of the research aim and objective, the following questions guided this report:

Question 1: What individual and contextual level factors are the most dominant in the fomentation of political trust at a local government?

Question 2: What are the most dominant causes leading to increased incidents of protest action at a local government level?

Question 3: Are protests an indication of low and/or declined levels of citizens' trust in local political institutions and incumbent political authorities?

1.5 Research Method and Design

Research is a complex and complicated process of scientific enquiry which unfolds in several stages or phases (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2018). To meet the minimum standard of scientific objectivity, a study must be underpinned by an adequately outlined research design. Research design refers to a detailed plan on how a study will be conducted to reach its logical conclusion (Bhattacharjee 2012). To this end, research design consists of a comprehensive exposition of the techniques, methods and processes employed to conduct a scientific and objective study (Devos and Fouche 1998).

A suitable research design is a pre-condition for conducting a scientific and objective study both at a theoretical and empirical level (Bhattacharjee 2012). A scientific theoretical study concerns itself with concepts, assumptions and hypothesis related to social phenomena and the interactions that emerge between them (Bhattacharjee 2012: 3). The research design in this report falls under the qualitative approach. Specifically, a theoretical document analysis was adopted in order to examine the relationship between political trust and protest action at a municipal level. This research design and approach enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for adequately responding to the research aim and objective, hypothesis and questions set out above.

In addition, this report adopted a deductive approach to research in order to formulate general assumptions and devise theoretical propositions on the link between political

trust and protest action. Two aims of research are evident in this report. Firstly, the aim of this research was correlational, meaning that it investigated the existence of either a positive or negative relationship or association between different phenomena. Secondly, the objective of research was explanatory in that it sought to explain 'how and why' different phenomena link and interact and the consequences thereof (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2018).

1.5.1 Document Analysis

The qualitative document analysis is arguably one of the most common and frequently used methods of research in the political and social sciences (Wesley 2010). It has been used frequently as a reliable research method and approach in several research articles, reports and journals (Bowen 2009). Document analysis is defined and explained as the process of:

[B]ringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data through reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. (De Vos et al 2011: 397)

A document analysis aims at establishing the real meaning of documents and the contribution of such meaning to the topic of research (Bowen 2009). By implication, the objective of a qualitative document analysis is to ensure that the researcher is able to analyse, interpret and explain documents in a way that proper meaning and understanding of phenomena can be extracted. The extraction and communication of the essence of what the data reveal involve an element of data interpretation. As such, a qualitative document analysis is textual, iterative, hermeneutic, and subjective in nature (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2018: 229-232). The qualitative document analysis was based on an extensive review of the literature. The document analysis and literature review as methods of qualitative research are mutually reinforcing and have far-reaching benefits for scientific research. The most evident and notable advantage of such a combination is that the researcher was enabled to draw significant insight on the subject-matter under scrutiny.

1.5.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive review of relevant documents covering a specific topic is crucial for successful research and academic projects. Therefore, the search strategy employed in retrieving relevant documents was of vital importance to the reliability and credibility

of research. In this report, the search strategy was employed to ensure the extraction of relevant information from academic books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and reports from both government and various private organisations.

The following keywords were used in the search strategy: political trust, service delivery protests, community protests, good governance, and local government.

1.5.3 Data Selection

The document analysis is an efficient method of research that “requires data selection, instead of data collection” (Bowen 2009: 6). The documents that may be subjected to analysis and evaluation in a qualitative document analysis may take a variety of forms. Both printed and electronic documents may be systematically analysed and evaluated in a qualitative document analysis (Bowen 2009:290). This research report relied and depended mainly on written sources of data. For the narrative review, the documents that were used in this study included, academic books, journal articles, organisational or institutional documents, newspaper articles, legislation and government policy. The data selected and extracted were organised, processed and analysed thoroughly to extricate relevant findings. The data selection assisted the researcher to theoretically explain the facts and minimise any biases around different phenomena.

1.5.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The historical, thematic and theoretical analysis was used to identify emerging and recurring themes in the data. Thereafter, data with positive and negative themes were contrasted (Creswell 2009).

1.5.5 Reliability and Credibility

Merriam (1988) argues that documents, irrespective of their type and form, can assist the researcher to uncover and develop relevant meaning, understanding, and insight on the topic of research. It is obligatory to ensure that the documents and data selected are reliable, credible and authentic (Bowen 2009:33). Reliability and credibility are of crucial importance for conducting proper and effective scientific research.

1.6 Layout and Design

This research report consisted of five chapters.

Chapter 1 served as an introduction and provided a general overview of the contents of this report. This chapter provides a background to the study and sets out the

rationale and problem statement, the aim, objective, hypothesis and the questions driving the research report. Additionally, this chapter provided an outline of the research design and methodology employed to reach the logical conclusion of the report.

Chapter 2 consists of an extensive review of the literature on political trust and protest action. This is done in order to highlight some of the important perspectives, themes and debates dominant in the characterisation of the relationship between the two phenomena in the context of democratic regimes. This chapter reviewed the literature on the causes of political trust and its consequences in relation to protest behaviour at a local government level. Several individual and contextual factors considered dominant in the fomentation on political trust were discussed and linked to the stimulation of protest action.

Chapter 3 sets the political, economic and social conditions that characterise the broader South African landscape. This was done to establish a basis through which the relationship between political trust and protest action could be examined and analysed in the context of the Free State. This was important, primarily on the understanding that this relationship in the context of the Free State cannot be comprehended in isolation of the broader conditions prevalent in the country. This chapter discussed the operation of the various institutional and cultural factors (as identified in the second chapter) and contextualised these in relation to citizens' political trust and its impact on their protest behaviour.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of protest action in the Free State and examined its causes and consequences in line with the established theoretical framework. The chapter analyses protest across the five regions of the Free State. This was done in order to establish whether the pervasiveness of protest is indeed an outcome and consequence of low and/or declined levels of political trust in the province.

Chapter 5 concludes the report and provided a discussion on the key observations and findings of the report in a synthesised manner. This chapter places the study in perspective in relation to the aims, objectives, questions and hypothesis set out in the first chapter of this report.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Citizens are losing faith in current leaders, elites, and institutions and taking to the streets in frustration and often disgust. (Banner et al. 2020)

The main topic of this research report, its associated concepts and themes are inherently complex and multi-faceted. In order to illustrate how political trust foments protest action in a municipal setting, this chapter establishes a comprehensive and conceptual theoretical framework founded on an extensive review of the literature. The framework aims to set out the parameters from which the relationship between the two phenomena in the context of democratic local government may be examined and analysed. This chapter sets out the basis from which adequate responses to the aim, objective, questions and hypothesis of this research report may be formulated. Political trust is understood as an attitude that reflects citizens' basic evaluative orientations of the political system, its institutions and incumbent authorities.

This attitude of political trust is also found to have a significant bearing on how citizens relate with and behave towards their local political institutions and incumbent authorities. For this research report, and in line with the developmental or lifetime learning model, the following set of individual and contextual factors influencing the fomentation of political trust are identified and examined: (1) Social Capital; (2) Socio-demographic Traits; (3) Institutional Performance; (4) Institutional Design; and (5) Institutional Trustworthiness. These factors are found, individually and jointly, to impact the fomentation of citizens' trust in local government and their protest behaviour. However, the extent of the influence that individual factors may vary, depending on the country's political, economic and social context.

Political participation action is often highlighted as the best example of how the attitudes of trust may impact citizens' behavioural patterns. Protest action is one of the many repertoires of public participation at the disposal of citizens in democratic regimes used to express their political preferences, demands and dissatisfaction. The fundamental proposition of this research report is that low and/or declined levels of political trust as indicated by pervasive protest action are *prima facie* evidence of a poor, ineffective and inefficient local government system. This chapter will illustrate that the link between political trust and protest action is based on the operation of a

common set of factors that impact on both phenomena. These factors derive from the cultural and institutional conditions that operate at both an individual and contextual level across many democratic regimes.

2.2 The Conceptualisation of Political Trust

2.2.1 Political Trust: A Sub-Concept of Broad Trust

Trust appears to be a common and straightforward concept that can easily be understood and comprehended. The simplicity of the concept can be attributed to the fact that it is often used by most people in their daily conversations and social interactions. To this effect, trust is loosely attributed to several moral and ethical standards such as honesty, integrity and reliability, which individuals are expected to possess and uphold in their dealings with others (Jamil and Askvik 2016: 648). These standards are integral to the development of different trust relationships in society and an individual who displays them is considered to be trustworthy. However, the literature has over the years developed and expanded the meaning of trust beyond the application of these standards in their ordinary and daily usage (Barber 1983; Baier 1986; Mayer et al. 1995; Rousseau et al. 1998; Levi and Stoker 2000). As succinctly put by Hetherington and Husser (2012), trust is now considered a much broader social construct with its reach even greater than previously thought and comprehended.

A close reading of the literature reveals that the concept of trust has evolved to be somewhat complex and contested in nature. Trust has been invoked in countless studies and investigations by scholars in various disciplines across different societal contexts (Rotter 1967; Fukuyama 1995; Mayer et al. 1995; Hardin 1998; Rousseau et al. 1998; McKnight and Chervany 2001; McMurphy 2013). For an example, psychologists consider trust to be a function of an individuals' internal cognitive process and a reflection of their personality (Rotter 1967; McKnight and Chervany 2001; Bachman and Inkpen 2007). Sociologists' shifts focus from the individual and draw attention to the social structural aspects of trust (Coleman 1990; McKnight and Chervany 2001). In almost a similar way, political scientists focus on the political system as an object of trust. Political trust is understood as an outcome of citizens' basic evaluative orientations of the political system and its components (Morris and Klesner 2010).

The differences in the conceptualisation of trust illustrate that the concept has been a subject of extensive multi-disciplinary attention. Consequently, trust emerges as a multi-dimensional and rather complex subject matter. Trust has been evaluated through different tools and standards of analysis and which at times, have been found to be incompatible and contradictory (McKnight and Chervany 2001; Bauer 2015). The multi-disciplinary attention placed on trust has resulted in the absence of academic consensus on the nature, form and content of the concept as a whole. McMurphy (2013: 1) illustrates that the absence of such academic consensus arises out of the very fact that trust has been described in various ways and is said to be “an emotion, a behaviour, a rationale decision, a leap of faith, a neurobiological expression”, or even a reflection of a combination of all or some of these aspects. By implication, it has been almost impossible to develop an integrated model for defining the concept and as a result, there is no single and universally accepted definition of trust. The concept of trust has acquired several and different strands of definition and meaning (Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2013).

The multiple meanings and interpretations of trust have “resulted in an unimpressive record on the part” of literature to articulate its meaning and nature coherently (Misztal 1996: 13-14). The meaning of trust is deemed to be elusive, ambiguous, vague and demarcated by a considerable lack of conceptual clarity (Luhmann 1988; McKnight and Chervany 2001; Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2013; McMurphy 2013). Some scholars have avoided the demanding and daunting academic task of formulating a universal definition of trust (Misztal 1996; Seligson 1997). McKnight and Chervany (2001) argue that the fact that some scholars have declined to respond to such invitation is an affirmation of the difficulties involved in such a task. As a result, Castaldo et al. (2010) issue a stern warning to scholars and researchers not to resort to the use of too simplistic definitions in an attempt to understand a highly complex phenomenon.

Despite the conclusive evidence of these definitional limitations, several definitions are provided for in the literature and the following two are considered useful in the context of this research report. The first definition is proffered by Mayer et al. (1995), who define trust as

the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the

trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party. (Mayer et al. 1995: 712)

The second definition is proffered by Offe (1999), who conceptualises trust as a belief and states that

[t]rust is the belief concerning the action that is to be expected from others. The belief refers to probabilities that others will do certain things or refrain from doing certain things, which in either case affects the wellbeing of the holder of the belief, and possibly the well-being of others or a relevant collectivity. (Offe 1999: 47)

The above definitions reveal several salient and interdependent elements that characterise the concept of trust. Political trust is an integral sub-concept of broad trust and as a result, it should be understood in line with these elements. The following elements are briefly discussed, namely belief, risk and reliance. The importance of each of these elements to the constitution of a sound comprehension of the meaning and conceptualisation of political trust cannot be over-emphasised.

2.2.1.1 Belief

Trust is considered to be a belief held by the trusting party in a trust relationship and refers to the unquestioning belief in something or someone (Baier 1986; Offe 1999; Herbert 2006). Belief has been described as the trusting party taking a leap of faith by believing in the trusted party (Mollering 2006). This leap of faith taken by the trusting party is based on the expectation that the trusted party will not intentionally or unintentionally cause harm or act contrary to their interests. As Newton (2001: 3) eloquently puts it, trust is “a belief that others, at worst, will not knowingly and willingly do you harm, and at best, will act in your interests”. This belief of the trusting party is placed in the future actions of the trusted party and the outcomes of such actions are not known with certainty.

2.2.1.2 Risk

The uncertainty on the part of the future actions of the trusted party invokes the second element of trust, namely, risk (Basher 2017). Risk is one of the most commonly discussed elements of trust and, as argued by Johnson-George and Swap (1982: 1306), is applicable to all trust relationships. In trust relationships, risk arises out of the trusting party’s vulnerability, which is based on the uncertain nature of the outcomes of the future actions of the trusted party (Mayer et al. 1995; Bohnet 2008). The possibility that the future actions of the trusted party may inflict harm or loss creates a

situation of risk for the trusting party (Coleman 1990; Baier 1986). If the trusting party is certain about the outcomes of the trusted party's actions, then there is no risk involved and, by implication, no trust relationship may evolve.

2.2.1.3 Reliance and Interdependency

The third element of trust draws attention to the reliance or interdependency that emerges between the parties to the trust relationship (Rousseau et al. 1998; Bachmann and Inkpen 2007). For trust relationships, interdependency means that the interests of the trusting party cannot be realised without relying on the trusted party's actions (Rousseau et al. 1998). The trusting party has a belief that the trusted party not only has the intention, but also the necessary capacity to fulfil trust and deliver positive outcomes through their actions. It has been argued that the capacity of the trusted party to materialise the terms and conditions of the trust relationship is in part based on their trustworthiness (Levi and Stoker 2000).

2.2.2 Political Trust: Definitions and Meaning

Political trust is a sub-concept of broad trust and the former is deeply rooted and embedded in the latter. Political trust is a highly contested subject in the literature. Similar to the concept of broad trust, its meaning is per definition considered elusive, vague and ambiguous (Hooghe and Zmerli 2011; Hamm et al. 2019). As Schneider (2017) contends, the challenge is that scholars seldom attempt to provide clear and unambiguous definitions of political trust, but rather position it as a 'proxy' for other concepts such as legitimacy and political support. Hooghe and Zmerli (2011) argue that researchers have not made significant strides in defining political trust and have overly relied on standard Trust in Government survey questions without interrogating their meaning and validity. Nonetheless, some scholars have made key interventions in the literature and provide a level of clarity on the meaning of political trust. The following two definitions proffered by Gamson (1968) and Miller and Listhaug (1990) adequately clarify the definitional parameters from which political trust may be understood. Respectively, and in line with the elements of trust explored above, these authors define political trust as the:

Probability ... that the political system (or some part of it) will produce preferred outcomes even if left unattended. (Gamson 1968: 54)

Judgment of the citizenry that the system and the political incumbents are responsive, and will do what is right, even in the absence of constant scrutiny. (Miller and Listhaug 1990: 358).

Both these definitions suggest that the party who is doing the trusting does so without having to scrutinise or even monitor the behaviour of the trusted party (Levi and Stoker 2000). The belief that the trusting party holds is sufficient to enable them to let go of any suspicion and to take the necessary risk by placing their trust in another. An important observation from both these definitions is that political trust is described as an outcome of citizens' basic and rational evaluative orientations on whether the political system, or some aspect of it, is producing the desirable outputs (Miller 1974; Miller and Listhaug 1990; Hetherington 2004). The outcomes produced by the political system are measured against citizens' expectations. In this sense, political trust is inextricably linked to how well and to what extent the political system responds to citizens' normative expectations (Hetherington 2004).

The centrality of citizens' expectations in the fomentation of political trust raises an important question, namely, what informs these normative expectations held by citizens? A diverse range of factors has been identified as forming the basis of citizens' normative expectations. Blind (2007:4) argues that political trust arises against the expectation that the political system, specifically its institutions and incumbent authorities, will be "promise-keeping, efficient, fair and honest". Similarly, Sierd et al. (2008) argue that citizens expect the intentions and actions of the government always to be "ethical, fair and competent", as well as always responsive, act in good faith and consider their best interests by intervening swiftly and efficiently in solving their challenges (Kim 2010b; Bauer and Fatke 2014).

It is of crucial importance to note that expectations will not be the same for each and every citizen in every social context (Bouckaert and Van de Walle 2003). This is the case primarily because citizens in different countries are concerned and preoccupied with a different set of issues that informs the basis of their expectations. As Christensen and Laegreid (2005: 492) neatly sum it up, "for some people in some countries, problems with receiving mail or with the tax authorities may be of greater significance than problems of gaining access to social or employment services". The diverse and complex nature of citizens' expectations means that political trust is highly normative and subjective (Schneider 2017). The extent to which citizens will trust

political institutions and incumbent authorities is context dependent and will differ from one country to the next, based on the different expectations of the citizens (Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Seabo and Molefe 2016).

2.2.3 The Main Variants of Trust

The relationship between political and social trust has been a subject of much theoretical and empirical debate in the scholarly literature. Most scholarly accounts on political trust pay close attention to this relationship and two contradictory perspectives have emerged. The first perspective emphasises the finding that political and social trust are altogether two distinct, unrelated and separate forms of trust (Inglehart 1999a; Newton and Norris 2000; Putnam 2000; Yang et al. 2014). As Newton (1999: 180) succinctly puts it, the two variants of trust “are not necessarily related, and may not” at all be closely related under any circumstances. This perspective is neatly summarised by Yang et al. (2014: 238) who refer to it as the “independence thesis”.

The main submission of the ‘independence thesis’ is that the association between the two variants of trust does not exist, or where it does, it is not significant to enforce any meaningful impact (Yang et al. 2014). Newton (2001: 203), emphasises that “one can predict virtually nothing about a person’s trust in other people from their trust in government”. The independence thesis is premised on the idea that the factors that may influence each of the variants of trust are logically quite different and independent, both in form and content (Newton 2000; Putnam 2000). The main implication of the independence thesis is that trust is found to be ‘wholly exogenous’ to any influence from the politics prevalent in a given society (Mishler and Rose 2001).

Contrastingly, and what seems by far the most supported perspective in the literature, the two variants of trust are closely related, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing (Almond and Verba 1963; Levi and Stoker 2000; Blind 2007). Political trust does not emerge, develop, and subsequently exist on its own in a vacuum, and as such, is intrinsically related to social trust (Blind 2007). The two variants of trust are interrelated and interdependent, and it may not be possible to separate them completely. The concern for proponents of this perspective is not so much the existence of a link between the variants of trust, but rather the causal direction of such relationship. The contentious theoretical and empirical question at the centre of this important debate

is: which one of the two variants of trust influences the other? In other words, does political trust influence the development of social trust or vice versa?

The response to this question in the literature is not straightforward and has often proven to be contradictory and ambiguous. Two dominant positions on the question of causality can be deduced. Some scholars have found social trust to influence citizens' trust in political institutions and incumbent authorities (Almond and Verba 1965; Putnam 1993; Newton and Norris 2000; Uslaner 2002). The main thesis of this proposition is that political trust is an extension of social trust and citizens' trust in government cannot develop independently of their trust towards one another (Zmerli and Newton 2008). An important reverse implication of this perspective is that citizens' political trust has no meaningful impact on their social trust (Yang 2012; Zhong 2014). However, and in contrast, the second position advanced in the scholarly literature proposes that "the causal arrow may well be pointing in the opposite direction" and it is political trust that influences social trust (Yang et al. 2014). A trusted and trustworthy government may very well be in a position to foster and engender social trust within a particular community (Levi and Stoker 2000; Chi et al. 2013; Yang et al. 2014). The central thesis of this perspective is that social trust is a "product of democracy, rather than a cause of it" (Muller and Seligson 1994).

2.3 Political Trust and Democracy

Political trust became a focal and contentious area of research since the first observations of its decline had been reported in the U.S. The conclusion of the scholarly literature at the time was that the decline in citizens' political trust was an anomaly and posed an imminent threat to the very existence of democracy (Almond and Verba 1963; Citrin 1974; Miller 1974). From this viewpoint, the standard position in the literature assumed that political trust is positively related to democracy and the two phenomena go hand in hand. As a consequence, political trust has mainly been conceptualised as a 'pro-democratic' social phenomenon and a compulsory criterion for the successful development of stable democratic regimes. The importance of political trust to democracy has been emphasised by several scholars who provide different reasons to make the point (Almond and Verba 1963; Jamil and Askvik 2015; Bauer 2015; Lenard 2015; Dalton 2016; Citrin and Stoker 2018).

Democracy depends on stores of trust from the citizenry, primarily because it is a political system based on voluntary compliance. Democratic regimes cannot rely on coercion or force to secure citizens' compliance with laws, rules, and practices that are considered fundamental to maintaining social order (Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Lenard 2008; Van de Walle and Six 2014). High levels of political trust in a democratic society are fundamental for sustainable political, economic and social development (Jamil and Askvik 2015). Effectively, political trust actively enables the government to navigate effortlessly around the complexities associated with the functioning of contemporary democratic regimes (Bachmann and Inkpen 2007; Ulsaner 2012). However, scholars have found and reported on some important variations in the patterns of citizens' trust in government across different democratic regimes.

An important variation is based on the finding that political trust is usually higher in established and developed democracies, as opposed to new and less developed regimes. To this effect, citizens' trust in government is found to be higher in countries with longer democratic traditions (Norris 1999; Torcal 2003; Dalton 2016). Torcal (2003) suggests that a country's "democratic history" is an important factor when analysing individual and contextual differences in citizens' trust at a country level. However, it is important to note that this finding should not be interpreted to mean that citizen's trust in new and less developed regimes is of no significant value. In fact, political trust has been of more fundamental importance to newly established regimes that have recently transitioned to democracy, such as the post-colonial African states (Godefroidt et al. 2015; Landmark 2016; Matebesi 2017).

The period of transition from authoritative rule to a new democratic dispensation requires of governments to confront several political, economic and social challenges (Mishler and Rose 2001; Landmark 2016). In such volatile conditions, the likelihood is that the transition to democracy will be followed by periods of poor and ineffective government performance (Mishler and Rose 2001). The period of poor performance is inevitable as the new government learns to grapple with the complexities associated with governing through newly established democratic systems, institutions and processes. Mishler and Rose (2005) characterise this period as the 'process of trial and error'. The expectation is that this situation will inevitably lead to low and/or declined levels of citizens' trust in the new government. Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasise that citizens' support for democratic principles, values and practices can

be said to be almost mandatory during this period (Seligson and Carrion 2002; Mishler and Rose 2005).

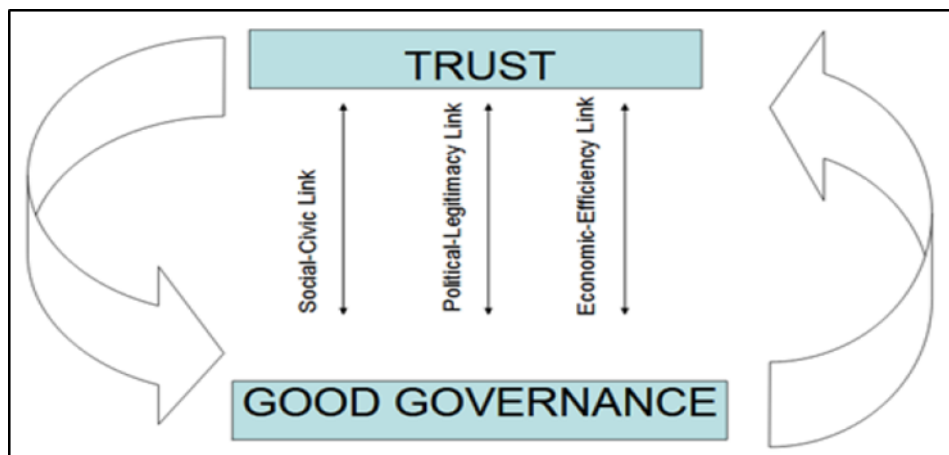
It is evidently clear that democratic regimes, both developed and less developed, require high levels of trust and support from its citizenry in order to function in an effective and efficient manner. Citizens' trust in the government is a necessary precondition for the development of stable democratic regimes. By implication, it has become almost impossible to ignore the concept of political trust when evaluating the health and status of democracies (Chingwete 2016). Political trust has been invoked as a basis for comprehending a wide range of other relevant phenomena important to democracy such as good governance, political support, and political participation. All these concepts are considered integral to the development of resistant and durable democratic regimes and, considered together, contribute directly to the stability and legitimacy of the political system (Bonner et al. 2009; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Hetherington and Husser 2012; Van der Walle and Six 2014; Landmark 2016). A democratic regime that demonstrates capacity to implement good governance strategies, mobilises citizens' political support and fosters positive political participation will likely attract stores of trust from its citizenry.

2.3.1 Political Trust and Good Governance

Good governance is a critical and indispensable condition for effective and efficient rule in contemporary democratic societies. The ability of the state to govern in a good way is a key indicator of a working and successful democracy (Landmark 2016). Governance may be described as a specific way that the state and its institutions organise themselves in relation to society to make decisions effectively; formulate and implement policy; manage available resources; and mediate between citizens' competing interests (Yousaf et al. 2016). Good democratic governance is ideal and necessary at every level of government and is carried out in synergy with a legal framework that establishes legal obligations, duties and rights conferred on both the state and its citizenry (Cheema 2010). Governance involves an interaction between several institutions, actors, systems, rules, traditions, procedures and practices that regulate the functions and operations of the political system.

Good governance is primarily premised on and requires a deliberate, consistent and harmonious process of interaction between the government, civil society and the

private sector (Blind 2007; Beshi and Kaur 2019). As an illustration of this interaction, the government has the responsibility of ensuring the provision of certain goods and services to its citizens and to create an enabling and conducive environment for business to thrive. Civil society promotes and facilitates engagement between citizens and the government, while the private sector operates to create jobs for citizens and generate revenue for the government (Cheema 2010). Based on this understanding, Blind (2007) identifies at least three links characterising good governance and which are equally fundamental to the fomentation of political trust. Figure 2.1 illustrates the three links, namely the (1) social-civic link, (2) political-legitimacy link, and (3) economic-efficiency link.



Source: Blind (2007)

Figure 2. 1: Political Trust and Good Governance Links

Research has established that a positive link exists between political trust and good governance in the context of democracy (Yousaf et al. 2016; Basher 2017; Beshi and Kaur 2019). Blind (2007) succinctly points out that good governance operates and functions as an “indispensable corollary in the trust culture” of a society. While the relationship between the two phenomena has been well canvassed in the literature, a debate has arisen on the causal direction of such relationship. Does good governance lead to increased levels of political trust, or is it the other way around?

On the one hand, good governance is considered to generate and increase citizens’ trust in government (Zhong 2014). By implementing good governance strategies and practices, a government is able to build and improve on meeting the needs of citizens and, consequently, increasing their trust in the government (Yousaf et al. 2016). On the other hand, scholars propose that political trust leads to the promotion of good

governance (Braithwaite and Levi 1998; Hetherington 2005). Political trust has been described as the main motor propelling good governance in democratic regimes (Hetherington 2005). In view of these contradictory perspectives, the literature seems to conclude that political trust is both an input into and output of good governance (Blind 2007; Popovski 2010; Yousaf et al. 2019).

Political trust has been described as the 'sine qua non' of good governance (Blind 2007). In other words, while political trust leads to the establishment, implementation and promotion of good governance strategies and practices, the latter in turn generates citizens' trust in government. Good governance is a product of an interplay between a multiplicity of factors. Nonetheless, the literature places emphasis on three universal and overarching factors that need to be present for good governance to exist, namely, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Not only are these factors important and crucial for good governance but are equally considered critical for the fomentation of citizens' trust in government (Grimmelikhuijsen 2013; Porumbescu 2015).

2.3.2 Political Trust and Political Support

Political support is an important building block for the existence, development and subsequent consolidation of democratic societies. To this extent, citizens' support for the government should continuously be mobilised and preserved to achieve genuine representative democracy (Bowser 2001; Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Lenard 2015; Van der Meer 2017). Most accounts of political trust in the literature draw on the concept of political support, which is considered a fundamental and direct catalyst for its conceptualisation (Levi and Stoker 2000; Lenard 2015; Van der Meer 2017). Theoretically, the two concepts have been used synonymously in the literature and could easily be mistaken to be the same. Christensen and Laegreid (2005: 489) state that the concept of political support is "pretty close to what many authors" refer to as political trust. Based on this understanding, political trust is considered to be inextricably linked to political support and the former cannot be investigated and understood in isolation from the latter.

Political support is understood as favourable (positive) or unfavourable (negative) attitudes of support that citizens direct towards a specific political object (Easton 1975: 436). Easton (1975) neatly draws a key distinction between two forms of support,

namely specific and diffuse political support. Specific political support is understood as the favourable or unfavourable attitudes of citizens' support directed towards incumbent political authorities (Easton 1975). This form of support is an outcome of citizens' evaluation of incumbent political authorities and is generated in line with citizens' levels of satisfaction derived from the output of the latter's performance (Easton 1975: 437). Stated differently, specific support is generated by what the incumbent authorities do (output) and the channels (process) they follow to achieve their policy objectives (Christensen and Laegreid 2005).

There is consensus in the literature that specific support is characterised by a tendency of inconsistency and, as such, is not stable and constantly fluctuates from time to time (Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Marien and Hooghe 2011; Bertso 2015). The fluctuation in specific support is mainly caused by the fact that political incumbents are ordinarily elected to political positions only for a pre-determined period (Marien and Hooghe 2011). Elections provide citizens with a rare opportunity to hand over power to specific authorities so that they are enabled to govern over them. Political incumbents have a responsibility to use this power to meet the needs and expectations of the citizens who voted for them (Bertso 2015). As Easton (1975: 436) succinctly puts it, the failure to use this power effectively will mean that the incumbents will lose it "to an alternative set of leaders" in the next elections. Contrastingly, leaders who produce desired outcomes are likely to generate and attract specific support and are the most likely retain power to govern (Dalton 2004).

The second form of political support is diffuse and is understood as citizens' 'favourable or unfavourable' attitudes of support directed towards the institutions of the political system (Easton 1975). In its positive form, Easton (1965: 273) describes diffuse support as the "reservoir of favourable attitudes" that enables citizens to tolerate government actions even when they are contrary to their own interests and expectations. The difference between the two forms of support is that, unlike specific support, diffuse support is about what the political system represents and not what incumbents do (Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Ao 2019). For this reason, diffuse support is mainly associated with the stability and legitimacy of a regime. A loss and/or decline in diffuse support is considered problematic and could lead to conditions that threaten and pose a legitimacy risk and/or crisis for the regime (Dalton 2004; Ao 2019). Diffuse support is considered to be a product of long-term attitudes held by citizens

and is deemed to be more durable than specific support (Dalton 2004). From this viewpoint, it is plausible to argue that high levels of diffuse support will hold a political system and regime intact, even when specific support is at low levels (Duvjso 2014).

The two forms of support are distinct and base their evaluations on different political objects. However, there is some level of interaction between them. This interaction points out the interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing relationship between the forms of support. Christensen and Laegreid (2005) contend that the combination of high levels of both forms of support will translate into the government as a whole, generating the highest standards of support and trust. Political trust is deemed an integral part of political support and a key indicator of citizens' support for the government (Levi and Stoker 2000). Political trust is elementary to political support and there can be no support for a government that is not trusted by its citizens (Bertsou 2015). Hetherington and Husser (2012: 312) summarise that citizens have to trust the government to generate the necessary support towards its institutions and incumbent authorities.

2.3.3 The Paradox of Trust in Democracy

A close reading of the literature reveals that the debate on the relationship between political trust and democracy is yet to be resolved. Some scholars have begun to question the accuracy of the standard assumption that points to a positive link between political trust and democracy. To this end, it is proposed that political distrust, and not trust, is more beneficial to democratic development and consolidation (Cook 2001; Van der Walle and Six 2014; Lenard 2015; Landmark 2016). The primary contention is that too much political trust may not always be suitable for democratic regimes (Cook 2001). Citizens who are too trusting are likely to be naive and less critical of the government, which may not be ideal for successful democratic development and consolidation (Landmark 2016). Similarly, Van de Walle and Six (2014) argue that too much trust in government presents potential dangers such as diminished citizen control.

The emphasis placed on the necessity of high levels of political trust in society may be less important than previously considered. Democracy also seems to require some levels of scepticism, or even distrust to function in an efficient and effective manner (Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Van de Walle and Six 2013; Lenard 2015; Van der

Meer 2017). From this viewpoint, there are salient contradictions and inconsistencies over the value of citizens' trust in government, which suggests that political trust may have a double-edged effect in democratic regimes (Mishler and Rose 1997; Ao 2019). This double-edged effect is well captured by Mishler and Rose (1997: 419), who explains that

democracy requires trust but also presupposes an active and vigilant citizenry with a healthy scepticism of government and willingness, should the need arise, to suspend their trust and assert control over government of the day.

Citizens' distrust in the political system may be warranted and most probably be productive in democratic societies (Lenard 2015; Landmark 2016; Van der Meer 2017).

A healthy distrust or scepticism ensures that the citizenry remains consistently 'active and vigilant', which is a critical requirement for democratic development and consolidation (Mishler and Rose 1997: 49). Citizens' vigilance is an important requirement or condition that must exist in order for them to execute their inherent obligation of keeping the government in check by holding it accountable, transparent and responsive (Marien and Hooghe 2011; Van de Walle and Six 2013). Such an active citizenry is important for monitoring the government's exercise of state power (Van der Meer 2017). Theoretical explorations often treat political trust and distrust as two sides of the same coin. Nevertheless, it has been argued that trust and distrust should be treated as two different and separate constructs altogether, each with its own key properties and underpinnings (Van de Walle and Six 2013; McKnight and Chervany 2001). Lewicki et al. (2008) has earlier argued that "there are elements that contribute to the growth and decline of trust and there are elements that contribute to the growth and decline of distrust". Several important implications emerge from this conceptualisation of trust and distrust.

By treating the two concepts as different and distinct suggests that it is then possible for both political trust and distrust to be simultaneously present in relation to the same object of trust (McKnight and Chervany 2001). The co-existence of the two in the context of democratic regimes is said to be a reflection of a working democracy. This suggests that political trust and distrust may play a complementary role in the development and consolidation of democracy. Another implication, as argued by Van der Walle and Six (2014), is that scholars should not be quick to conclude that low

levels of political trust and political distrust are the same. This argument strongly suggests that the consequences of each phenomenon for democracy will differ significantly. Nonetheless, there is still good reason to consider and treat low political trust as a cause for concern. Low and/or declined levels of political trust may still operate to “erode the vitality of democracy” and pose several challenges for regime stability and legitimacy (Dalton 2001). In any event, it seems logical and sensible to conclude that a consistent and an unabated decline in, or stubbornly, persistently low levels of political trust may ultimately translate into distrust. Low levels of political trust enduring over significantly long periods will likely turn into distrust and pose a legitimate threat to democracy.

2.4 Local Government as an Object of Trust

2.4.1 Incumbents v/s Institutions

A sensible study or research project investigating political trust should clearly identify and specify the object of trust under evaluation (Citrin and Muste 1999; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). Citrin and Muste (1999) emphasises the importance of drawing a proper distinction between the various objects of trust. The identification of the specific political object under scrutiny is important and sensible to do, because “not every political object” that can be subjected to citizens’ assessment and evaluation can be an object of trust (Levi and Stoker 2000). Easton (1975) has identified and drawn a distinction between three main objects of support and trust, namely the political community, the political regime, and incumbent authorities. However, Norris et al. (1999) argue that the concept of regime is too broad and needs to be broken down by distinguishing between “the community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions, and political actors” (Norris 1999: 9). The debate on the objects of trust has led to several scholars proposing some more specified objects to which political support and trust may be directed.

The most commonly studied objects of trust are political institutions and incumbent authorities and the literature reveals a long-standing debate on these objects (Miller 1974a; 1974b; Citrin 1974; Muller and Jukam 1977; Hardin 1999; Citrin and Muste 1999; Levi and Stoker 2000). The theoretical and empirical question at the centre of this debate was whether political trust is directed only at political incumbent authorities, or may also be extended to political institutions? An early and historical illustration of this debate in the literature is the well-recorded Miller (1974a; 1974b) and Citrin (1974)

debate, which was sparked by the decline in political trust observed in the U.S. in the 1960s. While Citrin (1974) concluded that the decline represented a loss of support and trust in incumbent political authorities, Miller (1974a; 1974b) counter-argued this proposition and concluded that the decline was related to institutions of the political system.

Some scholars have submitted several propositions that deny the possibility of citizens' trust being directed towards inanimate objects such as institutions (Hardin 1998; 1999; 2000; Luhmann 1998; Misztal 1996; Offe 1999; Sztompka 1999). In most instances, the relational nature of trust has been invoked as a basis for denying the possibility of trust being directed at institutions. The relational nature of trust is interpreted to suggest that trust is deemed to arise only in the context of human interactions (Hardin 1998; Sztompka 1999). Trust relates to human action and can only arise between at least two human actors. As an inanimate object, an institution of government cannot participate in a trust relationship, because it is not able to reciprocate trust in the same way that humans do (Sztompka 1999). The most pronounced advocate for denying trust in institutions is Hardin (1998; 1999; 2000), who bases such denial on his theory of encapsulated interests. Hardin (1999) argues that trust in political institutions can only be possible if the individual citizen has full knowledge of the structures and roles of every institution and every member serving in such political institutions. The lack of knowledge on the part of the citizens excludes the possibility of their trust being directed towards institutions.

The modern political system is complex, multi-faceted, and operated by a large number of administrative and political actors. It is difficult (if not impossible) for a citizen to know each and every official in an institution and, in addition, also have comprehensive knowledge of the specific and distinct roles they execute. Offe (1999) dismisses this requirement for extensive knowledge and argues that it is not a necessary precondition for trust relations to materialise. Trust does not need to be based on such complete knowledge, because it ordinarily emerges in situations of risk, which are often based on incomplete information. To this end, the dominant view in the literature is that political trust has both a personal and institutional dimension (Miller 1974a; 1974b; Easton 1975; Citrin and Muste 1999; Offe 1999; Levi and Stoker 2000; Christensen and Laegreid 2005). The object of trust in this research report is local

government, paying specific attention to citizens' trust towards both political institutions and incumbent authorities.

2.4.2 Political Trust at the Local Government Level

Local government is described as that

part of the government of a country operating on a local level, functioning through a representative organ, known as the municipal council, which is established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area of jurisdiction. (Warioba 1991: 1)

A modern, democratic political system is not complete without a local sphere of government (Havenga 2002). Previously, the sphere of local government was misunderstood as the least important part of government (Eskridge and Key 2016). However, and as argued by Norris et al. (2006), there has been a shift across the globe towards a multi-layered government system, with the local sphere becoming increasingly important and essential for democracy. All levels or spheres of government are expected to work together in the spirit of cooperative governance (Mohale 2013). Nonetheless, the sphere of local government stands out as distinctive in the process of effective and efficient governance in democratic contexts.

Local governments may be understood as the cornerstone of the democratic political system. By implication, citizens' trust in local government should be of crucial importance to the consolidation of citizens' support for the overall political system (Chen 2017). Trust in local government is a predictor of trust in other spheres of government that are not that close and near to the citizenry (Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). A critical question that often arises in the literature is whether citizens' trust in different spheres or levels of government is influenced and informed by the same or different set of factors. Posed differently, or as queried by Fitzgerald and Wolak (2016: 130), is trust in local government rooted in distinctive considerations different from those influencing other spheres or levels of government?

The above question arises in the context of literature that is dominantly skewed towards findings on trust at a national government level. Rahn and Rudolph (2005: 531) have long noted that the literature on the causes and consequences of political trust at a local government level suffers from a dearth of suitable and relevant data. In comparison, less data and research are examining political trust at a local government

level than there is in the context of national government. However, and up until recently, scholars in different country contexts across the globe have started paying specific attention to citizens' trust in local government (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Parker et al. 2008; Gershtensen and Plane 2011; Eskridge and Key 2016; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016; Matebesi 2017). The findings in these studies have produced different perspectives to the above question.

Some research points out that the trust citizens have in local government is just a reflection of their trust in national government and vice versa (Uslaner 2001). This finding postulates that local and national political trust is influenced by the same or similar considerations. Several arguments have been advanced to illustrate this point. For example, Caramani (2004) found that local political issues are driven by the national agenda in Western Europe and trust at both levels of government is informed by the same factors of influence. However, this perspective does not seem to draw adequate support in the literature and it is generally accepted that a distinction must be drawn between local and national trust (Jennings 1998; Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). As proposed by Jennings (1998), it is only logical and sensible to conclude that citizens' trust in local government moves independently from their trust in national government. Local and national political trust moves independently and are not influenced by the same set of determinants (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016).

The conclusion that there is a distinction between local and national political trust is justified by the finding that there are salient differences in the patterns of citizens' trust across levels of government. Firstly, citizens' trust in national government may be higher than their trust in local government (Wu and Wilkes 2018). Secondly, citizens' trust in local government may be higher than their trust in national government (Lidstrom and Baldersheim 2016; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). Thirdly, and seldom, citizens' trust in both spheres of government has been found to be the same (Wu and Wilkes 2018). In the context of most western democracies, the common pattern is that citizens' trust in local government is usually higher than in national government (Lidstrom and Baldersheim 2016; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). The issue of proximity may be an important structural condition explaining this finding (Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016; Beshi and Kaur 2019). Proximity should enhance political trust at a local government because citizens ought to find it much

simpler to assess and evaluate political institutions and incumbent authorities that are close to them.

2.5 An Integrated Model to Political Trust

2.5.1 Cultural and Institutional Approaches

Political trust is commonly explained and understood through the perspective of two divergent traditions based on the cultural and institutional theories, respectively. It is important to note that these theories are developed from the perspective of democracies in America and Europe; however, this does not automatically exclude their applicability in other social contexts. The main thesis of the cultural approach is that citizens' political trust is modelled by the decisiveness of cultural beliefs, norms, and personal values, learnt and internalised through the process of socialisation (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Inglehart 1999b; Mishler and Rose 2001). These beliefs, norms and personal values develop over significantly long periods of time and are passed on and transmitted through generations (Newton and Norris 2000). The conglomeration of these standards and norms in a specific society forms what Almond and Verba (1963) refer to as the 'political culture' of a society.

Political culture is defined and understood to be "the political system as internalised in the cognitions, feelings and evaluations of its population" (Almond and Verba 1963: 13). Marien and Hooghe (2011) point out that a country's political culture is fundamental to shaping how citizens interact and relate with their government. The expectation is not that citizens will embrace and accept all the norms, values and beliefs making up a nation's political culture to the same extent and degree (Lenard 2007). Nonetheless, these norms and standards are determined to be the basic tools of analysis through which citizens evaluate the political system to cognitively develop either attitudes of trust or distrust. The main implication of the cultural approach is that citizens' trust in government is considered to be influenced by factors exogenous to the political sphere (Mishler and Rose 2001). The two main exogenous factors identified as dominant in the fomentation of political trust are social capital and socio-demographic traits.

A different approach is conceptualised through institutional theories which considers political trust to be a product of endogenous, rather than exogenous factors (Mishler and Rose 2001). The institutional approach shifts attention from the individual subject

towards the political object in a trust relationship. This means that factors internal to the political system itself are deemed decisive in the fomentation of political trust (Wang 2016). The following are considered the main endogenous factors in the fomentation of political trust: institutional performance, institutional design, and institutional trustworthiness (Levi and Stoker 2000; Bouckaert and Van de Walle 2003; Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Hutchinson and Johnson 2011; Arancibia 2012; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). The institutional approach is based upon the rational choice perspective and assumes that political trust arises from citizens' rational responses to several endogenous factors (Arancibia 2012).

There is no consensus in the literature on the approach that best explains political trust in democratic societies. Most scholars opt to explain political trust by applying either one of the two traditions, but there are several exceptions (Mishler and Rose 2005; Godefroidt et al. 2015; Chu and Shen 2017; Donga and Kubler 2018). To this end, several studies have explained political trust by applying the two theoretical traditions concurrently and simultaneously. The application of the two traditions in this way should not be understood as a contradiction (Mishler and Rose 2001). A combined reflection on both the cultural and institutional traditions may provide a deeper insight into political trust's nature, causes and consequences. The expectation is that the cultural and institutional traditions ought to reinforce mutually. When applied in this way, the two traditions can be integrated and established into what Mishler and Rose (2001) refer to as a "developmental or lifetime learning model".

Although the two theoretical approaches are often characterised as divergent and incompatible, both approaches are linked to citizens' experience with the political system (Schoon and Chang 2011; Mishler and Rose 2001; Godefroidt et al. 2015; Landmark 2016). The main distinction is the relevant period in which citizens' experience occurs. On the one hand, cultural theories emphasise early experiences, which hardly undergo any fundamental alteration at a later stage in life. On the other hand, institutional theories pay specific attention to present-day experiences with the political system, which may undergo changes at any point (Mishler and Rose 2001; Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Landmark 2016; Asfaw 2019). The proposed integrated model to understanding political trust does not treat this distinction as problematic and proposes that both early and later life experiences are important to the fomentation of citizens' political trust (Mishler and Rose 2001). The effect of each

theory is context dependent and will vary based on the specific political, economic, and social context under consideration.

2.5.1.1 Social Capital

The concept of social capital has attracted increased scholarly attention against the backdrop of Putnam's (1993) study, which found and confirmed the existence of a link between voluntary social organisations and a healthy democracy. This link was established on the strength of the finding that local governments in northern Italy perform much better than those in the southern parts. The disparities in the performance between the two systems of local government are squarely located in the fact that the north boasts a citizenry that is actively involved and engaged in voluntary social organisations, unlike their counterparts in the south (Putnam 1993; 1995). Effectively, these findings led to the scholarship paying specific attention to the relationship between social capital and democracy in different country contexts (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Putnam 2000; Veenstra 2002; Keele 2007; Van der Meer 2017).

The most relied-upon definition of social capital in the literature is provided by Putnam (1995: 167), who defines the concept as the “features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared interests”. From this definition, two inter-related and inter-dependent main elements of social capital may be deduced and which are reflective of both a structural and cognitive dimension (Asfaw 2019). The structural dimension is constituted by social networks and the cognitive dimension by social trust. Social networks are considered a necessary pre-condition for the creation, enhancement and sustainability of social trust (Yang 2012). Together, social networks and social trust create social capital, which is crucial for stable democratic regimes. The expectation is that the more citizens engage in voluntary social organisations, the more trusting they will be of one another (Levi and Stoker 2000; Van der Meer 2003; Dalton 2004; Newton and Zmerli 2011; Landmark 2016). The presence of both social networks and social trust means that a society is conditioned by social capital. The question on the link between social and political trust was dealt with in 2.2.3 above and to this extent, this section of the report will focus mainly on social networks.

The existence of social networks in any given society is a consequence of the quality and nature of the various social organisations in such a society (Castiglione et al. 2009). Social networks are constituted by both smaller group networks such as family, friends, neighbours, etc., and larger groups such as local or national social movements and organisations (Landmark 2016). Effective social organisation and coordination are based on an active and engaged citizenry. Civil society is found to play a critical role in the creation of social solidarity necessary for the development of a durable and stable democracy (Delhey and Newton 2003). The crucial role that civil society plays in the development and consolidation of democracy is generally accepted across the globe. As Matebesi (2017) puts it, democratic governments across the globe “now recognise the value and role of civil society in nation building” and overall societal development.

Despite this emphasis placed on the role of social networks and social trust in a democracy, however, it has been argued that social capital will not automatically translate into political trust in all democratic societies (Newton 2001; Cheema and Popvski 2010). For example, in some country contexts, social networks and civil society have been found to only have an impact on social and not on political trust (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Veenstra 2002). Veenstra (2002) found that this was the case on the strength of the finding that passive participation through the mere subscription or payment of membership fees of voluntary social organisations is on its own inadequate for the fomentation of political trust. However, and in other democratic societies, the empirical evidence in the literature confirms the existence of a link between social capital and political trust in democratic contexts.

Empirical studies reveal that the relationship between social capital and political trust assumes either a positive or negative character in different societies (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Keele 2007; Seabo and Molefe 2016). For example, Keele (2007) found a positive relationship between the two at the local level and confirms that higher levels of social capital will lead to higher levels of citizens’ trust in local government. Contrastingly, Brehm and Rahn (1997) found a negative relationship in the context of less developed democracies and argue that voluntary social organisations inherently inculcate values such as individualism and personal interest which should be negatively related to political trust. Similarly, Putnam (2000) found that the lack of participation by Americans in activities of civil society leads to citizens’ inability to learn

the values of cooperation and collective effort, which are important for democratic development and ultimately political trust. Civil society provides ample opportunity and a platform for citizens to engage on shared experiences and grievances (Matebesi 2017). To this end, civil society operates as a sanctuary for those who may be facing political, economic and social marginalisation in society to express their dissatisfaction and discontent with the government.

2.5.1.2 Socio-demographic Traits

Socio-demographic traits have often been included as standard control variables in empirical investigations on political trust. Based on the cultural tradition, it is expected that citizens' levels of political trust will vary according to the various social demographic factors characterising an individual citizen. The most common socio-demographic traits include age, gender, education and income level (Mishler and Rose 2001; Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Hutchinson and Johnson 2011; Magnum 2016). The literature differs on the individual and collective effect that socio-demographic traits have on the fomentation of political trust. However, several scholars have placed significant emphasis on the importance of these variables. Christensen and Laegreid (2005) emphasises the importance of socio-demographic traits in establishing long-term trends in political trust. Magnum (2016) argues that socio-demographic traits are important, as they are a reflection of citizens' "political and social realities". The impact of socio-demographic factors on political trust will likely be context dependent and will differ from country to country and from individual to individual (Christensen and Laegreid 2005). Consequently, individually and collectively, the different socio-demographic traits will not impact the fomentation of political trust in every social context (Pande 2010).

Age is found to be related to political trust and has been investigated in several studies, but with contradictory results (Newton and Zmerli 2011). Owen and Dennis (2001) finds that the younger generation is more trusting than the older one. However, the most common perspective on age in the literature is that young people are less trusting than old people (Newton 1999; Espinal and Hartley 2006; Magnum 2016). Conversely, it is assumed that the older generation is more inclined to have higher trust in government than the younger generation. Another most commonly investigated socio-demographic variable having an impact on political trust is education, and like many other social traits, empirical research on its effect on political trust has been mixed and

contradictory (Bouckaert and Van de Walle 2001; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Anderson and Singer 2008; Kestila-Kekkonen 2015; Magnum 2016; Seabo and Molefe 2016). Generally speaking, education in developed and advanced democracies is found to be negatively related to political trust (Seligson 2002; Ulbig 2002; Luhiste 2006). In new and less developed democracies, citizens with lower levels of education seem to demonstrate higher levels of trust towards their political institutions and actors (Seabo and Molefe 2016). Closely associated and related to education is citizens' income levels. In developed countries, higher-income levels are considered to be negatively related to political trust, while in less developed countries, high-income levels are often positively related to political trust (Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Magnum 2016). The expectation is that the different socio-demographic traits and specifically, age, gender, education and income level will have an impact on citizens' political trust.

2.5.1.3 Institutional Performance

Institutional performance is the most widely researched aspect of the common factors considered important in the fomentation of citizens' trust in government. The literature demonstrates that political trust is likely to be increasingly sensitive to performance evaluations (Dalton 2004; Keele 2007; Van de Walle and Six 2013; Kestila-Kekkonen and Soderlund 2015; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016; Landmark 2016). Governments at different levels have distinct responsibilities and functions to perform in line with citizens' needs and normative expectations (Hutchinson and Johnson 2011). The performance of each level of government will be evaluated and assessed on whether political institutions and incumbent authorities carry out specific functions and tasks assigned to them as expected. Citizens' evaluation and assessment of the performance of the government are rationally motivated and are considered to have a direct impact on citizens' political trust.

The levels of political trust may be used as a reliable indicator and measure of the performance of the political system (Jamil and Askvik 2013). Catterberg and Moreno (2005) highlight that citizens apply and use government performance as a frame of reference to provide views and opinions about political institutions and incumbent authorities. On the one hand, the ability of the government to perform assigned tasks and functions as expected will be positively linked to political trust. High levels of political trust indicate that the government is efficient and effective in executing its

functions and obligations (Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Van de Walle and Six 2013; Bauer and Fatke 2014). On the other hand, the failure of the government to perform and complete assigned tasks will be negatively linked to citizens' trust in government (Dalton 2004; Keele 2007; Van de Walle and Six 2013; Kestila-Kekkonen and Soderlund 2015; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016; Landmark 2016).

Institutional performance is broad and there is little consensus on the aspect of government performance that is the most decisive in the fomentation of political trust (Citrin and Stoker 2018). The logical and reasonable conclusion is that the aggregate effect of all aspects of institutional performance will contribute to the fomentation of political trust. The literature emphasises the importance of both economic and political performance. However, the decisiveness of each factor is dependent on the political, economic and social context. For the purpose of this discussion, the following aspects of government performance will be discussed: economic growth and development; the provision of services; and corruption and financial mismanagement.

(a) Economic Growth and Development

In a society where the economic performance of the government is producing desirable outcomes, the likelihood is that there will be sustainable democratic development and consolidation (Chang and Chu 2006; Espinal et al. 2006; Morris and Klesner 2010; Weinschenk and Helpap 2015). Some scholars have even proposed that economic performance is the most decisive factor in the fomentation of citizens' political trust in democratic societies (Kotzian 2010). The impact of economic performance on political trust has been found to be greater in developed and industrialised democracies than in new and less-developed ones (Espinal et al. 2006). The economic performance approach is derived from the political economic theory and is closely related to the concept of economic voting (Clark et al. 1993). The logic of economic voting is that a government that ensures economic growth and development will likely be voted for into political power (Clark et al. 1993; Cusack 1999). Similarly, a government that manages and performs its economic tasks and functions as expected will likely generate high levels of political trust. Conversely, poor economic growth and development lead to low and/or declined levels of political trust. The impact of economic performance in trust evaluations operates both at an individual and contextual level.

At a contextual level, evaluations of economic performance draw attention to national economic conditions and is measured through objective indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country, inflation rates, financial and fiscal stability, unemployment rates, poverty, inequality, tax rates, etc. (Vilhelmsdottir and Kristinsson 2018). Any positive evaluation of the governments' macro-economic performance is a reflection of the growth and stability of the economy (Luhiste 2006). At an individual level, economic performance may be measured by individual-level indicators such as citizens' subjective perceptions of their own personal economic and/or financial status (Van der Meer and Dekker 2010). These individual and contextual economic factors are inter-related and inter-dependent. The expectation is that political trust is positively related to good economic performance and negatively related to poor economic performance (Mishler and Rose 2001; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Vilhelmsdottir and Kristinsson 2018).

(b) Service Delivery and Satisfaction

The provision of basic services has been isolated as a decisive aspect of political performance crucial to citizens' political trust fomentation. A fundamental function of democratic governments is the effective and efficient provision of public services. These services are spread across all spheres of government, with each sphere having its own specific set of services it must render to the citizens. One of the most pronounced expectation of citizens is the ability of the local government to deliver basic services such as the provision of water and electricity, basic sanitation and effective waste management, and road and transport infrastructure, etc. (Beshi and Kaur 2019). A government that performs in accordance with citizens' expectations by delivering basic services will attract elevated levels of political trust (Godefroidt et al. 2015; Gustavsen et al. 2017). In contrast, poor and/or inadequate service delivery will result in the government attracting exceptionally low levels of trust from the citizens.

Several scholars have argued that the delivery of basic services is on its own not a sufficient and adequate predictor of citizens' political trust (Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Gustavsen et al. 2017). In addition, the satisfaction that citizens derive from the delivery of such services is considered an important predictor of political trust at an individual level (Gustavsen et al. 2017). Citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of services is influenced by both subjective and objective assessments of the quality of services (Beerli et al. 2019). Combined, the provision of services and the subsequent

satisfaction on the part of the citizens are expected to be the most decisive predictors of political at the local government level (Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Baldersheim et al. 2011; Eskridge and Key 2016; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016; Gustavsen et al. 2017). Local government is best located to provide many of the vital services that citizens rely on on a daily basis. Thus, the expectation is that satisfied users of services are more likely to trust political institutions and incumbent authorities than users who are dissatisfied.

(c) Corruption and Financial Performance

Corruption, whether perceived or actual, has been identified as an important factor, which has a detrimental impact on citizens' trust in government. The performance of government in eradicating corruption and financial mismanagement is important for obvious reasons related to issues of good governance. The negative effects of corruption on political trust have been reported to be universal and are found to have a negative impact on political trust in both developed and less developed country contexts (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Uslaner 2016; Matebesi 2017; Van der Meer 2017). Empirical evidence has pointed out to the finding that both the actual occurrence and perceptions of corruption in government lead to low levels of trust and at times, even political distrust (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Morris and Klesner 2010; Landmark 2016; Seabo and Molefe 2016; Van der Meer 2017). Unabated corruption in government leads to a vicious circle where corruption foments declined political trust and which in turn may produce an environment that enables more corruption to occur (Morris and Klesner 2010; Sole and Navaro 2014). The pervasiveness of corruption in government is a direct violation of principles of good governance such as accountability and transparency and speaks directly to the untrustworthy nature and character of government (Przeworski et al 1999; Sole and Navaro 2014). At a local government level, the expectation is that high levels of perceived and/or actual corruption and financial mismanagement will have a negative and detrimental impact on citizens' levels of trust in government.

2.5.1.4 Institutional Design (Openness)

The design of political institutions is considered to have an impact on the fomentation of citizens' political trust. Institutions function and operate to maintain social order and stability through the formulation and implementation of laws, policies, rules, and procedures governing the society (Bachmann and Inkpen 2007; Landmark 2016). The

conglomeration of all these factors make up the design of institutions and are found to operate significantly to structure and shape the attitudes and behaviour of actors inside and outside institutions (Bachman and Inkpen 2007). The design and quality of political institutions can either operate to increase or decrease citizens' trust in government. Political trust is found to be high in countries where institutions promote representation and allows citizens to voice their interests and demands without institutional and structural hindrance (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Jamil and Askvik 2015; Fitzgerald and Wolak 2016). These institutions are characterised by high levels of openness and, in most cases, are considered to be more attentive, sensitive and responsive to citizens' needs and normative expectations. The expectation is that the design (institutional openness) will have an impact on the level of citizens' political trust at a local government level.

2.5.1.5 Institutional Trustworthiness

A complete and comprehensive understanding of political trust depends on thorough evaluations of both the subject and object involved in a trust relationship. The institutional tradition shifts attention from the individual (subject) and focuses on the characteristics of the main object of political trust. Trustworthiness is one such important characteristic that will have an impact on citizens' trust assessments and evaluations (Mayer et al. 1995; Levi and Stoker 2000; Blind 2007; Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Bauer 2015; Hamm et al. 2019). By implication, the literature draws a distinction between trust and trustworthiness and treats the two as distinct and separate concepts (Gremler 2018). Some scholars have even argued that it is trustworthiness rather than trust that is required for an efficient and effective democratic political system (Bauer 2015).

Trustworthiness refers to the political system's moral and legal obligation to fulfil its functions and serve the needs of citizens as expected (Levi and Stoker 2000). Trustworthiness is determined to be a reflection of qualities and standards which the object of trust is expected to possess, such as ability, benevolence, integrity, fairness, responsiveness, honesty, accountability, reliability, etc. (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Yang 2012; Hamm et al. 2019). Trustworthy political institutions and incumbent authorities have the capacity to make and implement credible commitments and develop and implement policies in a fair, transparent and responsiveness manner (Levi and Stoker 2000).

While there are several standards which can be said to influence evaluations of trustworthiness, however, the literature emphasises three elements that seem to capture the concept of trustworthiness (Mayer et al. 1995; Levi and Stoker 2000; Hamm et al. 2019). These elements are ability, benevolence and integrity, which are considered to constitute a major portion of trustworthiness. Ability refers to the specific and subjective skills, knowledge and experience required for the execution of responsibilities and functions in government (Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Hamm et al. 2019). Benevolence refers to the extent to which the trustee is considered to hold good intentions in relation to the trustor and acts in with those intentions (Hamm et al. 2019). Integrity refers to the perception that the trustee follows and is bound by a set of values and principles that the trustor finds to be of an acceptable standard (Hamm et al. 2019).

Each of these three elements are argued to contribute a unique perpetual perspective to the overall concept of trustworthiness (Mayer et al. 1995). Firstly, ability refers to the specific and subjective skills, knowledge and experience required for the execution of responsibilities and functions in government (Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Hamm et al. 2019). Secondly, benevolence refers to the extent to which the government is considered to hold good intentions in relation to citizens and acts in line with those intentions (Hamm et al. 2019). Thirdly, integrity refers to the perception that the trustee follows and is bound by a set of values and principles which the citizens generally finds to be of an acceptable standard (Hamm et al. 2019). The expectation is that political trust will be positively related to trustworthy governments and negatively related to untrustworthy governments that do not display ability, benevolence and integrity.

2.6 Political Trust and Protest Behaviour

2.6.1 Political Participation and Democracy

The literature focusing on the development of democratic regimes has over the years maintained and emphasised that citizens' participation in the political affairs of society is of crucial importance to regime stability and legitimacy (Pateman 1970; Dahl 1971; Putnam 1993; Blind 2007; Bonner 2009; Riley et al. 2010; Crepaz and Polk 2012; Demetriou 2013; Marien and Hooghe 2013; Memoli and Vassallo 2016; Basher 2017; Ao 2019). Citizens' political participation is a basic and minimum requirement for functional and durable democracies and is a sign of good citizenship (Lenard 2015;

Gustavsen et al. 2017). Put differently, Basher (2017) persuasively argues that citizens' meaningful participation is "the prime condition" for responsible citizenship. Participation in the political affairs of a society is an integral and inherent aspect of citizens' responsibilities and obligations in a democratic regime (Van Steenberghe 1994). To this end, across both developed and less developed societies, political activism is fundamental and no democratic regime will be durable in the absence of any meaningful public participation (Demetriou 2013). Main effective and efficient democratic regime is one that promotes, facilitates, and implements inclusionary public participation based on an active and vigilant citizenry (Crepaz and Polk 2012). Such participation is integral to good governance and the best practices and strategies of good governance should include what is often referred to as participatory governance (Farazmand 2004; Lamprianou 2013).

The importance of political participation lies in the belief that those who are affected by a decision or action of the government have an inherent right to be involved in the process leading to such decision or action (Basher 2017). Riley et al. (2010) describe political participation as a set of rights and duties that involve organised civic and political activities. These rights and duties are conferred upon both the citizens and the government. Local government provides a wide-range of activities that advance citizens' meaningful participation. The proximity of local government places it at the centre of political and social life and is often described as a central arena for meaningful and inclusive participation (Farazmand 2017; Beshi and Kaur 2019). Citizens have been found to have a better comprehension and understanding of local political issues and this motivates them to participate in local political affairs (Fitzgerald and Wolak 2015; Farazmand 2004a).

At the local level, meaningful political participation is crucial on two fronts. Firstly, it affords citizens an opportunity to express political demands and secondly, it empowers the government to evaluate and respond to citizens' actual needs in an adequate manner (Marquari-Pyatt and Petrzela 2008). To this end, meaningful public participation creates a valuable and important link that connects citizens to their government and vice versa. In the absence of meaningful political participation, citizens' ability to share their concerns with the government diminishes and the latter cannot respond adequately to such concerns (Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995). A fragmented, splintered or degraded system of public participation at the local

government level is detrimental and undermines the quality of democracy. A compromised system of public participation that limits citizens' genuine participation may lead to dissatisfaction and disaffection.

2.6.2 Main Forms of Public Participation

The concept of political participation is broad and is mainly understood through the description of various political activities at the disposal of citizens' participation in a democratic society. It is generally accepted that it is almost impossible to formulate a single and universal definition covering all available activities of public participation across all democratic regimes. Therefore, a single definition may not be adequate and in any event, such definition would probably have to be consistently updated to reflect the continuous expansion in the modes of participation across different societies (Memoli and Vassallo 2016). This expansion demonstrates that the phenomenon of political participation is not stagnant or static. Political participation is dynamic and seems to evolve with the development of democracy (Lamprianou 2013). To keep abreast of these developments, the literature distinguishes between conventional and non-conventional participation.

Conventional activity may be described as involving personal and collective forms of participation such as voting, taking up membership of a political party, participating in political campaigns, or attending public hearings, meetings or any other government policy formulation and implementation platforms (Bonner 2009; Bertou 2015; Memoli and Vassallo 2016; Basher 2017). Elections are the most common and widespread conventional activity across most, if not all, democratic states (Verba and Nie 1972; Hooghe and Marien 2012). Compared to other forms of participation, voting is considered the most effortless form of public participation and which requires little initiative from citizens (Memoli and Vassallo 2016). However, Crepaz and Polk (2012) argue that an effervescent democracy only requires a citizenry that is engaged in conventional but also in non-conventional activities. Non-conventional forms of political participation are understood as all other activities citizens may use to channel their demands to the government and involve mainly collective activities such as petitions, pickets, boycotts and protest action (Arancibia 2012).

The distinction between the two forms of political participation is consolidated in terms of the difference between how the two are facilitated and organised. Conventional

activities are mainly initiated and facilitated by the government and are aimed at the coordinated mobilisation of society to participate through the platforms created and regulated by government (Inglehart and Catterberg 2003; Arancibia 2012). These forms of participation are described as “formal, structured and lawful”, and are intrinsically linked to the institutional politics of a democratic regime (Henn and Foard 2012; Demetriou 2013; Lamprianou 2013). In contrast, non-conventional political participation refers to activities that are not linked to or facilitated by the government. Instead, these activities are an outcome of citizens mobilising and coordinating themselves to take direct action to engage the government (Matebesi 2017).

It has often been argued that the distinction between the forms of public participation seems to be losing significance (Lamprianou 2013). This perspective is based on the finding that many of the activities considered non-conventional in the past have now been accepted as part and parcel of recognised forms of participation (Dalton 2008; Norris et al. 2006; Linssens et al. 2011; Lamprianou 2013). To this extent, Lamprianou (2013) argues that the distinction between conventional and non-conventional public participation is outdated and requires radical revision. By implication, it would be technically incorrect to classify and analyse such activities as non-conventional, because they have become more widespread in democratic societies across the globe. However, even more importantly, empirical evidence demonstrates that there are significant changes in the patterns of citizens’ political participation in democratic contexts characterised mainly by a shift from conventional to non-conventional political participation (Dalton 2013; Memoli and Vassallo 2016).

2.6.3 Shift in Citizens Political Participation

Over the years, research has reported on the observed changes in the patterns of citizens’ political behaviour and participation in democratic societies (Dalton 2013; Christensen 2013; Memoli and Vassallo 2016; Parvin 2018; Acre and Rise 2019). These changes are in the main characterised by a decline in citizens’ participation through conventional forms of such as voting and a simultaneous rise in non-conventional forms such as protests. Reference has been made to the widespread decline in voter turnout in many democratic regimes across the globe (Arancibia 2012; Dalton 2013; Parvin 2018). Low voter turnout has been a re-emerging theme in many democratic societies, and scholars have provided several reasons to explain this widespread phenomenon (Putnam 2000; Norris 2002; Dalton 2013; Parvin 2018). An

important reason that stands out is that citizens have begun to doubt the effectiveness of voting as a means to express political preferences (Stolle et al. 2005; Christensen 2013). This may indicate that many citizens in democratic societies are experiencing marginalisation and alienation from the more conventional forms of participation (Riley et al. 2010).

The decline in conventional political participation is an anomaly in the assumption that democracy primarily depends on citizens' participation and involvement (Parvin 2018). To be specific, the basic assumption is that elections are fundamental to and forms the basis of the existence of democracy itself. Therefore, a decline in citizens' electoral participation has often been described as problematic and constituting a nuisance to the very existence, development and consolidation of democracy (Crepaz and Polk 2012). This concern is further complicated by the rise in protest action as an alternative mode of participation. The historic position in the literature has always been that protest action and democracy are negatively related. From the late 1970s, protest activity has been treated as a threat to the stability and legitimacy of democratic regimes (Gurr 1970; Crozier et al. 1975). This perspective located its roots in the historical description of protest action as a non-conventional, anti-systemic, rebellious or elite-challenging form of political participation (Marsh 1990; Wang 2005; Laegreid 2013; Braun and Hutter 2016; Memoli and Vassallo 2016; Landmark 2016).

Protest action has normalised over the decades and is now accepted as an avenue for citizens' participation in the political affairs of democratic societies. To this end, some scholars argue that protest action should not be seen as disruptive, but rather as a legitimate mode of participation (Dalton 2006; Braun and Hutter 2016). Across many democratic societies, protest action is a protected constitutional right geared towards the protection of citizens' freedom of expression (Demetriou 2013). Lancaster (2018: 29) explains that the use of protest as a means to participate in politics has, with time, transformed into conventional activity. In similar terms, Oliver et al. (2003: 3) explain that protest action has been "highly routinized, organized and even institutionalized" in democratic societies. The reason for this development may be that protests are no longer heavily policed and repressed in many democracies and as a result, citizens participate without any fear of negative repercussions (Dalton et al. 2009).

Some scholars argue that protest should not be understood as a replacement of the more conventional activities, but rather as an addition to the already available and more traditional forms of public participation (Norris 2002). Citizens are the most likely to turn to protest when they believe that it will be the most effective in addressing their immediate concerns. As Matebesi (2017) explains, citizens will “regularly move back and forth between institutional and non-institutional spaces” when engaging the government. In the past decade, many democratic countries experienced increased levels of protest activity and this has been across both developed and less developed democracies (Acre and Rise 2019). A study by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) found that in the last decade, there has been an average annual increase of 11,5% in mass protests across all regimes of the globe, with sub-Saharan Africa demonstrating the fastest growth rate (Brannen et al. 2020). In addition, the CSIS predicts that the number of protests will continue to rise across the globe, both in terms of frequency and intensity.

2.6.4 An Integrated Theoretical Approach to the Causes Protest Action

An analysis of the literature reveals that protests are a dynamic, complex and complicated social phenomenon (Dalton et al. 2009; Memoli and Vassallo 2016; Matebesi 2017). Protests are unpredictable and take place in diverse political, economic, and social contexts and for different reasons (Matebesi 2017). This characterisation of protest action complicates how they may be conceptualised and operationalised in research. To this extent, it is not possible to make generalisations about the causes and nature of protest (Krastev 2013). Nonetheless, this research report draws from descriptions which depict protest as a “resource of the powerless” (Lipsky 1965) or a “rebellion of the poor” (Alexander 2010) or as a “conscious way of engaging the state” (Matebesi 2017).

Several theories have been developed to explain the fomentation of protest action, specifically, in the context of democratic societies. The causes of protest are a combination of diverse and manifold factors, which are not the same for each and every protest across different social contexts. In other words, protests are a product of an interplay of factors relating to the specific political, economic, and social context in which they are mobilised and carried out (Saxton 2016). Norris et al. (2006) demonstrate that the fomentation of protest depends on the “specific context set by the particular event, issues, political actors, coalition partners, mobilization processes,

and cultural frames surrounding each demonstration”. Each protest is influenced by its own distinct and specific political, economic, and social conditions, which operate at both an individual and contextual level. Although individual and contextual factors mainly consist of specific and distinct sets of variables, there is a level of interaction between them (Opp 2009; Saxton 2016).

The interaction between individual and contextual level factors in the fomentation of protest may best be explained through the integrated application of three main theories on protest, namely, the grievance, political opportunity structure (POS), and strategic resource theories (McAdam et al. 1996; Norris et al. 2006; Dalton et al. 2009). Although developed mainly from the perspective of industrialised and developed democracies, these theories are considered to be effective in explaining protest action and behaviour across different democratic country contexts. Tarrow (1998) integrates the theories under what he refers to as ‘contentious politics’. Several scholars have theoretically and empirically tested this integrated approach, specifically when studying the emergence of social movements and the fomentation of protest (Norris et al. 2006; Saxton 2006; Dalton et al. 2009; Opp 2009; Simmons 2019).

2.6.4.1 The Grievance Theory

The grievance theory is deemed to be the “most straight-forward explanation” of protest action and behaviour (Dee 2018). In general terms, the grievance theory postulates that grievance is a critical stimulant for citizens’ political participation in both conventional and non-conventional activities (Opp 1998). In specific terms, grievances have been found more related to non-conventional forms of participation, specifically protests. As argued earlier by McAdam et al. (1996: 5), protests emerge when citizens “feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic” that their collective action can bring redress. The popularity of theory began in the 20th century to explain social movements that emerged as a reaction to the deteriorating material and societal conditions (Runciman 1966; Gurr 1970).

Grievances are mainly related to political, economic and social concerns that arise as a result of citizens’ experiences of deprivation, alienation, exclusion and marginalisation in society (Gurr 1968; 1970; Opp 1998; Dee 2018; Acre and Rice 2019). When citizens are excluded from fully participating in the political, economic and social life of the society within which they live, more often than not, they become

aggrieved by these conditions (De Haan 1999:6). From the point of view of socio-economic exclusion, deteriorating economic conditions have been found to be strong determinants of protests (Seybolt and Shafiq 2012). On a contextual level, economic factors such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, high inflation rates and low GDP growth have been found to be linked to deprivation (Gurr 1968; 1970; Offe 2013). The difficulties associated with slow economic growth and development have been found to lead to grievances and, ultimately, citizens' dissatisfaction with government, which often motivates collective action (Seybolt and Shafiq 2012). On an individual level, the negative impacts of a struggling economy on the individual's personal well-being have also been associated with relative deprivation (Smith and Huo 2014). Citizens who cannot maintain high or reasonable living standards may experience relative deprivation, which may be induced by their unemployment or low income status (Chen, 2015). With regard to political exclusion, the perception that one is excluded from meaningful public participation or is limited in accessing political processes and platforms to express their preferences is a strong driver of protest action (Tarrow 2000; Dalton 2004; Seybolt and Shafiq 2012).

However, although the grievance theory has been widely applied, it is not without any criticism. Firstly, and as queried by Zhong and Hwang (2016), the grievance theory seems to be limited in explaining "why, among people who have the same or similar grievances, some people participate in protest activities while others do not". Secondly, the grievance theory has been argued to offer limited explanation for protest action in developed and advanced democracies (Dalton et al. 2000; Simmons 2019). The reason behind the limited explanatory power of the grievance theory in these contexts is because severe political and/or socio-economic exclusion is less prevalent. Conversely, the grievance theory is argued to be more effective in explaining protest action in less developed and poor country contexts (Booth and Seligson 2009; Dalton et al. 2009). An increase in grievances relating to the deteriorating political, economic, and social conditions often lead to dissatisfaction, which stimulates citizens' participation in protest action to address such grievances.

2.6.4.2 Political Opportunity Structure

The POS approach draws on the opportunities created by the specific design and quality of the political system. The main submission of this approach is that the arrangement and design of institutional structures and political processes are key

macro-level factors in the fomentation of protest activity (Dalton et al. 2009). Institutional arrangements operate to influence the behaviour of actors inside and outside of the institutions (Bachmann and Inkpen 2007). To this effect, political regimes characterised by increased institutional openness seem to be more tolerant to protest action and the barriers to such action are almost non-existent (Kriesi et al 1995; Tarrow 1998; Dalton et al. 2009). The basic assumption is that protest action will be high in democratic regimes that are characterised by institutional openness. A significant part of the literature on protest used and applied the POS to explain the emergence and development of social movements (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1989, McAdam 1982, Meyer and Minkoff 2004). The POS pays significant attention to large-scale factors that create political opportunities for social movements and protest action to emerge and develop (Simmons 2019).

The characteristics of institutional openness are evident in a social environment characterised by viable means of political access and where citizens are enabled to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and speech. Citizens are empowered to make demands and criticize political authority without fear of reprisal, while the authorities are responsive to such citizens' demands (Dalton et al. 2009; Simmons 2019, in Acre and Rice 2019). Institutional openness is mostly associated with democratic regimes where protest is likely to be recognised and highly institutionalised as part and parcel of the repertoires of participation available to citizens. The institutional openness of a democratic regime provides a pathway to the emergence of social movements which use legal and institutional means to organise and mobilise (Simmons 2019). The legal, institutional and policy framework in democratic societies guarantees the protection of citizens' right to take action in order to express their demands and concerns through protest. As explained by Dalton et al. (2009), the institutional arrangements in democratic regimes may even motivate and "facilitate protest by providing venues and security protection for protests". In comparison, democratic regimes provide more opportunities for protest mobilisation and action than authoritative regimes do (Tilly and Tarrow 2006).

An alternative perspective provides that an open and democratic political environment that allows citizens the opportunity to raise their concerns and demands does not motivate citizens to protest (Dalton et al. 2009). The viewpoint of this perspective is that governments in such contexts are inherently responsive to their citizens and

consequently, the need to protest rarely exists. Nonetheless, the expectation is that protest action will be higher in democratic regimes characterised by institutional openness (Dalton et al. 2009). Several contextual variables and factors may be accommodated under the POS theory. The main variables under the POS may include regime type, electoral systems and the degree of government repression in a specific society (Saxton et al. 2006).

2.6.4.3 Resource Mobilisation

The resource mobilisation approach contends that the levels of protest in a specific societal context depend on the availability of certain resources that assist in the facilitation, organisation and mobilisation of protest action (Brady et al. 1995; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Dalton et al. 2009; Dee 2018). The resource approach operates at both an individual and contextual level. On a contextual level, resource mobilisation considers the socio-economic growth and development to be related to protest action. In developed and advanced democratic states, affluence has led to the development of a strong economic and technological infrastructure that has been crucial in facilitating and mobilising protest action (Norris 2002). For example, post-industrial democracies have stable communication and information technology structures and independent media, which have been a significant resource for social movements in the mobilisation of citizens. In such societies, a large and strong civil society sector is likely to have access to material and financial resources essential in the mobilisation and execution of protest action (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Resource mobilization theorists highlight the importance of social movement organisations, and the resources available to these organizations, as a basis for contentious politics (Brady et al. 1995; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Social movements have effectively mobilised citizens towards political action through the use of the internet, mobile phones and social media networks (Chan and Lee 2005; Dalton et al. 2009; Howard and Hussain 2013). Most scholars highlight the importance of the availability of time and participation in social networks as valuable resources for political participation and engagement (Verba et al. 1995; Schlozman et al. 2012). According to Dalton et al. (2009), individual citizens who “are members of social groups such as unions, churches, professional organizations and political parties” are easily recruited and mobilised to participate in protest activities (Dalton et al. 2009). At

an individual level, the resource mobilisation theory posits that individual citizens participate in protest based on the availability of various personal resources (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Norris 2002; Copeland 2013). Edward and McCarthy (2004) illustrate that these resources are economic or material and include what they refer to as moral, cultural, social-organizational, human and material resources.

The operation of the strategic resource mobilisation theory seems to be more effective in explaining protests in the context of developed and not less developed democracies. In less developed democracies, it has been found that those who are educated, wealthy or in higher income brackets are less likely to participate and engage in protest action (Canache and Kulisheck 1998). The argument advanced from this perspective is that in such countries, wealthy and educated people may already be content with the available conventional forms of participation and may already have their views represented by the political establishment (Verba et al. 1995; Bartels 2003). In this instance, such citizens would ordinarily not want to disturb the status quo by engaging in protest action (Dalton et al. 2009). Conversely, the poor and less resourced individuals are likely to participate in contentious politics, because they view protests as an alternative channel to raise their demands and concerns.

2.7 Declined Political Trust and Protest Action

As noted, early literature reached consensus that low and/or declined levels of citizens' trust constituted a threat to democracy (Gamson 1968; Crozier et al. 1970; Aberbach 1979). Despite the emergent scholarship challenging this historical position, the concerns raised by early scholars seem to have re-emerged consistently throughout the development of the extant literature on political trust (Dalton 2004; Zmerli and Van der Meer 2016; Van der Meer 2017). This may be because the emergence and subsequent expansion of democracy as the dominant political system across the globe have been accompanied by widespread declines in political trust (Levi and Stoker 2000; Catterberg and Moreno 2005). To this end, scholars continue to advance several legitimate reasons why the downward trend in political trust should be a cause of concern for contemporary democratic regimes (Levi and Stoker 2000; Dalton 2004; Landmark and 2016; Matebesi 2017). The decline in political trust has been observed and reported across both developed and less developed democracies. The decline occurs in societies with different historical, political, economic and social backgrounds,

and diverse institutional structures and cultural settings. Moreover, empirical evidence demonstrates that the decline does not only cut across different democratic regimes, but across all levels of government.

However, there are important variations, and it is important to note that the extent, pattern, and pace of the decline in political trust vary across different social contexts (Dalton 2004; Blind 2007). Most importantly, the decline occurs at different points in time of democratisation. For example, in new and less developed democracies, the decline is found to occur during the 'trial-and-error' period, which follows immediately after transition (Mishler and Rose 2001; Dalton 2004; 2013; Hooghe and Marien 2012). For new and less developed democracies, prolonged and unabated declines in citizens' trust in government have been found to have deleterious and far-reaching implications for good democratic governance (Cheema and Popvski 2010: 28). To be specific, low and/or declined levels of political trust are found to have negative impacts on citizens' levels and modes of political participation (Gamson 1968; Muller et al. 1982; Dalton 2004; Landmark 2016; Matebesi 2017).

Citizens' levels of political trust have been found to promote their participation in the politics of democratic societies quantitatively and qualitatively (Mishler and Rose 2005). As Matebesi (2017) succinctly puts it, "trust is inscribed into the very fabric of political participation" in democratic regimes. In fact, the levels of citizens' public participation are a reliable indicator of their trust in the government and the extent of democratisation of the political system (Blind 2007). The standard assumption in the scholarly literature is that political trust is (1) positively related to conventional participation, and (2) negatively related to non-conventional participation (Gamson 1968; Inglehart 1977; Norris et al. 2006).

It is against the backdrop of this assumption that the observed patterns of change in citizens' political participation from conventional to non-conventional forms of participation are found to be inextricably linked to low and/or declined levels of political trust in many democracies across the globe (Dalton et al. 2009; Hooghe and Marien 2012; Braun and Hutter 2016; Matebesi 2017). The most pronounced consequence of declined levels of citizens' trust in government is a rise in protest action as a form of political expression. However, declined levels in citizens' political trust are on its own insufficient to propel protest (Gamson 1968; Bertou 2015). In addition, it has been

argued that citizens' dissatisfaction and the belief that their participation in protest will change their situation are important determinants for protest action. Thus, dissatisfaction and political efficacy are key factors that propel citizens' participation in protest action.

2.7.1 Dissatisfaction and Disaffection

Protest action is often associated with citizens' dissatisfaction and discontent with government (Inglehart 1997; Dalton 2004; Stoker 2006; Hay 2007; Boualline 2019). Early literature positioned dissatisfaction and discontent at the centre of the relationship between political trust and protest action (Stokes 1962; Almond and Verba 1963; Gamson 1968; Inglehart 1977; Barnes and Kaase 1979). Low and/or declined levels of political are found to be a product of dissatisfaction and, as argued by Aberbach (1979), are the first step towards sustained political action and resistance. Dissatisfaction is found to be directly and inextricably linked to disaffection, which in turn results in citizens' withdrawal from formal political participation. This is not a complete withdrawal from political participation, but only from conventional forms. Citizens tend to endorse other non-conventional means to express their political preferences and demands (Chong et al. 2010; Mishler and Rose 1997).

When the government fails to act according to citizens' expectations, those who are dissatisfied are likely to express themselves through protest action (Christensen 2013). Furthermore, citizens who are dissatisfied with the more formal and conventional avenues of public participation are the most likely to use protest as an alternative form of participation (Braun and Hutter 2016). Norris et al. (2006), refer to this phenomenon as "disaffected radicalism" and argue that increased protest action is an expression of a lack of trust in the political system, which results in "disaffection with conventional channels".

The link between dissatisfaction and protest is usually found to be weak or non-existent in the context of developed societies and much more pronounced in less developed democracies (Dalton et al. 2009). The insignificant of dissatisfaction in explaining protest in developed democracies is associated with the argument that protest has now become entrenched as part and parcel of the many accepted repertoires of public participation (Christensen 2013). However, in the context of less developed democracies, dissatisfaction with the government motivates citizens to "act

collectively” through protest (Matebesi 2017). The causes of this dissatisfaction are manifold, but are mainly related to the failures of the political system to function and act according to citizens' legitimate expectations (Boualline 2019). Therefore, protests are an alternative ‘avenue to channel and express deep seated feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent towards the political system, its institutions and incumbent authorities (Mishler and Rose 1997; Norris et al. 2006; Chong et al. 2011; Matebesi 2017).

2.7.2 Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has been invoked in a number of studies on political participation and behaviour. The concept of political efficacy was first linked to low political trust by Gamson (1968), who argued that “a combination of high political efficacy and low political trust is the optimum combination for mobilisation – a belief that influence is both possible and necessary”. Although Gamson (1968) did not make specific reference to protest action, Hooghe and Marien (2013) argue that the effect of the combination of the two phenomena should be more relevant for participation in protest action. In its original form, political efficacy was initially conceptualised by Campbell et al. (1954: 187) who defined it as

the feelings that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process i.e., that it is worth whilst to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.

As the literature developed, scholars began to distinguish two interrelated dimensions of political efficacy, namely internal and external political efficacy (Craig et al. 1990; Citrin and Muste 1999; Berstou 2015; Boulianne 2019). On the one hand, internal political efficacy is understood to refer to an individuals' belief and levels of confidence that their political participation will have the ability to influence political decisions and actions of the government (Craig et al. 1990). On the other hand, external political efficacy is understood to refer to the individuals' belief and levels of confidence that the government will be responsive to their political action (Robinson et al. 1991; Bertou 2015; Boulianne 2019). Nonetheless, Bertou (2015) argues that it is internal efficacy that should be important for citizens' participation in protest action. The decline in the levels of participation in conventional activities in democratic regimes is argued to be in part a result of a combination between low and/or declined levels of political trust and high levels of internal political efficacy (Bertou 2015).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided an extensive literature review of the literature on political trust and protest action in the context of both developed and less developed democratic regimes. This was done to set out a theoretical framework establishing the parameters from which the relationship between the two phenomena will be examined in the following chapters. The literature on this topic is vast, extensive and multi-dimensional. However, a general limitation exists in relation to the literature on this topic in the context of new regimes such as post-colonial democratic regimes in Africa (Godefroidt et al. 2015). Most of the theories on political trust and protest action in the scholarly literature developed mainly in the mid-20th century emerged in the context of the U.S. and Western Europe. To this end, there seems to be a general lack of systemic analysis on the causes and consequences of political trust in Africa. This does not mean that academic interest on political trust and protest action is completely non-existent; there are scholars who have explored the topic (Godefroidt et al. 2015; Matebesi 2017; Nzewi et al. 2017). May this as be, this limitation is not entirely negative, as it presents ample opportunity to explore un-enchanted areas of research. In addition, it provides an opportunity to examine whether these theories developed in U.S. and Europe may be relevant and suitable in the context of new regimes in Africa.

The literature illustrates that citizens' basic evaluative orientations of the government have an impact on their attitudes of trust and have salient implications on citizens' political behaviour (Newton and Norris 2000; Parker et al. 2000; Marien and Hooghe 2011). In this regard, political trust is found to impact both citizens' levels of public participation directly and on their choice of avenues to express their political preferences. The consequences of the decline in political trust in many democratic societies have mainly been examined with its effects on political participation (Gamson 1968; Gurr 1970; Muller et al. 1982; Dalton 2004; Landmark 2016). Over the years, scholars have observed and reported on the changing trends in citizens' political behaviour and participation in democratic regimes across the globe. Empirical observations point out a decline in participation in conventional political activities such as voting, while participation in non-conventional activities and specifically protest, is on a dramatic increase (Levi and Stoker 2000). Research has established that low voter turnout and a rise in protest action are critical symptoms of a decline in political trust.

At the local government level, the decline in citizens' political trust is influenced by several individual and contextual factors. In line with the "developmental or lifetime model", the following individual and contextual level factors were assessed and examined as dominant in the fomentation of political trust: (1) Social Capital; (2) Socio-Demographic Traits; (3) Institutional Performance; (4) Institutional Design; and (5) Institutional Trustworthiness. An important observation was that not only are these factors important in understanding the decline in political trust but they also have a significant bearing the stimulation of protest action. This observation emerged from the application of what Mishler and Rose (2001) refer to as a "developmental or lifetime learning model" for explaining political trust and through the application of the three prominent theories on the causes of protest action, namely grievance, political opportunity structure and resource mobilisation. Therefore, the individual and contextual factors influencing the decline in political trust are duplicated in the stimulation of protest action. Thus, both the decline in political trust and the stimulation of protest action are conditioned by a common set of cultural and institutional factors. Against the backdrop of this understanding, the following chapters will focus on how political trust foments protest action in the context of municipalities in the Free State.

CHAPTER 3: SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

3.1 Introduction

There is now a lack of citizen confidence and trust in the system. This has been publicly evidenced in the spate of community protests during the course of the year, which may be seen as a symptom of the alienation of citizens from local government. (COGTA 2009)

The above excerpt was formulated as an outcome of a study conducted over a decade ago. However, its characterisation of the conditions prevailing in South African local communities is as relevant now as it was then. The relationship between political trust and protest action in the Free State cannot be evaluated and analysed without understanding the manifestation of this relationship in the broader South African context. The Free State is an integral part of South Africa and, by implication, does not exist in isolation of the material political, economic, and social conditions characterising the country as a whole. The challenges of declined levels of local political trust, the decline in voter turnout during local government elections, and endemic local protest action are not peculiar to the Free State.

An important finding that emerged from the conceptual and theoretical framework is that there seems to be a direct relationship between the individual and contextual factors that foment both the decline in political trust and protest. Therefore, it is important to determine whether this finding is relevant and applicable in the context of this research report. To do this, this chapter presents an exposition of the political, economic and social conditions prevailing in present-day South Africa, specifically as it relates to the state of political trust and protest action at a local government level. To this end, this chapter will examine and analyse the following structural and systemic causes of local protest action, namely unemployment, poverty and inequality, poor and inadequate service delivery, ineffective public participation, corruption and financial mismanagement, shortage of skills and expertise, and unfulfilled promises and unresponsiveness (Marais et al. 2008; Matebesi and Botes 2011; SALGA 2016; Matebesi 2017).

3.2 Historical Overview: The State of Trust

Political trust in South Africa is a complex subject matter and has been described as an outcome of three factors: circumstances, knowledge and experience. According to Matebesi (2017), all these factors are inextricably linked to the historical development

and legacy of the state. The South African state and its society are a product of a vicious political, economic and social system of colonial apartheid entrenched in racial segregation and discrimination. The brutal depredations of colonial apartheid that manifested over centuries, ultimately led to the state and government attracting exceptionally low trust levels from most South Africans (Mariotti and Fourie 2014). The majority of citizens were justifiably suspicious of the state and developed some levels of distrust towards its main political institutions and incumbent authorities. However, and in 1994, South Africa made a historical transition towards a new regime based on democracy, which invoked a sense of renewed trust in the new democratic political system. The democratic transition involved the negotiation of a new constitution as a fundamental part of that process. As a result, the transition was founded on principles of equality, human dignity and freedom, as encapsulated in the new Constitution (RSA 1996). To this end, trust in both its social and political dimensions was a necessary precondition for successful democratic transition.

Social trust was a requirement for a successful transition towards democracy primarily because the new state was to be negotiated by parties who significantly distrusted one another (Schreiber 2016). The high levels of social distrust in the main crystallised along the lines of racial divisions between black and white people. During the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which was a multi-party negotiating forum paving the way towards democracy, social distrust was mainly expressed through the divide between the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP), which were both critical and main role-players during the negotiations. The inability of the parties to trust one another would have collapsed any reasonable prospect of reaching consensus on the fundamental processes of successful transition. However, as Nathan (2004) correctly points out, the political leaders were able to engage in successful negotiations. This trust was seldom evident between the parties that had, on many occasions, led to major and positive outcomes during CODESA.

In a similar vein, political trust was critical for transition primarily on the basis that the 1994 elections became the first actual (democratic) test and measurement of the confidence that South Africans had in the new political system and its processes (Schreiber 2016). The significance of these elections was that they led to a major positive shift in the nature and character of state-citizen relations in South Africa. The

changed conditions allowed most citizens to relate and interact differently with the state, its institutions and incumbent authorities. The 1994 democratic elections led to the ANC winning the majority of votes, which enabled the formation of the first democratically elected government in South Africa in over three centuries. The majority of citizens had trusted the ANC to lead the process of transforming the state and society. To do this, the ANC formed the GNU which became critical to dislocating the “lingering distrust” between different political parties (Schreiber 2016).

Through subsequent elections, the majority of citizens continued to trust the ANC-led government to exercise state power on their behalf. However, it is important to note that political trust is not static and constantly changes over time about changing material conditions (Kestila-Kekkonen 2014; Matebesi 2017). This understanding of the nature of political trust raises several questions in the context of this research report. Firstly, do citizens’ trust levels in the South African government still reflect the same levels demonstrated in 1994? If not, what are the causes of any changes in citizens levels of trust towards the government? In a study conducted by Booysen (2013), it was reported that “black-Africans indicate that much of the preceding trust in government has lapsed”. Thus, the extant literature reveals that citizens’ trust in South Africa's government is considerably low (Booyesen 2013; Matebesi 2017; Chu and Shen 2017).

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has consistently reported on declining citizens’ trust in local government over the past two decades (HSRC 2008; SA Local Government Research Centre 2014: 5-6). In 2013, the HSRC conducted a study to gain insight into the attitudes held by South African citizens in relation to their local government. The study found that only 34% of the surveyed individuals trusted local governments (SA Local Government Research Centre 2014: 5-6). This study attributes the low levels of political trust to several factors, inter alia poor and inadequate service delivery, which was seen as a consequence of unethical practices such as corruption, nepotism and maladministration. Similarly, the Afro-Barometer, a pan-African series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, governance and society, conducted a survey on citizens’ trust in political institutions and incumbent authorities. Generally, the findings of this study were that citizens’ trust in the president, members of parliament, provincial premiers, local government councils, the ruling party, and opposition parties reflected a dramatic decline (Chingwete 2016). An

analysis of the findings in both these studies suggests that, unlike in the U.S. and Europe, citizens in South Africa are found to have higher trust levels in national as compared to local government (Booyesen 2013).

3.3 South African Local Government System

3.3.1 Local Government: Historical Development

The existence and development of local government in South Africa can be traced as far back as the 17th and 18th century with the arrival of the Dutch and British settlers in the Cape, respectively (Ngubane 2002; Powell 2012). It is not the intention of this report to provide a detailed historical account of the development of local government; however, it is important to note that the three-sphere or tier system of government in South Africa was introduced as far back as during the colonial era (Sithole and Mathonsi 2014). Local government in South Africa has a rich history and had undergone several significant changes since the colonial era. Before the 1994 democratic breakthrough, the authority of local government under the apartheid regime was systematically fragmented and demarcated along racial and ethnical divides (RSA 1998; Madumo 2016; Matebesi 2017). The main apartheid legislation, often isolated as the most influential in the establishment of a racially and ethnically fragmented local government, was the Group Areas Act 1950 (Act 41 of 1950). Dubbed the corner-stone of apartheid policy, the Group Areas Act prescribes that Africans in particular and blacks in general, should systematically be prohibited to reside in areas and/or municipalities designated for the white population.

The Group Areas Act was enacted to extend protection to white municipalities against the influx of Africans and secure sustainable rates of income for such municipalities (RSA 1998). Emphasising this point, Sithole and Mathonsi (2014) state that the “apartheid system sought to avoid a situation wherein wealthy white municipalities would have to carry the burden of providing services to areas inhabited by the African majority”. The consequences of these developments saw municipalities designated for the white population having more than an adequate revenue base and sufficient rates income necessary for the effective and efficient functioning of the system. In contrast, municipalities in the black townships and rural areas had very low, if at all any, revenue base to sustain the provision of even the most basic services (RSA 1998; SALGA 2015b). For example, the White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) shows that in rural areas, “water and electricity were supplied to white residents” at enormous

costs, while African and black rural communities had no service infrastructure at all (RSA 1998).

Local government in the homelands and black townships during apartheid has been described as having been almost non-existent (Ngubane 2002). The apartheid government made several attempts to establish and force exclusive black managed local government structures for black townships but without any tangible results (RSA 1998; Binza 2005). The WPLG provides a brief exposition of some of these by the apartheid government to create structures of local government in black-designated areas (RSA 1998). In the homelands, the apartheid government established limited local governance through giving traditional leaders some powers over allocation of communally owned land. In small rural townships, administrators were appointed with limited power to govern. For the Coloured and Indian communities, the apartheid government established management committees as advisory bodies to white municipalities (RSA 1998; Binza 2005). The apartheid government promulgated the Bantu Affairs Administration Act of 1971, which provided for the appointment of Administration Boards that sought to remove the responsibility of black townships from the authority and control of white municipalities (RSA 1998). Despite these attempts, local communities rejected these black local bodies of authority as imposed, undemocratic and illegitimate and often mobilised collective action against them (RSA 1998; Binza 2005).

On 31 May 1961, the apartheid government gained independence from the British and adopted the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1961 (Act 32 of 1961). In relation to local government, municipalities were under the strict control of provincial councils (RSA 1961). The 1961 Constitution significantly limited the powers, functions and decision-making capacity of local government as a whole. Decisions taken at the local government level could be subjected to judicial review at the behest of provincial and national government authorities (Matebesi 2017). For example, all by-laws enacted by municipalities were subjected to the approval of the relevant provincial administrator responsible for municipalities in a specific province (Binza 2005; Matebesi 2017). By the 1990s, South Africa had approximately 834 municipalities demarcated along boundaries characterised by racial and ethnic divisions (Binza 2005). To transform local government, the first responsibility of the new democratic state was to de-racialise the system and amalgamate the previously fragmented

municipalities into a single local government system (RSA 1998). To this end, the ANC-led government undertook the process of formulating and establishing an extensive legislative and policy framework regulating local government affairs.

3.3.2 Local Government: Constitutional and Legislative Framework

Local government in South Africa is a statutory body and should be understood through the extensive constitutional, legislative and policy framework that regulates its existence, functions and powers. The basis of the framework is provided for in the constitution and various pieces of legislation covering different aspects of local governance (Labuschagne 2010). This framework is supplemented by policy, and as Madumo (2012) points out, without policy, legislation on its own is not adequate to ensure that municipalities give effect to their constitutional and developmental mandate.

3.3.2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)

The Constitution is the supreme law and is located at the apex of the legislative framework regulating local government. In terms of Section 2 of the Constitution, any “law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled” (RSA 1996: 3). The Constitution provides for the establishment of local government as a distinctive sphere of government and provides for municipalities' structures: objectives, powers and functions (RSA 1996).

3.3.2.2 Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998)

The Municipal Structures Act was enacted with the purpose of regulating the establishment of functional structures for municipalities. Specifically, this Act gives effect to section 155 of the Constitution and sets out the criteria used to determine the category a specific municipality falls within and the functions and powers attached to each category. This Act provides for the establishment of municipal councils, ward committees and other internal structures and functionaries of a municipality.

3.3.2.3 Local Government Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000)

The Municipal Systems Act sets out the main principles, mechanisms and processes that regulate municipalities' obligation of ensuring the socio-economic emancipation of citizens and the universal access to basic and affordable services to local communities (Act 32 of 2000: 1). Operationally, the Act provides for the regulation of

the internal systems of municipalities through the establishment of the municipal administration (Madumo 2015).

3.3.2.4 Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act 2003 (Act 56 of 2003)

The Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) is an important piece of legislation that was enacted to regulate the financial affairs of municipalities. The MFMA was enacted to ensure sound and sustainable management of financial resources of municipalities. Section 2 of the MFMA sets out the objects of the Act and provides that it aims at, inter alia:

- (a) Ensuring transparency, accountability and appropriate lines of responsibility in the fiscal and financial affairs of municipalities and municipal entities.
- (b) The management of their revenues, expenditures, assets and liabilities and the handling of their financial dealings.
- (c) Budgetary and financial planning processes and the coordination of those processes with the processes of organs of state in other spheres of government.
- (d) Borrowing; the handling of financial problems in municipalities; supply chain management; and other financial matters (Act 56 of 2003: 17).

An important function of the MFMA is to align the budget of the municipality with the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and, ultimately, the service delivery budget plan of a municipality (Madumo 2015). Moreover, the MFMA ensures that the management of the financial affairs of municipalities are in line with the principles, standards and norms of the national and provincial treasury (SALGA 2006).

3.3.2.5 The Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act 1998 (Act 27 of 1998)

The Municipal Demarcation Act was enacted for the purpose of setting out the criteria and procedures for determining municipal boundaries. The Act provides for the establishment of an independent authority in form of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) that is tasked with determining municipal boundaries in line with the 1996 Constitution and other relevant legislation (RSA 1998c: 3).

3.3.2.6 The White Paper on Local Government 1998

The WPLG is a policy framework that establishes the foundation for a developmental local government system in South Africa. In terms of the WPLG, the developmental local government system is one,

which is committed to working with citizens, groups and communities to create sustainable human settlements which provide for a decent quality of life and meet

the social, economic and material needs of communities in a holistic way (RSA 1998: 6).

Thus, the WPLG became a blueprint for local government in South Africa and has been crucial in sketching out the transformation agenda for local government as envisaged by the 1996 Constitution.

3.3.2.7 The National Development Plan (Vision 2030)

The National Development Plan (NDP) is a broad macro-policy on social and economic development that aims to eliminate or at least significantly reduce poverty and inequality in South Africa by the year 2030. The NDP, in chapter 15, makes an argument that the creation of a developmental local government is central to the objectives of the plan as a whole (RSA 2012: 435). Local government is considered central to government's overall ability to create a capable developmental state in South Africa. To this end, the NDP aims to strengthen local government and set out four critical areas that must be given attention to achieve a capable developmental local government system. These critical areas are set out as:

- (a) An enabling framework for local government;
- (b) A proactive approach to improving intergovernmental relations;
- (c) A long-term approach to building capacity; and
- (d) Mainstreaming citizen participation (RSA 2012: 435-437).

3.3.2.8 Other Policy Initiatives

Other important policy initiatives aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient functioning of local government include, amongst others, the Local Government Turn-around Strategy of 2009 and the Back to Basics Strategy of 2014. These policy initiatives are produced at the national government by the ministry responsible for local government affairs in South Africa.

3.3.3 Local Government: Mandate and Objectives

The mandate and objectives of local government are statutorily prescribed by the Constitution. In terms of section 152 of the Constitution, the objects of local government are:

- (a) To provide democratic and accountable government for local municipalities;
- (b) To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- (c) To promote social and economic development;
- (d) To promote a safe and healthy environment; and

- (e) To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government (RSA 1996: 84)

Section 152(2) directs local government to strive, within its financial and administrative capacity, to achieve and carry out its objectives (RSA 1996: 84). The fulfilment and implementation of these objectives is crucial for the establishment and creation of a developmental local government. In addition, Section 153 of the Constitution provides for the developmental obligations of local government and instructs municipalities to:

- (a) Structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning process to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community; and
- (b) Participate in national and provincial development programmes (RSA 1996: 84-85)

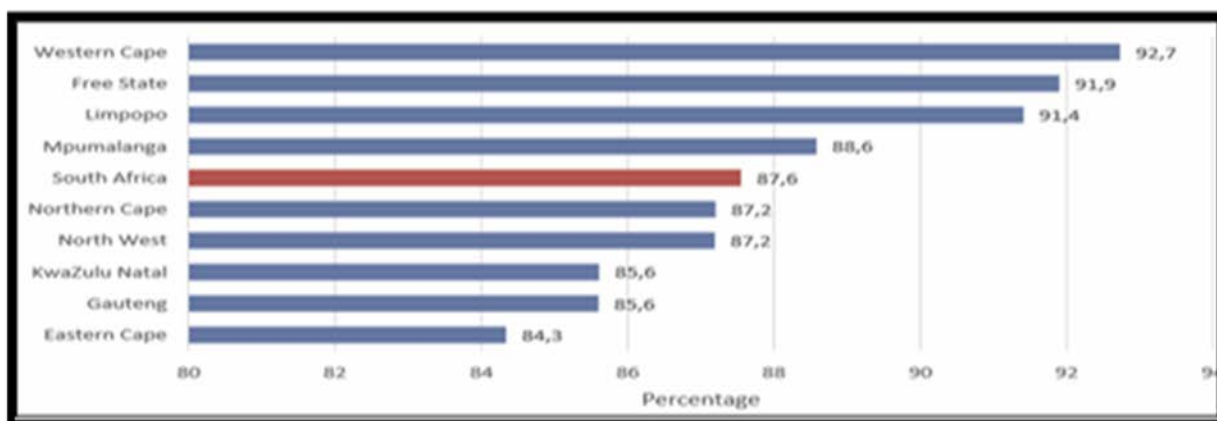
The adoption of the 1996 Constitution positioned local government to be at the epicentre of the government's program of establishing a developmental state. Such a developmental local government is considered effective and efficient in eradicating poverty and inequality through the provision of basic services to local communities (Mogale 2003; Nzewi et al. 2019; RSA 1998b).

3.3.4 Local Government: Progress and Challenges

The South African local government has registered significant progress in achieving its transformative constitutional objectives since its establishment in the year 2000. The most notable area of progress is the provision and delivery of basic services to local communities in the black townships and rural areas. As stated by Nkomo (2017), "for the first time, many citizens have enjoyed electricity and sewage systems that had previously been reserved for whites-only suburbs". Statistics reveal that more communities in black townships and rural areas now have access to electricity, water and basic sanitation and refuse removal services (COGTA 2009; Booysen 2013; Nkomo 2017; Statistics South Africa 2017).

Over the years, Statistics South Africa, which is a national statistical service organisation, has conducted periodical general surveys on households' access to different government services. These reports have been critical for tracking the progress made in the improvement of basic service delivery in the country (Statistics South Africa 2017). The 2016 Statistics South Africa General Household survey indicates that 84% of the South African population now have access to electricity; 88% have access to water; 81% have access to improved sanitation; and 65% have their

refuse removed at least once a week (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The report indicates that these are a significant improvement from the statistics revealed in 1994, shortly after the first democratic elections. Figure 3.1 indicates the percentage of households with access to electricity by province by 2016.



Source: Statistics South Africa (2017)

Figure 3. 1: Percentage of households with access to electricity by province, 2016

The majority of households in South Africa have access to electricity at an average of 87,6% across the country. The Western Cape, Free State and Limpopo registered the highest household access to electricity averaging more than 90%, respectively. The lowest was the Eastern Cape, with 84,3% of households with access to electricity. Regarding the provision of water services, statistics reveal that the percentage of people who had access to improved sources of drinking water increased from 76,6% in 1996 to 88,3% in 2015 (Statistics South Africa 2015). It is important to note that municipalities in different provinces are now the main providers of water to households across local communities (Statistics South Africa 2017). Table 3.1 shows that the number of households with access to piped municipal water increased from 9,3 million to 13,8 in 2018.

Table 3. 1: Access to piped municipal water supplies, 2006–2018

| | | Year | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2018 |
| Yes | N | 9 349 | 9 993 | 9 556 | 10 951 | 11 491 | 11 611 | 11 975 | 12 372 | 12 646 | 12 942 | 13 294 | 13 769 |
| | % | 76,5 | 80,1 | 74,9 | 83,9 | 86,5 | 85,5 | 86,0 | 86,5 | 86,0 | 86,1 | 86,5 | 85,4 |
| No | N | 2 867 | 2 487 | 3 204 | 2 107 | 1 796 | 1 965 | 1 949 | 1 932 | 2 059 | 2 083 | 2 073 | 2 360 |
| | % | 23,5 | 19,9 | 25,1 | 16,1 | 13,5 | 14,5 | 14,0 | 13,5 | 14,0 | 13,9 | 13,5 | 14,6 |
| Subtotal | N | 12 216 | 12 480 | 12 760 | 13 058 | 13 287 | 13 576 | 13 924 | 14 304 | 14 705 | 15 025 | 15 367 | 16 129 |
| | % | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |
| Unspecified | N | 27 | 42 | 59 | 70 | 168 | 221 | 227 | 217 | 198 | 283 | 377 | 541 |
| Total | N | 12 243 | 12 522 | 12 819 | 13 128 | 13 455 | 13 797 | 14 151 | 14 521 | 14 903 | 15 308 | 15 744 | 16 671 |

Source: Statistics South Africa (2018)

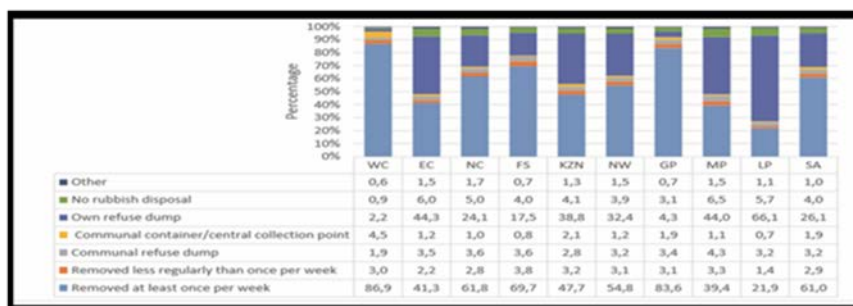
Generally, all provinces indicate high percentages, except for those in Limpopo (58,1%), the Eastern Cape (67,8%) and North-West (68,9%) (Statistics South Africa 2015). Table 3.1 below indicates households' access to piped municipal water supplies. Relatedly, there has been an improvement in the provision of access to basic sanitation services. Table 3.2 indicates the number of households that received basic sanitation by province, 2011–2015. Table 3.2 indicates that 10,8 million households in South Africa have access to basic sanitation and 3,3 million receive such services for free.

Table 3. 2: Number of households that received basic sanitation by province, 2011–15

| Province | Basic sanitation services | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Western Cape | 1 014 527 | 1 036 963 | 1 061 682 | 1 085 493 | 1 116 636 |
| Eastern Cape | 1 021 752 | 1 041 070 | 1 142 293 | 1 344 641 | 1 421 781 |
| Northern Cape | 237 708 | 244 210 | 256 976 | 260 464 | 272 595 |
| Free State | 665 955 | 663 630 | 718 743 | 699 889 | 735 661 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 1 675 267 | 1 739 073 | 1 867 052 | 1 982 765 | 2 024 193 |
| North West | 588 158 | 609 845 | 679 569 | 726 637 | 752 275 |
| Gauteng | 2 708 004 | 2 511 510 | 2 459 296 | 2 564 540 | 2 617 211 |
| Mpumalanga | 820 665 | 872 629 | 906 416 | 969 952 | 1 104 528 |
| Limpopo | 635 586 | 681 752 | 761 966 | 800 403 | 825 580 |
| South Africa | 9 367 622 | 9 400 682 | 9 853 993 | 10 434 584 | 10 870 460 |
| Province | Free Basic Sanitation | | | | |
| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Western Cape | 744 467 | 699 058 | 738 830 | 749 909 | 776 682 |
| Eastern Cape | 504 772 | 464 771 | 501 222 | 538 619 | 631 086 |
| Northern Cape | 72 107 | 73 863 | 58 353 | 56 013 | 64 872 |
| Free State | 158 548 | 154 896 | 144 716 | 146 197 | 133 958 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 508 754 | 233 026 | 397 867 | 457 573 | 452 409 |
| North West | 81 645 | 98 439 | 97 872 | 102 935 | 87 165 |
| Gauteng | 318 790 | 733 368 | 891 986 | 905 429 | 866 635 |
| Mpumalanga | 102 851 | 139 392 | 97 053 | 102 273 | 91 989 |
| Limpopo | 189 941 | 216 694 | 207 705 | 226 445 | 204 041 |
| South Africa | 2 681 876 | 2 813 607 | 3 135 604 | 3 285 393 | 3 308 837 |

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2017)

Another aspect of basic services which the local government has registered progress and improvement is the refuse and solid waste removal. Figure 3.2 indicates that 61% of households in South Africa are having their household waste removed at least once a week.



Source: Statistics South Africa (2017)

Figure 3. 2: Household refuse removal by province, 2016

The highest percentages of households where refuse is collected at least once per week were in the Western Cape (89,9%) and Gauteng (83,6%). The percentage of households in the Free State that have access to refuse removal at least once a week was 69,7% in 2016. Limpopo recorded the lowest number in all the provinces, with 23,3% households receiving such services.

However, and despite these achievements in the provision of basic services, local government is still faced with several critical challenges. These challenges not only undermine municipalities' ability to execute its constitutional mandate, but also now threaten to reverse the progress registered since 1994. To this end, Siddle and Koelbe (2016) make the point that the South African local government is still very much ill-equipped to shoulder the developmental agenda as required by the 1996 Constitution.

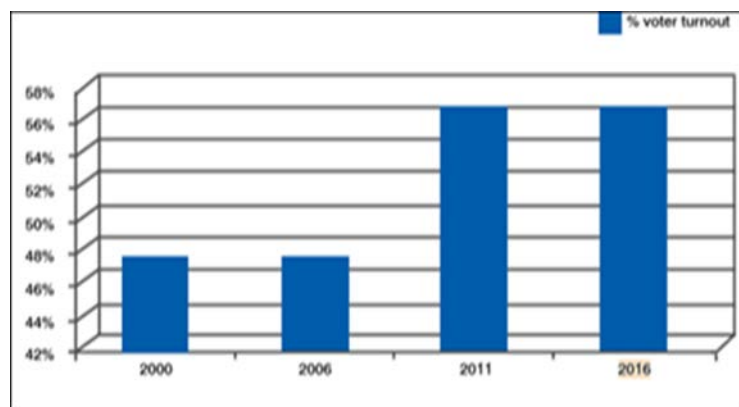
The complex political and administrative challenges facing local government are structural and systemic, often posing several threats to the effective and efficient functioning of the overall political system. The challenges facing local government are manifold and paralyse its ability to fulfil its constitutional and developmental mandate (Madumo 2015). In 2009, COGTA investigated and reported on the state of local government in South Africa and concluded that most municipalities in the country were under distress (Department of COGTA 2009). Although this report was produced over a decade ago, the challenges it identified as critical are as relevant now as they were in 2009. The report attributed the distress of municipalities to several factors relating mainly to issues of good governance. As will be shown, the distressful state of local government in South Africa is a result of endogenous and exogenous factors to municipalities.

3.3.5 Trends in Local Government Elections

Citizens' participation in elections has been established as an important conventional political activity that provides a frequent opportunity for citizens to choose their preferred governments. Elections remain the most common form of political participation in democratic societies. In fact, elections can be understood as "the founding pillars of any democratic political system" (Mesfin 2008). Powell (2000) considers elections as an important exercise that compels the government to pay attention to citizens' preferences, needs and demands. South Africa has had four LGEs its establishment of local government. This has afforded local communities an

opportunity to elect candidates of their choice to serve as councillors in various municipal councils across the country. This is very important, considering that the majority of South Africans were disenfranchised and “were unable to vote or engage in any public political participation before 1994” (Tirivangasi et al. 2017).

The overall voter turnout during LGEs has been consistent and has not significantly declined significantly since 2011. Figure 3.3 reports on the overall LGE voter turnout from 2011 to 2016.



Source: IEC (2017)

Figure 3. 3: Overall LGE voter turnout, 2011–2016

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) statistics indicate that in 2011, the voter turnout was 57,64% of the total registered voters and 57,95% in 2016 (IEC 2017). However, and contrastingly, the voter turnout or vote share of political parties reflects interesting trends. Table 3.3 indicates the voter turnout for the main political parties in South Africa from the year 2000 to 2016.

Table 3. 3: Percentage of total national vote in LGE, 2000–2016

| YEAR | POLITICAL PARTY | VOTES GAINED % |
|------|-----------------|----------------|
| 2000 | ANC | 59.4 |
| | DA | 22.1 |
| | IFP | 9.1 |
| | Other | 9.4 |
| 2006 | ANC | 66.3 |
| | DA | 14.8 |
| | IFP | 8.1 |
| | Other | 10.8 |
| 2011 | ANC | 69.4 |
| | DA | 15.3 |
| | IFP | 5.2 |
| | Other | 10.1 |
| 2016 | ANC | 55.6 |
| | DA | 24.5 |
| | EFF | 8.3 |
| | Other | 11.6 |

Source: Tirivangasi et al. (2017)

As indicated above, the ANC received 59,4% of the votes in 2000, 66,3% in 2006, and 69,4% in 2011. This shows that the ANC had consistently increased its share in the overall vote during LGE. Despite these significant increases in the ANCs voter turnout, the outcomes of the 2016 LGEs indicated a drastic decline in the ANCs overall vote share from the 69,4% in 2011 to 55,6% in 2016, which is a decline of 13,8%. The Democratic Alliance (DA) has increased its voter share in the last three elections from 14,8% in 2006, 15,3% in 2011, and 24,5% in 2016. An interpretation of these trends seems to indicate that in instances where the ANC gains votes the DA drops and vice versa (Tirivangasi et al. 2017). In 2016 the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) contested their first LGEs. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had been the third largest political party represented in local government 2000 to 2011 but in 2016, it was replaced by the recently formed EFF which received 8,3% of the overall vote share. The combination of the vote share for other small political parties has also been on a steady increase from 9,4% in 2000 to 11,6% in 2016 (Tirivangasi et al. 2017). During the 2016 LGEs, the ANCs overall vote share declined even more pronounced in metropolitan municipalities across the country. Mkhabela (2016) indicates that in comparison to 2011, the ANC lost a significant number of wards across the eight metropolitan municipalities combined. Specifically, the ANC lost the Johannesburg, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipalities to coalition governments.

The ANC recorded a decline in three main metropolitan municipalities, namely Johannesburg, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay, while the DA increased its share of the vote in all three (Mkhabela 2016). Effectively, the ANC lost control of these metropolitan municipalities to DA-led municipal council coalitions. The results of the 2016 elections ushered in a new era of coalition governments at a local level (Matebesi 2017). In analysing the outcomes of the 2016 LGEs, Matebesi (2017: 13) states,

It remains to be seen whether these municipalities will become more responsive and extend purview of democracy at local level, or become a space where the ostensibly ideological and doctrinal differences among the newly-found political allies take centre stage.

The above statement is important in the context of the recent developments in these coalition led municipalities. In 2019, the ANC managed to wrestle back the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality from the DA (Timeslive 2019a). This

happened after a vacancy emerged in the council when the mayor resigned from both the council and the DA. In the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, the mayor was removed by the council, and an Acting Mayor from the DA was appointed (News24 2019c). Since then, the courts have intervened on matters relating to the election of the new mayor (News24 2020b). In August 2020, at the Port Elizabeth High Court, the DA managed to secure a court order directing the Speaker of the Council to hold elections to elect a new mayor (Sowetan Live 2020a).

In Tshwane, the municipal council took three resolutions relating to the appointment of a new speaker, a motion of no confidence in the mayor and the subsequent removal of the mayor from office (News24 2019c). The DA challenged the legality of these resolutions and the Gauteng High Court in Pretoria declared all three resolutions unlawful and set them aside (Sowetan Live 2019b). Moreover, the Gauteng Provincial Government invoked section 139(1)(c) of the Constitution, which effectively placed the municipality under administration (Daily Maverick 2020a). The DA challenged this decision in court and argued that the reasons provided for these resolutions were politically motivated. The Gauteng High Court was called upon to intervene and had recently overturned the decision and as a result, the council has recently elected a new mayor (Mail and Guardian 2020; Business Day 2020). Coalition governments have changed the dynamics of local politics and it is not quite clear how the elections will play out in most municipalities. The evidence indicates that it will not be business as usual and interesting developments are anticipated. It is yet to be seen which political party will increase or decrease its power in local government. This is important in the context of LGEs providing a good indication of citizens' confidence and political trust in the local government sphere.

3.4 Protests at a Local Government Level

Since 2004, black townships have become indefinite scenes of endless protest action directed at local municipalities. Emphasising the pervasiveness of these protests, Mathonsi and Sithole (2014:6) state that "service delivery protests punctuate and pervade life in South Africa". Although these protests are locally oriented; however, and because of their pervasive nature, they have become an urgent concern for both the provincial and national government (Twala 2014). The increase in local community protests over the years has generated significant research on the topic (Atkinson 2007; Marais et al. 2008; Booysen 2009; Alexander 2010; Karamoko and Jain 2010/11;

Twala 2014; Matebesi 2017). Research on local protests has given much focus and attention to several aspects, including the nature, location, frequency, causes and consequences. Statistics, research and media reports indicate that local protests continue to increase in frequency and intensity across many localities.

3.4.1 Protests: Historical Accounts

The African National Congress (ANC) led Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), which includes the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU), and the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), and the United Democratic Front (UDF) and other progressive formations led massive protests in an attempt to render the apartheid government and its systems ungovernable (Tambo 1986; Marais et al. 2008). This history suggests that protest is not a novel phenomenon in the South African political and social landscape. Protest action has always been an integral part of the history of politics of the country (Alexander 2010; SALGA 2015b). Significant attention in the literature has been paid to the history of protest activity under apartheid in South Africa (Ballard et al. 2006; Marais et al. 2008; Twala 2014; Binza 2015). However, much of the literature pays attention on protest a national scale and less about those directed at local government. As argued by Twala (2014), “a lacuna remains, in as far as providing a historical analysis of the socio-political impact of such protests on South African citizens”. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there were no protests directly targeting municipalities in the past.

The ANC and its MDM organisations, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and many other local community organisations had consistently mobilised communities against apartheid municipalities and local authorities (Binza 2005). The WPLG highlights that in some areas, local communities adopted the slogan ‘one city, one tax’ to challenge the racially skewed local government system (RSA 1998). The increase in the frequency and intensity of protest action during apartheid can be traced back between the 1970s and 1980s, which saw an emergence of locally organised popular mass mobilisations against the regime (Ballard et al. 2006). As demonstrated earlier, representation at local government level during apartheid was undemocratic and was considered illegitimate by the majority of the local communities. In response, local communities embarked on mass protest action in a demand for a single and united local government system (Marais et al. 2008). Two main problems characterised the

apartheid local government. Firstly, there were no properly established channels of public participation and secondly, there was little or no service delivery in black townships, rural areas and homelands. This led to the rejection of the imposed apartheid government black local authorities, which were disguised as giving effect to self-governance (RSA 1998; Binza 2005).

The present wave of local community protests have been compared to those which emerged during apartheid. Some scholars have even described and characterised the current spate of local protests as a continuation of those that occurred during the apartheid era (Alexander 2010; Mottiar and Bond 2012; Twala 2014). To this end, local protests are argued to have “cultural connections” (Mottiar and Bond, 2012) with, or are a “replicate” of (Simpson 2010) or are reminiscent of (Nleya 2011) anti-apartheid protests. Similarities have been identified in the nature, causes and consequences of pre- and post-1994 protests (Ngwane 2011). Ngwane (2011: 84) points to similarities “in the issues taken up, their framing, repertoires of resistance, songs, symbols, etc.”. In addition, there are similarities in the identity of the protesters and their geographic location. Alexander (2010) states that both recent and past protests are led “by residents of formal townships and informal shack settlements, which are still spatially and socially separated from the suburbs”. As Matebesi (2017) succinctly puts it,

the current wave of community protests in contemporary South Africa are as rampantly institutionalized and personally and socially detrimental to impoverished communities as apartheid was.

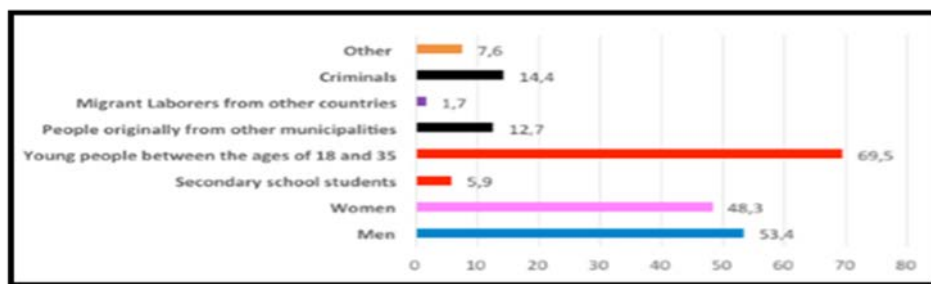
The tactics which protestors use seem not to have changed over the years and protesters still use the burning of tyres and barricading roads. Most interestingly, the police response to protest action seems not to have changed in many instances (Alexander 2010; Ngwane 2011; Mottair and Bond 2012).

3.4.2 Protest Location and Participants

It is common cause that most of the protests are directed at municipalities as the most basic units of local government. To emphasis this finding, Alexander (2010) argues that phrases such as “local political protests or local protests for short” best describe these protests' location. However, local community protests do not occur across all residential areas but mainly across black townships and rural communities. As conceptualised in this report, protest action hardly finds expression in the former white suburban areas that, in comparison, still receive better services (Booyesen 2007;

Alexander 2010; Nleya 2011). Similarly, Atkinson (2007) finds that local protests occur in “wrecked black and coloured townships”. Pithouse (2007) and Alexander (2010) conclude that the participants in these protests are poor and marginalised shack dwellers. This means that community protests occur in vulnerable areas faced with intense social and economic exclusion and political marginalisation (Akinboade et al. 2013). This is not surprising, taking into account that townships are a product of the skewed apartheid spatial planning characterised by limited access to adequate housing and basic service infrastructure. There is little, or rather, no effective LED in most townships that remain geographically isolated from mainstream economic activity, production and opportunities.

The youth have often been cited as the main participants in local protest across the different townships and rural areas (Von Holdt et al. 2011; Bedasso 2014). In the South African context, the youth are considered to be persons between the ages of 14 and 35, as defined in several Acts of parliament and policy documents, including the National Youth Commission Act 633 of 1996 (RSA 1996), the National Youth Policy and the Integrated Youth Development Strategy. SALGA (2015b) investigated the perceptions of local government on the main participants in local protest. Figure 4.6 shows the local governments’ perceptions of protest actors.



Source: SALGA (2015b)

Figure 3. 4: Local governments’ perceptions of protest actors

Figure 3.4 confirms that the majority of protester are young people between the ages of 18 and 35. Marais et al. (2008) identify that underdevelopment of youths in townships is a critical factor, leading to their participation in protests. Alexander (2010) finds that a key feature of local protests “has been mass participation by a new generation of fighters” and identifies high levels of unemployment among the youth as a critical motivator for protest action. Similarly, Alexander and Pfaffe (2013) argue that young people, as a result of unemployment, have the time and ability to organise and

mobilise the community towards protest action. The conditions and realities of the youth may have bearing on how they “evaluate and act on their perceptions of government performance” (Matebesi 2017: 47).

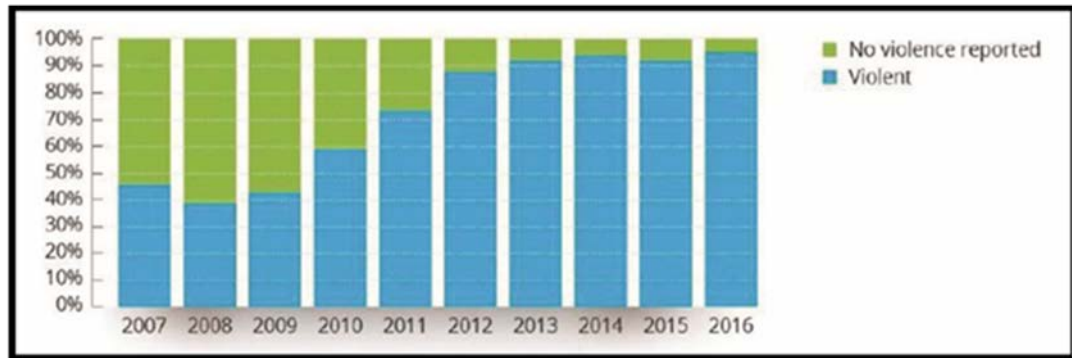
3.4.3 Nature of Protests: Violence and Disruption

The pervasiveness of protests over significant periods of time have several negative impacts on governance and may ultimately turn into social unrest (Lancaster 2018). Social unrest emerging out of protest affects good municipal governance negatively and may constitute a threat to the stability and legitimacy of the local government system. In the South African case, the element of violence, disruption, and criminality during protests are common features charactering protest. Matebesi and Botes (2017) sharply raise the point that increased violence during protests has weakened the ability and capacity of local government to perform and, most importantly, has hindered the provision of basic services. The culture of violence is historical and traces its lineage to the apartheid era. As Twala (2014: 161) correctly asserts, the “burning of government buildings and houses of those who were seen to be supporting apartheid” was a common feature of protest then.

There is a strong belief among some protesters that violent protests are more effective than peaceful action (Bohler-Muller et al. 2017). Runciman (2015) found that violence and the destruction of infrastructure by protestors are tactics to gain the attention of municipal councils and officials. Violent protests are described as those “where some or all of the participants have engaged in actions that create a threat or actual harm to people or property” (Vuuren 2013:14). However, it is important to note that the violence is not one-sided and cannot solely be attributed to the protesters. The response of the SAPS and how they manage conflict through the use of force during some local protests have also been found to instigate and/or even escalate violence (Mchunu and Theron 2013; Kunene 2014; Bohler-Muller 2017). The SAPS has been found to have ‘randomly’ opened fire on protesters and “at other times would fire at assembled groups of people who were not actively involved in the protests” (Twala 2014).

During the first decade of the South African democracy, violent protests constituted less than 10% of the overall protest activity, but increased dramatically after the emergence of the present wave of local protests after 2004 (Mottair and Bond (2012). Karamoko and Jain (2010/11) reports that by 2011, violence had become a common

feature in most of these protests. The Municipal IQ (2019) reports that service delivery protests reached an all-time high record in 2018 and a significantly high number of these protests were violent. Figure 3.5 compares violent and non-violent protests in South Africa between 2007 and 2016 and, as seen below, violent protests increased from just below 40% in 2009 to over 90% by 2019.



Source: Chigwata et al. (2017)

Figure 3. 5: Local governments' perceptions of protest actors

The disruptive and violent nature of protest is often characterised by, inter-alia, the blockading of roads through the construction of barricades; the burning of tyres and other flammable objects; rampant looting; destruction of buildings; confrontations with the police and other similar acts (Alexander 2010; Karamoko and Jain 2010/11; Twala 2014; Matebesi 2017). In addition to the violence, some protests have been taken over by opportunistic elements, involving criminal activities such as vandalism and arson. Furthermore, xenophobic attacks have emerged more than often during local protests and protesters argue that foreign nationals are a threat to their access to already limited resources, including access to basic services, housing and jobs (Twala 2014).

Protest have also been disruptive to the functioning of other aspects of society unrelated to the core concerns of the protesters. For example, protests have hurt schooling and disrupted the right to basic education (Twala 2014; SAHRC 2016; Matebesi 2017; Nzewi et al. 2019). In an investigative report, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) found that the right to education has been affected negatively by service delivery protests that emerge as a result of factors not related to the core functions of basic education (SAHRC 2016). The main finding of the SAHRC has been that protesters who deny learners access to schools are in violation of the learners' constitutional right to basic education. In 2019 in the Western Cape, service delivery protests turned violent and led to the disruption of education, with the closure

of 21 schools in the province (News24 2019b). In some instances, access to health care has been infringed on, as was the case in Phuthaditjhaba in the Free State, where health services were impacted negatively as a result of violent local community protests relating to water services (News24 2020a).

The scholarly literature refers to violence during protests as a form of militancy or even a reflection of what is termed “violent democracy” (Alexander 2010: 37; Von Holdt, 2013:590). However, evidently, this violence is a strong indicator of the deep dissatisfaction and discontent that have developed with local communities across the country (Karamoko and Jain 2010/11). Interestingly, the use of violence by protesters has led to the destruction of the same-service delivery infrastructure, which should ensure good service delivery (Holdt et al. 2011; Chigwata et al. 2017; Matebesi and Botes 2017). To this extent, violence during local community protests seems not to be progressive, as it may exacerbate the deteriorating conditions in local communities.

3.4.4 Civil Society and Protest Mobilisation

The role of civil society in the organisation and mobilisation of protest action has been at the centre of the development of the social sciences literature. Civil society and specifically social movements have always provided a platform for citizens who are dissatisfied with the government to demonstrate by means of a wide range of protest activities (Matebesi 2017). Pre-1994, local government was on the receiving end of intensive protest mobilisation coordinated by various social movements (Von Holdt et al. 2011; Marais et al. 2008; Matebesi and Botes 2017). Nonetheless, Marais et al. (2008) argue that most social movements that mobilised against apartheid “had to adjust their strategies” after the ANC had been democratically elected in 1994. To this extent, social movements have been able to transform in line with the changing political, economic and social conditions (Matebesi 2017).

Post-1994, many of the organisations that were at the forefront of protesting against the apartheid government “began to support – and even form alliances with” the ANC (Matebesi and Botes (2017). However, the honeymoon phase between government and civil society was interrupted in the early 2000s with the emergence of new social movements more antagonistic towards the ANC-led government (Ballard et al. 2006). Much of the literature points out that the new social movements emerged in direct resistance to the ANC-led government’s liberal macro-economic policies (Ballard et al.

2006; Marais et al. 2008; Matebesi 2017). Between 2000 and 2010, several new social movements emerged in South Africa. These included, amongst, others the Anti-Privatisation Forum; the Treatment Action Campaign; the Western Cape Anti Eviction Campaign; Abahlali ba se Mjondolo and Equal Education. These movements have challenged the government on a variety of issues, including service delivery, access to education and health care, unemployment, crime, racism, etc.

Several studies have found evidence of a link between the new social movements and the protests that began to emerge in local communities (Seekings 2000, Nthambeleni 2009). In describing the role of social movements in the current conjuncture, Matebesi (2017: 47) states,

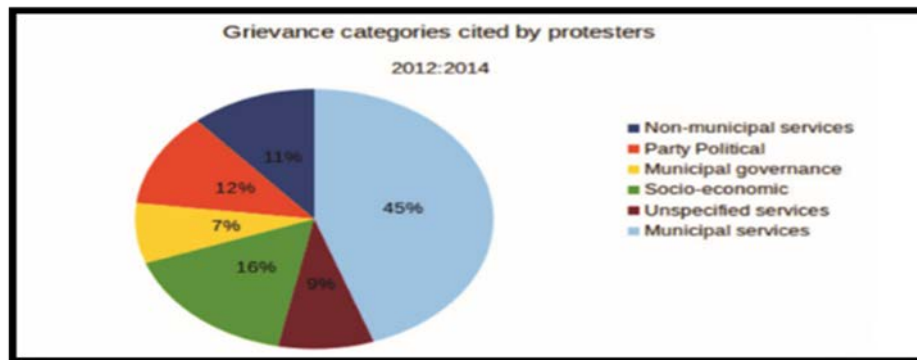
As unresolved grievances of individual actors at local municipal level accumulate, existing social networks provide a powerful platform to the aggrieved to share their frustrations. The availability of dense social networks with frequent interactions allows individual residents to share their grievances with relatives, friends and colleagues, among others.

Social networks have created a platform for shared grievances and an opportunity for citizens to take appropriate collective action to address their concerns and dissatisfaction. However, it has been argued that the present local protests are different and “cannot be referred to as fully-fledged social movements” (Marais et al. 2008). Local civic groups operating in townships are to a large extent still poorly organized, “highly fragmented and spontaneous” (Matebesi 2017).

3.5 The Main Causes of Local Protest

Several reasons which have been advanced to explain the fomentation of local community protests. An analysis of the literature demonstrates that the causes of protest are diverse, complex and multi-dimensional. This is a reflection of the nature and character of these protests that are “dynamic and characterised by great complexity” (Matebesi 2017). As succinctly put by Nleya (2011), “the exact configuration” of the factors fomenting local protests is a context depend matter and varies from “protest to protest and community to community”. Nonetheless, the scholarly literature reveals several factors that emerge as common and dominant across different local communities. Figure 3.6 indicates grievance categories as cited

by the protesters. It is evidently clear that a significant part of the citizens' grievances relates mainly to the provision of municipal services to local communities.



Source: Nzewi et al. (2019)

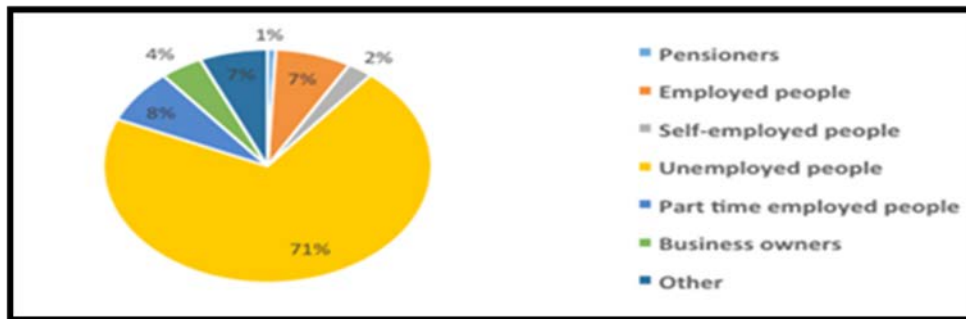
Figure 3. 6: Grievance categories cited protesters 2012/2014

Figure 3.6 indicates that grievances relating to municipal services constituted 45% of overall grievances; 16% of grievances to socio-economic issues; 7% to municipal governance; and 12% party political issues. Political infighting in the ANC has been found to be a common factor leading to protests where rival and/or factional groups within ANC branches use service delivery challenges to mobilize support against local rivalries (COGTA 2009; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Twala 2014; Matebesi 2017). Matebesi and Botes (2017: 91) refer to political infighting in the ANC as a hidden factor responsible for fuelling protests. The ANC has long accepted that, in some instances, service delivery protests are organised and led by its own members at local community level (Alexander 2010). However, it must be noted that some of the grievances local communities raise have been found to be unrelated to the mandate and objects of local government (SALGA 2016). These grievances fall outside the scope and capacity of municipalities and are more related to national and provincial levels of government.

3.5.1 Unemployment, Poverty and Inequality

The triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality are the most prevalent challenges facing local communities across local communities (Hoffman 2012). Despite the progress and improvements in the living conditions of most citizens, however, unemployment, inequality and poverty remain persistently high. These challenges are even more evident in black townships and rural areas where most citizens depend on the government to provide social services and goods to improve their livelihoods (SALGA 2016). As Nleya (2011) correctly asserts, "it needs to be

borne in mind that informal settlements are also sites of higher poverty and unemployment, which could in themselves be responsible for higher protests”. Figure 3.7 indicates the perceived economic status of community protesters.



Source: SALGA (2015b)

Figure 3. 7: Perceived economic status of community protesters

Protests are more prevalent in communities that are poorer and have high levels of unemployment (Akinboade et al. 2013). SALGA (2015b) makes an argument that the unemployed in local communities “use protest in the same way the working class use strikes, and for the same reason, to see improvements to living conditions”. Table 3.4 compares the unemployment rates in South Africa between 2015–2019.

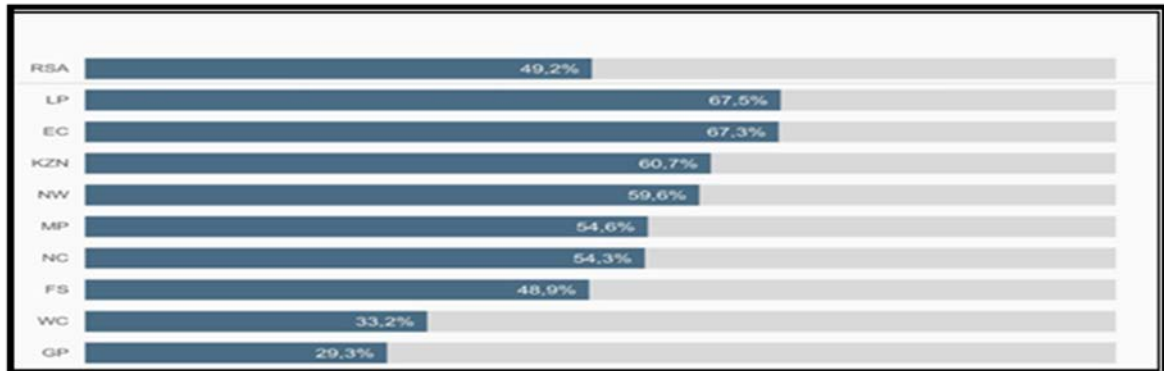
Table 3. 4: Unemployment rates in South Africa, 2015 -2019

| YEAR | UNEMPLOYMENT IN # | UNEMPLOYMENT % | % INCLINE/DECLINE |
|------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 2015 | 5 154 000 | 25.0% | 0% |
| 2016 | 5 634 000 | 26.6% | +1.6% |
| 2017 | 6 177 000 | 27.7% | +1.1% |
| 2018 | 6 083 000 | 27.2% | -0.5% |
| 2019 | 6 655 000 | 29.0% | +1.8% |

Source: Adapted from Free Facts (2019)

Table 3.4 indicates that between 2015 and 2019, unemployment in South Africa increased by an average of 2%. In 2015, the unemployment rate was at 25% and at 29% by 2019. For the past five years, unemployment in South Africa continued to increase and no significant progress in creating jobs was registered. At present, the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2021 shows that unemployment rates are at 34,4%, which is constituted mainly by youth (News24 2021). A crucial consequence of unemployment is that local governments are unable to derive revenue from local communities, which has a negative impact on the

provision of services (SALGA 2016). Unemployment leads to poverty and inequality, which exacerbates the challenges facing local communities and this causes them to demand more from their municipalities. Figure 3.8 shows the percentage of adults living in poverty in South Africa, 2014/2015 per province.



Source: Statistics South Africa (2019)

Figure 3. 8: Adults living in poverty in South Africa, 2014/2015 per province

Figure 3.8 indicates that 49,2% of adults are living in poverty. The most affected provinces seem to be those with vast rural areas such as Limpopo (67,5%), Eastern Cape (67,3%) and KwaZulu-Natal (60,7%). Poverty and unemployment lead to high levels of inequality and a widening gap between rich and poor in society. South Africa is considered one of the unequal societies globally, as characterised by a very high Gini coefficient. Table 3.5 indicates the Gini-coefficient in South Africa per area between 2006 and 2015.

Table 3. 5: Gini coefficient in South Africa by area, 2006–2015

| YEAR | GINI INDEX URBAN AREA | GINI INDEX RURAL AREA |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2006 | 0.65 | 0.53 |
| 2009 | 0.62 | 0.51 |
| 2011 | 0.62 | 0.55 |
| 2015 | 0.61 | 0.53 |

Source: Adapted from Statista (2020)

Table 3.5 shows that inequality is high across both urban and rural areas in South Africa. To this end, and as argued by Alexander (2010: 32), “inequality must rank highly among the structural determinants of the protests”. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are a result of poor economic development and growth. Economic

growth leads to a decline in protest activity and, conversely, poor economic growth increases protests (Bedasso 2014; Matebesi 2017). Local government has an important constitutional responsibility to foster and facilitate LED in order to ensure improvement in the quality of life within local communities. LED is crucial for creating jobs and reducing the high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality. In contrast, the lack of economic development and growth has often led to deteriorating and poor economic conditions which 'correlate to protest action' (SALGA 2015b).

3.5.2 Poor and Inadequate Service Delivery

The provision of services to local communities is considered to be more critical and important in less developed rather than developed countries (Owusu-Ampomah and Hemson 2004). The provision of services is considered one of the main reasons for the existence of local government and its municipalities (Statistics South Africa 2017). The provision and delivery of services to local communities are fundamental constitutional objectives of local government (RSA 1996; Matebesi 2017). Section 153 of the Constitution states that a municipality has the responsibility to "structure and manage its administration, budget and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community" (RSA 1996).

As reiterated, local government has registered significant progress in the provision and delivery of basic services to local communities in the townships and rural areas. However, Mpehle (2012: 214) states that there is now consensus that service delivery across all the provinces in South Africa "is proceeding at a snail's pace, minimal and not adequately visible". In a survey on how well or badly citizens believed that their municipalities were handling service-delivery, over 50% responded 'fairly badly' or 'very badly' (Nkomo 2017). Similarly, Statistics South Africa (2017) points out that citizens believe that municipalities are not doing enough to address their service delivery concerns adequately. This has led to many local communities that have low and poor access to services resorting to protest in demand of adequate and sufficient service provision (SALGA 2016).

Media reports on local protests indicate that the majority of protesters often complain about the lack of provision of electricity, water, sanitation, refuse removal and related service infrastructure. The poor and inadequate delivery of these services is one of the most decisive factors leading to protest action (Marais et al. 2008; Booysen 2009;

Alexander 2010; Mottair and Bond 2012; Twala 2014; SALGA 2016). According to Powell et al. (2015), issues relating to service delivery constitute 50% of the causes of protests in local communities. A study by Nkomo (2017) revealed that 51% of white South Africans who mainly stay in suburbs and areas that are better serviced express more satisfaction towards service delivery than 33% of their black counterparts who mainly stay in townships.

There are several factors that have led to present-day challenges in the provision of services to local communities. A key and outstanding factor that has often been raised is population growth and migration (Pillay et al. 2006). Although progress has been registered in relation to the provision of water, sanitation, electricity and other basic services, the population growth in black townships has led to a serious service delivery backlog (Statistics South Africa 2017). To this end, the increase in population means that more households require basic services. Unfortunately, this demand has often not been met with increased provision of basic services and, as a result, more service-delivery problems have emerged in local communities.

An analysis of the literature indicates that protesters are concerned with the delivery of basic services, with the delivery of basic services, and the quality of such services (Alexander 2010; Hunter 2015; Nkomo 2017). Poor quality services may be the result of the lack of proper maintenance and management of service delivery infrastructure. In emphasising the challenge regarding the quality of services, Nkomo (2017) poses a question and asks, “although services may be reaching people who never had them, is the quality of services inadequate to satisfy their recipients?” To this end, local community protests are a direct result of a number of factors relating to both the provision and quality of basic municipal services.

3.5.3 Ineffective Public Participation

The ability of local governments to foster and facilitate credible platforms for public participation is an important constitutional obligation critical for the promotion of local democracy. This constitutional obligation is imperative in the light of the historic exclusion of the majority of citizens from participation in the affairs of local government (Binza 2005). Section 152(2) of the Constitution provides that the local government has an obligation “to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government matters” (RSA 1996 : 84). To give effect to this

constitutional object, legislation requires of municipalities to create a conducive and enabling environment for local communities to participate in their local governments' affairs (SALGA 2016).

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, communities have the right to be part of the local development planning, budget and service delivery processes. To this extent, the Municipal Systems Act provides for the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) which enables citizens' participation at a ward or community level (RSA 2000). The IDP is a strategic five-year plan of a municipality which "informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision making in a municipality" (Bratton and Sibanyoni 2006). The formulation of the IDP of a municipality involves all municipal role-players such as elected representative councillors, ward councillors, ward committees, and other "IDP representative for a" (SALGA 2016). An important function of political participation is to ensure "effective communication" between the municipality and the local community. As stated by Mpehle (2012: 225),

The inability of government to have adequate community consultation and engagement in decision-making processes, particularly in matters that affect communities, limits the voice of communities on the type, standard and quality of services they need.

According to SALGA (2015b), the more municipalities communicate and engage with local communities, the lower the communities desire a propensity to protest. However, should any of the channels created for political participation be closed, ineffective and inefficient, local communities will most likely resort to protest as an alternative avenue for raising their grievances and engaging the government (Nleya 2011; SALGA 2016; Matebesi and Botes 2017). Local community protests emerge in communities where there is a communication gap between local councils and local communities (Mpehle 2012). Consequently, intensified protest action in black townships has been found to be an outcome of the municipalities failing to implement adequate public participation (Runciman 2014; Pointer 2015). As argued by Pointer (2015), local protests are an indication of the inadequacy of representative democracy at a local level. The failure of municipalities to facilitate and sustain citizens' political participation signifies that local governments are not responsive to citizens' economic, political and social developmental needs (SALGA 2016: 14).

3.5.4 Financial Mismanagement and Corruption

Corruption and financial mismanagement are two critical issues that have been raised by protesters as reasons for embarking on protest action. As stated by Karamoko and Jain (2010/11: 32), issues of corruption and financial mismanagement are often invoked in conjunction with one another as major concerns during protest. The failure of service delivery is often associated with corruption and mismanagement of government resources, such as the misuse or under-use of funds allocated for the provision of basic services (Managa (2012: 3). The financial viability of a municipality is an important aspect of good local governance that cannot be over-emphasised. The capacity of a municipality to budget and allocate financial resources for carrying out its programmes is a core responsibility that may not be neglected. To ensure sound financial management, the MFMA provides the necessary procedures the municipal council and administration should adhere to when conducting its affairs.

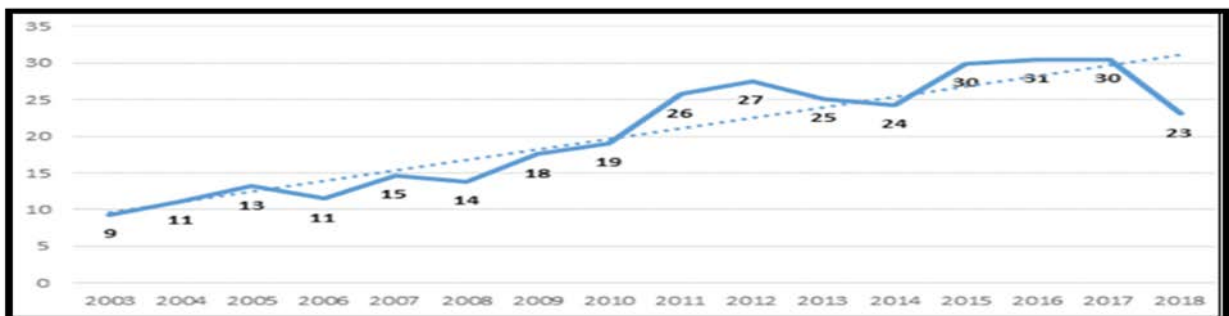
Substantial evidence has been produced that demonstrates that many municipalities are faced with “serious irregularities, corruption, fraud, financial mismanagement and related wrong-doing” (COGTA 2009; Managa 2012; Matebesi 2017). Local and district municipalities across the country are faced with a problem of poor and inadequate financial management characterised by weak “budgeting, accounting, credit control and financial reporting systems” (Koma 2010; COGTA 2014). In addition, municipalities were found to have a challenge of non-compliance with the legal and policy framework regulating sound financial management. In a recent report of the Auditor-General (AGSA 2018) it was noted that the municipal audit outcomes for the 2017/2018 financial year indicated an overall regression. Figure 3.9 shows a summary of audit outcomes of municipalities for the financial year 2017/2018.



Source: AGSA (2019).

Figure 3. 9: Summary Municipal Audit Outcomes, Financial Year 2017/2018

The Auditor-General attributed the deterioration of audit outcomes to the slow implementation and in many instances even a total disregard the recommendations made by the AG (AGSA 2018: 1). As a result, the lack of accountability for financial and performance management has deteriorated in most municipalities across the country. In 2020, the Auditor-General released audit outcomes of municipalities for the financial year 2018/2019 and titled the report, “Not much to go around, yet not the right hands at the till.” (AGSA 2020) As stated in a media press release of the AGSA (2020), it was reported that municipalities were managing billions of rand “in ways that are contrary to the prescripts and recognised accounting disciplines”. Overall, only 21 municipalities out of 226 achieved a clean audit (AGSA 2020). There was a total of R32 billion in irregular expenditure, which indicated a sharp increase from the R21 billion in the 2017/2018 financial year. Moreover, fruitless and wasteful expenditure was found to remain high at R2 billion for 2018/19. Figure 3.10 indicates the percentage of people identifying corruption as one of the top three challenges in South Africa, 2003 – 2018.



Source: Politicsweb (2020)

Figure 3. 10: Percentage identifying corruption as one of the top three challenges in South Africa, 2003–2018

Corruption at a local government level has reached unprecedentedly high levels. In the past few years, a significant number of municipal officials have been arrested by the Hawks National Clean Audit Task Team on allegations of corruption and fraud across the country. For example, it was reported that the former acting manager for the Ratlou Municipality in North-West was arrested for alleged tender fraud to the value of R5,8 million, which occurred between 2018 and 2019 (The Citizen 2020). An official in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality was arrested for soliciting a bribe by demanding “cash in order to facilitate the approval of the complainant’s building plan” (Timeslive 2019b). In Newcastle, an official responsible for the payroll system manipulated the system by making salary payments to persons who were no longer

working at the municipality (SAPS 2020). In the Free State, a municipal manager at the Dihlabeng Local Municipality and a security service provider were arrested on charges of corruption and fraud (News24 2019). To this end, corruption and financial mismanagement are, more often than not, concerns raised by local communities during protests.

3.5.5 Shortage of Skills and Expertise

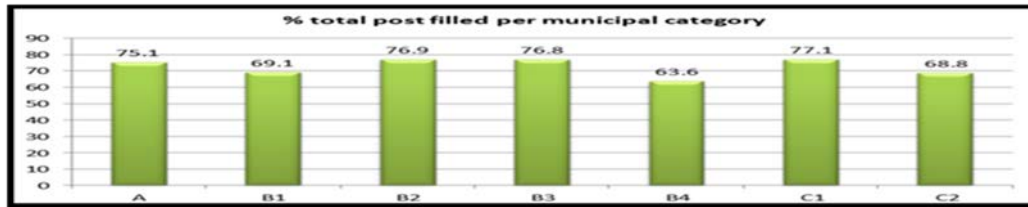
Effective, efficient and good governance in local municipalities requires of officials in administrative positions to possess several skills and technical expertise to ensure policy initiatives' proper development and implementation (Twala 2014). Koma (2010: 114) defines capacity as “the availability of and access to concrete or tangible resources (human, financial, material or technological) and knowing to implement policies”. Hemson et al. (2009: 151) identify the lack of skills as an impediment to effective governance and stated that South Africa generally “faces grave challenges regarding capacity within the state concerning skills, numbers of professionals, the competence to manage complex systems” In this regard, Gumede (2009: 58) states that this has led to senior civil servants rotating “from one top job to another because only they can be politically trusted”. This reality ultimately compromises local governments' capacity to execute in mandates and objectives effectively and efficiently. In 2012, the Auditor-General's report found that officials in key positions at more than 70% of the audited municipalities did not have the minimum or necessary competencies and skills required to perform their jobs (AGSA 2012). Table 3.6 below indicates the percentage of municipalities that were operating with acting municipal managers and chief financial officers per province by the end of the 2017/2018 financial years.

Table 3. 6: Percentage of Municipalities with Acting Municipal Managers and Chief Financial Officers per province, 2018

| 2018 Summary per Province | | | Acting MM | | Acting CFO | | Both Acting | |
|------------------------------|------------|----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Eastern Cape | 39 | EC | 7 | 17,9% | 4 | 10,3% | 3 | 7,7% |
| Free State | 23 | FS | 4 | 17,4% | 6 | 26,1% | 2 | 8,7% |
| Gauteng | 12 | GI | 2 | 16,7% | 4 | 33,3% | 2 | 16,7% |
| Kwazulu Natal | 54 | KZ | 5 | 9,3% | 10 | 18,5% | 1 | 1,9% |
| Limpopo | 27 | LP | 4 | 14,8% | 7 | 25,9% | 4 | 14,8% |
| Mpumalanga | 20 | MP | 4 | 20,0% | 5 | 25,0% | 1 | 5,0% |
| North West | 22 | NW | 5 | 22,7% | 13 | 59,1% | - | 0,0% |
| Northern Cape | 31 | NC | 8 | 25,8% | 10 | 32,3% | 5 | 16,1% |
| Western Cape | 30 | WC | 3 | 10,0% | 3 | 10,0% | - | 0,0% |
| Total | 258 | | 42 | 16% | 62 | 24% | 18 | 7% |

Source: National Treasury (2018)

As indicated by Table 3.6, the highest percentage of crucial positions not being filled remains high in Gauteng (16,7%), Northern Cape (16,1%) and Limpopo (14,8%). In the North-West Province, 59,1% of municipalities had acting chief financial officers, an alarming percentage. Similarly, Figure 3.11 indicates the percentage of posts filled per municipal category.



Source: Presidency (2014)

Figure 3. 11: Percentage of posts filled per municipal category, 2014

Figure 3.11 indicates that none of the municipalities have filled posts to their full capacity. In fact, as indicated by Figure 3.11, the positions that are critical are not filled in municipalities. The lack of skills and technical expertise in municipalities have often been blamed on the ANC’s political deployment process and it is argued that the ANC ordinarily deploys unskilled and unqualified persons in key government positions (Mpehle 2012; Twala 2014). The process of political deployments and appointments in the ANC is a highly politicised and sensitive matter (Gumede 2009; Twala 2014). Gumede (2009) argues that the appointment of persons in key and crucial positions in the civil service is normally not based on merit, but rather on political connections. Similarly, Mpehle (2012) states that “the deployment of unskilled, unqualified and inexperienced cadres to municipal management positions” has had a negative impact on the provision of service delivery. Moreover, Siddle and Koelbe (2016: 33) argue that “employees with high priority skills, such as engineers, were frequently lured away by the private sector with promises of more generous” salary packages. This has left the public sector and in particular local government and its municipalities with a significant shortage in skilled employees.

3.5.6 Unfulfilled Promises and Unresponsiveness

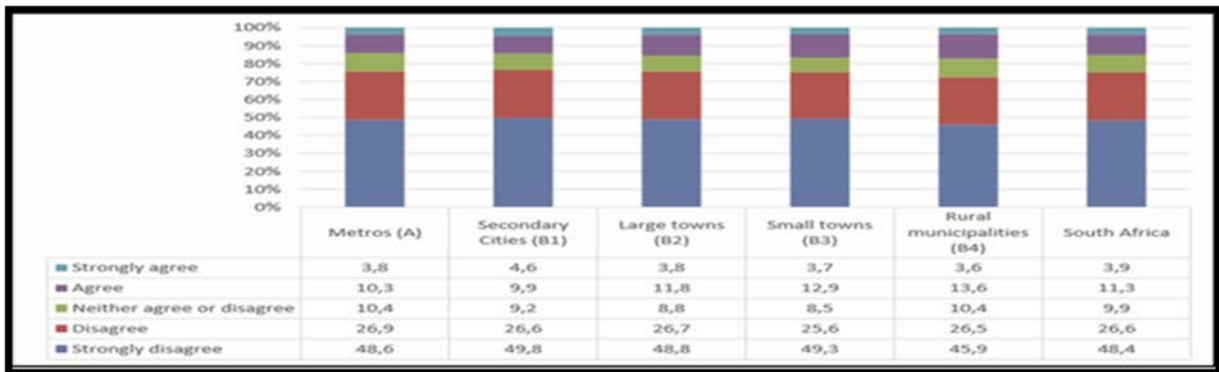
Local councils, ward councillors and municipal administrations have been found to be unresponsive in many instances and this has been isolated as one major cause of local protests (Booyesen 2009; Nleya 2011; Twala 2014; Tirivangasi et al. 2017; Nzewi et al 2019). Booyesen (2013) found that issues relating to unfulfilled government promises are an ‘ever-present’ theme in local communities. Managa (2012) argues

that the failure of the ANC to keep and fulfil its promises since 1994 is responsible for the rise in protest in local communities and further states,

Most election manifestos and campaigns of participating political parties have shared a series of recurring themes since 1994: addressing underperforming municipalities to arrest poor service delivery; improving basic service delivery; developing infrastructure; fighting corruption; and creating employment. Once these promises are not delivered, communities begin to panic and resort to protestation. (Managa 2012: 2)

In a similar vein, Marais et al. (2008) identify the neo-liberal macro-policy choices of the government as constrain and an impediment to the ANCs ability to fulfil its promises. Even when communities have protested to register their demands, local councils still fail to respond adequately to the grievances of local communities. Matebesi (2017: 150) found that during or after protests, officials from the provincial government visit local communities to address the protesters and make promises without a sound understanding and knowledge of the issues of the local municipality. Nonetheless, the anger of local citizens' manifests as protest directed at municipalities even though local officials' were not responsible for the promises made and not fulfilled. COGTA (2009) reports that unrealistic promises "create a crisis of expectation rather than a more developmental approach" in addressing the empowerment of local communities. Managa (2012) states that these citizens' expectations are informed by 'false perceptions' created by political parties in an attempt to secure citizens' votes.

The unresponsiveness of municipalities to the needs and concerns of citizens is considered to be generally unresponsive, which has been cited as one of the main propellers of protest action in local communities (SALGA 2016; Matebesi 2017). During protests, local municipal councils and municipal administrations are often accused of unresponsive to community needs, grievances and demands as stated in memorandums. Statistics South Africa (2017) found that a significant majority of households across South Africa perceive municipalities as not responding adequately to identified challenges and problems of local communities. Figure 3.12 shows the percentage of households that believe that municipalities are attempting to solve the problems they have identified by municipal category.



Source: Statistics South Africa (2017)

Figure 3. 12: Percentage of households that believe that municipalities are attempting to solve the problems they have identified by municipal category, 2016

Figure 3.12 indicates that 75% of households in South Africa believe that municipalities do not attempt to solve their challenges and problems. This high percentage seems to cut across all municipalities, irrespective of category. Similarly, Lekalake (2015) found that local citizens' perceptions of their ward and municipal councillors are not impressive.

3.6 Conclusion

Unlike in developed countries, the structural causes and consequences of political trust have not received sufficient attention by scholars in developing countries (Chu and Shen 2017). In the context of relatively new democratic states and in comparison to America and Europe, there has not been significant research on the causes and implications of political trust. The history of the development of the concept of political trust and subsequent scholarship on the topic have been influenced by the observation of declines in citizens' trust in many, if not all, democratic regimes and at all levels of the government (Van der Meer 2017). In the context of this report, an examination and determination of the causes of both political trust and protest action required a close analysis of the state of local government and its municipalities. Based on this analysis, the report found that protest action is an outcome of low and/or declined levels of political trust as conditioned mainly by the failures of municipalities to function in an appropriate manner. The decline in political trust seems to be accompanied by widespread decline in conventional political participation and a rise in unconventional forms of participation. The question of the causal direction of the relationship between low and/or declined political trust and the fomentation of protest is an important issue in the context of democratic regimes. The most accepted position in the literature is

that there is a negative relationship between political trust and protest action (Hooghe and Marien 2013).

The new democratic dispensation in South Africa required a deliberate process of transforming the state and society to build citizens' trust in government, which was low during apartheid. It must be noted that transformation and state building are not events, but a process that occurs over long periods of time. The reconfiguration of local government since 2000 is a good example of such a process and significant progress has been registered in developing a functional local government system. An important breakthrough was the development of a coherent and comprehensive constitutional and legislative framework regulating the affairs of local government (Presidency 2014). The newly established trust led to a major and positive shift in the nature and character of state-citizen relations and, as such, altered how they relate and interact with the democratic government. The evidence of this trust can be seen in citizens' expression of confidence towards the ANC through several LGEs since 2000.

Two important interrelated questions were posed in this chapter: Firstly, do citizens' trust levels in the South African government still reflect the same levels demonstrated in 1994? If not, what are the causes of any changes in citizens levels of trust toward the government? The conclusion of this report is that the trust that citizens had at the point of transition to democracy has started to diminish (Gouws and Schultz-Hezernberg 2016). This indicates that the preceding trust and support in government the previously disenfranchised, marginalised and excluded citizens were not unconditional but were associated with expectations of political, economic and social freedom. The development of democracy has about brought many changes in the attitudes of citizens. This demonstrates that political trust is not a static or stagnant phenomenon, but one that constantly changes with the development of society (Matebesi 2017). Empirical evidence from research is consistent with characterising South African citizens as demonstrating extremely low levels of trust across the different levels of government. However, there are variations in the levels of trust citizens have in national and local government and research illustrates that citizens appear to be more trusting of the national government than of local government (Brown 2005; Nzewi et al. 2019).

Protest activity is not a new phenomenon in South Africa and has been a prominent and frequently used terrain of struggle in the fight against colonial apartheid (Nleya 2011; Madumo 2015). During apartheid, citizens protested to demonstrate their dissatisfaction not only towards the national government, but also towards local political institutions and incumbent authorities. Municipalities in many localities across the country were often the target of mass protest over issues relating to rent, electricity and water tariffs (Binza 2005; Twala 2014; Matebesi 2017). During the 1980s and 1990s, the mobilisation of these protests were more evident in black townships (Matebesi 2017). As correctly pointed out, several scholars have drawn comparisons between the present wave of local community protests to those that had swept the country during apartheid (Alexander 2010; Mottair and Bond 2012; Twala 2014; SALGA 2015b). Protest action directed at municipalities have since increased both in frequency and intensity across many local communities in the country. As a consequence, South Africa has at times been pronounced as the protest capital of the world (Nleya 2011).

CHAPTER 4: PROTEST ACTION IN THE FREE STATE

4.1 Introduction

The Free State is located at the geographical centre of South Africa and its capital city is Mangaung (Bloemfontein), the judicial capital of the country. The Free State is mainly rural and is geographically characterised by farmlands, mountains and goldfields. The Free State comprise five regions, one metropolitan municipality (Mangaung); four district municipalities (Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana and Xhariep); and 18 local municipalities. The local municipalities in the Free State consist of several small towns that are generally widely dispersed (Main 2019). The Free State is the third-largest province and covers an area of approximately 129 825 km² (Main 2019). The population of the Free State contributes approximately 5% to the overall national population (Main 2019). The Free State's population has grown from 2 633 506 million in 1996 (approximately 6,5% of the overall South African population) to 2 887 465 million in 2019 (approximately 4,9% of the overall South African population) (SAIRR 2020).

The main contributing sectors to the economy of the Free State are agriculture, mining and manufacturing. The agricultural and mining sector are the strongest contributors and the province is often dubbed the breadbasket of the country (Main 2019). Main (2019) highlights that the agricultural sector contributes “approximately 34% of the total maize production of South Africa, 37% of wheat, 53% of sorghum, 33% of potatoes, 18% of red meat, 30% of groundnuts and 15% of wool”. With regard to mining, the Free State is the fifth-largest gold producer in the world and the mines are a major source of employment in the province (Main 2019). Nonetheless, the Free State Province, like all other parts of the country, face serious challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

This chapter provides an exposition of the nature of protest activity in the Free State. This in order to determine and demonstrate the link between local protests and the loss and/or decline in citizens' trust in municipalities. The data presented in this chapter were retrieved from reports by government and non-governmental agencies. However, and as it specifically relates to protest, the data analysed herein were in the main sourced from media articles and reports by credible institutions. The data below are presented in line with the conceptual and theoretical framework established in Chapter 2. At the centre of the conceptual and theoretical framework is the finding that

both the decline in political trust and the rise of protest action are influenced by the same set of individual and contextual factors.

4.2 Free State: State of Local Government

Several reports of the AG have found that municipalities in the Free State are deteriorating and are faced with a financial crisis. A consistent observation in these reports was that the local government environment in the province “displayed a total breakdown in internal controls as the province’s political and administrative leadership” (AGSA 201; 2018; 2019). According to the AG, the leadership in both political and administrative capacities consistently fails to improve its accountability for financial and performance management (AGSA 2018: 110). To this end, municipalities in the Free State have failed to produce a single clean audit for three consecutive financial years since 2016 (AGSA 2019). The lack of adequate financial controls and mechanisms ensuring accountability is a common feature characterising municipalities across the province. The outcomes of the audit reports of the AGSA point to an undesirable state of affairs in local government, which generally seems to be embodiment of ineffective, inefficient and dysfunctional municipalities.

An important finding by the AG in the 2018/2019 financial year was that the combined liabilities of municipalities across the province were found to exceed current assets by approximately R6,1 billion (AGSA 2019). Additionally, municipalities in the Free State owed Eskom and the water boards a total of R3,1 billion. This was reiterated by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) responsible for Treasury (Free State) in a presentation to the NCOP on the state of local government in the province (Bloemfontein Courant 2019). Irregular expenditure disclosed in the financial statements of municipalities doubled from R600 million in the 2017/2018 financial year to R1,4 billion in the following financial year (AGSA 2019). This amount could have been higher, taking into account that municipalities such as Maluti-a-Phofung and Masilonyana had failed to submit financial statements, while eight other municipalities could not complete their audits (AGSA 2019: 20).

Municipalities in the province have not demonstrated any tangible improvements and the AG reported that 80% of municipalities in the Free State remain financially vulnerable (AGSA 2019). As a response, some municipalities in the province have been placed under provincial intervention as provided for in terms of section 139(1) of

the Constitution. Nonetheless, the present state of municipalities indicates that these measures are yet to produce the desired outcomes. To this extent, the AG found that the undesirable status of several municipalities in the province qualified them for mandatory section 139(5) constitutional intervention (AGSA 2019: 110).

4.3 Free State: Local Government Elections Trends

Overall, the ANC in the Free State has received overwhelming support during local government elections since the first LGEs in the year 2000. By implication, the ANC has been in control of all municipal councils at both the district and local levels in the province. However, and following the overall decline in the ANCs support in the 2016 LGEs across the country, the support of the ANC in the province showed a drastic decline. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the ANCs support during LGEs between 2000 and 2016.

Table 4. 1: Summary ANC (Free State) Support LGE Results, 2000-2016

| Election Year | No. of Metropolitan Councils | No. of District Councils | No. of Local Council | Overall Support % |
|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2000 | Not Applicable | 5 | 20 | 72.10 |
| 2006 | Not Applicable | 5 | 20 | 76.61 |
| 2011 | 1 | 4 | 19 | 71.74 |
| 2016 | 1 | 4 | 18 | 62.41 |

Source: Independent Electoral Commission

Table 4.1 indicates that the support of the ANC decreased drastically from 71,74% in 2011 to 62,41% in 2016. For the first time, in 2016, the ANC lost control of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, which is currently led by a coalition government between the ANC, SACP, the Metsimaholo Community Association (MCA) and the Forum for Service Delivery (Daily Maverick 2017).

4.4 Local Community Protests in the Free State

In 2004, some of the very first service delivery protests in the country took place in Intabazwe in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district in the Free State, and Phumelela in

early 2005 (Atkinson 2007; Booyens 2007; Bernstein and Johnston 2007; Marais et al 2008; Twala 2014). In the case of Intabazwe, the community felt marginalised from the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) and mobilised against the lack of development in their community (Atkinson 2007; Bernstein and Johnson 2007). The main concern of the local community was that the ISRDP funding was channelled askew to the QwaQwa area and there was no equitable share for the development of their communities. The protest escalated into violence and clashes with the SAPS led to the death of Tebogo Mkhonza, a boy in his teens (Booyens 2007; Twala 2014). A year later, the protests spread to Phumelela (Bernstein and Johnson 2007; Marais et al. 2008).

By 2005, local protests had begun to emerge in several other municipalities across the province and the primary concern of communities was issues related to service delivery and governance (Marais et al. 2008). Between early February and mid-April 2005, local protests emerged in Phomolong in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality. The following issues were identified as forming part of the grievances of the protesters in Phomolong, namely corruption, lack of economic development and employment, poor governance and unfulfilled promises (Botes et al. 2007) The community is reported to have complained about the fact “that the municipality discriminated against Phomolong in favour of Welkom” in terms of development and the provision of municipal services (Alexander 2010: 30).

Various media, academic and organisational reports indicate that municipalities in the Free State have had their fair share in local community protests over the past decade. Most of these protests have taken place in black townships and have often turned to being uncontrollable and violent. In some cases, the South African Police Service (SAPS) have resorted to the use of force to control these protests, at times leading to fatalities (Sowetan 2011; SABC 2018a; 2019a; News24 2020). In 2018, the Municipal IQ reported that out of all nine provinces, the Free State recorded the highest number of major service delivery protests in the country (Municipal IQ 2019; Bloemfontein Courant 2019a). The reasons for these protests are diverse but are mainly mobilised around the failure of municipalities to respond adequately to the normative expectations of local communities.

4.5 Protest Activity: Free State Regions

4.5.1 Fezile Dabi District Municipality

The Fezile Dabi District Municipality is a Category C municipality and is located to the north of the Free State. It is the smallest district in the province and comprises four local municipalities (Moghaka, Metsimaholo, Ngwathe and Mafube). The main contributing sectors in the economy of the district are trade, manufacturing, agriculture and finance (Main 2019). Table 4.12 provides the demographic information of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality.

Table 4. 2: Fezile Dabi District Municipality demographic information, 2019

| | |
|---|--|
| Area (km²): 20 668km ² | Households (No.): 172 370 |
| Population (No.): 494 777 | Grade 12 and Higher Education (%): 39.2% |
| Population Growth (%): 0,31% p.a. | Formal Dwellings (%): 85.6 |

Source: Adapted from Main (2019)

The council in the Fezile Dabi District Municipality has been led by the ANC since the first LGEs in the year 2000 to date. The ANC is in control of all councils in the local municipalities, except the Metsimaholo Local Municipality, which is led by a coalition between the ANC, SACP, Metsimaholo Community Association (MCA) and the Forum for Service Delivery (News24 2017a).

(a) Metsimaholo Local Municipality

In January 2013, protests erupted in Zamdela in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality after a community meeting concerning municipal demarcation matters (News24 2013a). To be specific, the community protested in opposition to the proposed merger between the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in Sasolburg and the Ngwathe Local Municipality in Parys. The community was opposed to the merger on the basis that they accused the Ngwathe Local Municipality of being a hub for fraud, nepotism and corruption (Mail and Guardian 2013). The protests quickly escalated to violence and disruption characterised by the barricading of roads and the torching and throwing of stones at passing vehicles. This led to a violent clash between the SAPS and the protesters, which resulted in deaths, injuries and arrests (News24b; EWN 2013a; b). The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) stated in a media briefing that it was investigating deaths and injuries allegedly caused by police action (IPID 2013).

Based on the IPID statement, it could be deduced that the victims were youth, which may indicate that there were high participation rates of young people in these protests.

These protests led to the MDB instituting an investigation into the proposed merger (EWN 2013b). Although the proposed merger had not materialised, it seems that the local community demonstrated their dissatisfaction in the 2017 local by-elections. Effectively, this resulted in the ANC losing exclusive control over the municipal council it had led since the 2000 LGEs, with no political party receiving an outright majority adequate enough to form a council on its own (Daily Maverick 2017). The emergence of the MCA in 2013 during the protests led to the association registering to contest elections and gaining two seats on the council. The opposition parties, namely the DA, EFF, MCA, and the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) entered into a coalition government (Mail and Guardian 2017). Although the ANC won the majority of the seats (19), it was not enough against the numbers of the DA (12), EFF (8), MCA (2) and the FF+ (1), which amounted to a total of 23 seats. The coalition government did not last and in less than a year, tensions between the MCA and DA began to emerge, which altered relations (Mail and Guardian 2017). In addition, the MCA shifted alliance towards the ANC in 2017, and as a result left the municipality hung and unable to take decisions.

The inability of the council to approve the municipal budget for the financial year 2017/2018 led to the provincial government invoking section 139(4) of the Constitution and dissolve the council on the 6th of July 2017 (Free State Government 2017; News24 2017b). The dissolution was based on the failure to adhere to the MFMA requirement that council must approve the budget at least 30 days before the start of the financial year (1 July) of the relevant year. An administrator was immediately appointed following the dissolution of the council (News24 2017b). By-elections were called and held on 29 November 2017, which saw an unprecedented move by the SACP to contest local elections outside the ANC-led alliance (News24 2017a). The outcomes of the by-election in terms of the seat allocation was ANC (16), DA (11), EFF (8), and SACP (3), while the MCA, FF+ and the Forum for Service Delivery each received one seat on the council. The ANC, SACP, MCA and the Forum for Service Delivery entered into a coalition, which led to the mayoral position going to the SACP, while the speaker position was occupied by the ANC (News24 2017c).

The AGs reports do not paint the Metsimaholo Local Municipality in a good light. An issue raised consistently by the AG in its reports is the R21 million spent on a sports complex that was not constructed and built (AGSA 2018; 2019) The AG states that even though the municipality paid over 98% of the allocated R21 million budget to a service provider, upon visiting the site, only a fence was visible and no sports complex in sight (AGSA 2019). In addition, the AG found that the municipality paid R146,6 million to a service provider for the Refengkgotso Wastewater Treatment Works project, for which was initially budgeted only R6 million. According to Fin24 (2020), the municipal manager of the Metsimaholo Local Municipality had been suspended for over two years with pay on allegations of fraud and corruption exposed by two forensic reports. The AGSA also found that some officials in this municipality have been doing business with the government (AGSA 2019). The Metsimaholo Local Municipality has been reported to be in dire need to appoint competent and qualified persons in strategic positions in finance, supply chain, human resources and legal departments in the administration of the municipality (Daily Maverick 2020b). Due to the inability of the council to take decisions, it was unable to decide on appointments of suitable persons for all these important and senior administrative positions. The SABC (2019c) reported that “long running political battles in Metsimaholo Local Municipality have left residents desperately deprived of service delivery” (SABC 2019c).

(a) Moqhaka Local Municipality

In April 2019, the Moqhaka Local Municipality was at the receiving end of the anger of local communities who protested for over two weeks (The Citizen 2019a). The protests erupted in the town of Kroonstad on or about 4 April 2019, and by the following week, the protests had spread to other local communities such as Steynsrus (News24 2019c). It is important to note that at the same time, the media reported that local protests were erupting across the country and 13 local communities had embarked on protests (EWN 2019; The Citizen 2019a). The reason behind the eruption of these protests may be related to the fact that 2019 was an election year. The Citizen (2019a) and News24 (2019c) reported that the Moqhaka Local Community protested in opposition to high unemployment rates, service delivery concerns and allegations that there was a misuse of funds that were meant for the construction of a new mall in the area. OFM (2019f) reported that the protesters raised allegations of maladministration

and mismanagement of funds against officials of the Moqhaka Local Municipality council and administration.

The municipality held a meeting with the community in an attempt to resolve some of the concerns raised in a letter of demand from the protesters (OFM 2019f). However, the protests in Moqhaka continued despite such attempts. The municipality responded by stating that it had informed the community that some of the concerns raised could not be resolved in the immediate. Nonetheless, the local community proceeded to embark on protest and which within a short period of time escalated to violence and disruption (The Citizen 2019b; News24 2019d). Three trucks were reported to be burnt on the night of 11 April 2019 on the R76 road between Steynsrus and Kroonstad (News24 2019c). SABC (2019) reported that one of the truck drivers was injured as a result of stone throwing and protesters even looted the goods that were transported. During the protests, a local post office in Phomolong was burnt down and municipal vehicles were torched. The SAPS reported that 60 people were arrested for public violence (News24 2019c; 2019e). The arrested suspects were between the ages of 16 and 28, which is an indication that the majority of protestors were youths (News24 2019e; Times Live 2019d).

An article by Bloemfontein Courant (2019) titled 'Moqhaka needs to be stabilised financially' reports that the Mayor of the Moqhaka Local Municipality indicated that the municipality is facing several challenges such as "lack of investor confidence, high vacancy rates, damning Auditor-General reports, and high Eskom debt". According to the article, the Member of the Executive Council for Finance in the Free State briefed the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) that Moqhaka Local Municipality was in distress. The issue of high vacancies in the municipality was singled out as one of the main challenges and problems in the municipality.

4.5.2 Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality

The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is a Category C municipality located to the east of the Free State. The district accounts for almost a third of the geographical area of the province and consists of six local municipalities Maluti-a-Phofung, Dihlabeng, Mantsopa, Setsoto, Nketoana, and Phumelela. The main contributing sectors in the district are agriculture and tourism (Main 2019). Table 4.12 provides the demographic information of the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality.

Table 4. 3: Thabo Mofutsanyana district demographic information, 2019

| | |
|--|--|
| Area (km2): 32 734km2 | Household (%): 246 028 |
| Population (No.): 779 330 | Grade 12 and Higher Education (%): 37.4% |
| Population growth (%): 1.31% p.a. | Formal Dwellings (%): 77.7% |

Source: Adapted from Main (2019)

The council in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality has been led by the ANC since the first LGEs in the year 2000 to date. The ANC is in control of all councils in local municipalities.

(a) Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality

As previously highlighted, the first protests in the Free State emerged in the Maluti-a-Phofung Local District (Atkinson 2007). In the past decade, most of the major service delivery protests in the Free State occurred in the Maulti-A-Phofung Local Municipality. In March 2017, several protests emerged in Phuthaditjhaba (formerly known as QwaQwa)(Bloemfontein Courant 2017; OFM 2017). In Tseseng and Mmako, residents barricaded roads with large rocks and burning tyres in protest in demand of water (Bloemfontein Courant 2017). These protests are said to have been sparked by the decision of the National Department of Water Affairs to stop supplying water to local communities using water tanker trucks as it was too costly and expensive. As a result of these protests, the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality attracted the attention of the Public Protector after receiving several concerns and complaints about alleged financial mismanagement in the municipality that was identified as the cause for the water shortages (OFM 2017).

In 2018, violent and disruptive protests again erupted in Phuthaditjhaba over service delivery issues related to electricity cuts, unemployment and poor services in general (News24 2018; SABC 2018b). The main demand of the protesters was the removal of the mayor who was accused of illegally employing approximately 500 people without following the proper recruitment channels (News24 2018; OFM 2018b). During these protests it was alleged that a protester was shot and killed by the SAPS (SABC 2018c). The protests were joined by municipal workers who had downed tools after some of them not receiving their January salary, while the employment contracts of others were terminated (OFM 2018b). In response, the Free State Provincial Government invoked

section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution on the basis that the municipality was unable to perform its constitutional and legislative obligations (COGTA 2019).

To exacerbate the situation, 16 ANC local councillors were expelled from the ANC in 2019 after they had attempted to remove the ANC mayor by voting with opposition parties (City Press 2019). Consequently, by-elections had to be held in the affected wards and the ANC lost 10 wards to independent candidates (SABC 2019b). The 10 independent candidates were the same councillors that the ANC had expelled from the organisation and who later campaigned under what became known as the Maluti-A-Phofung 16 (MAP16) (City Press 2019). The ANC secured 32 out of 69 seats and formed a council, but this was nevertheless a drastic decline from the 2016 LGEs' outcomes (News24 2019f).

Prompted by consistent protest activity in Maluti-A-Phofung, there was a Ministerial visit to the municipality in an attempt to find solutions to the ongoing crisis (COGTA 2019). In describing the challenges facing Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, COGTA (2019) stated,

The Municipality of Maluti-a-Phofung has been experiencing political instability, poor delivery of services, maladministration, high levels of corruption, poor financial management and high levels of debt owed to Eskom and other creditors. (COGTA 2019)

Maluti-a-Phofung is reported to be in deep debt and collectively owes Eskom, Sedibeng Waters and other creditors over R2,8 billion (News24 2020c). The property and bank accounts of the municipality were attached on behalf of Eskom as a result of the municipality's failure to service their debt (OFM 2020b). Another important finding of the Ministerial visit was that key senior management positions in the municipality were vacant, including the following positions: the Municipal Manager, the Director Technical Services, the Director Public Safety, the Director Community Service and the Director LED (COGTA 2019). In addition, the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) responded to a proclamation in the Government Gazette on 21 August 2020, which authorised the "SIU to investigate allegations of corruption, maladministration and the awarding of tenders" in the municipality (News 24 2020c). However, the interventions of national government are yet to provide tangible results and have not managed to curb the frequency of protests in the local municipality. In January 2020, protesters took to the streets in demand of answers regarding concerns

raised with the municipality and the Ministerial Team relating to the water shortages in the area (The Citizen 2020b).

4.5.3 Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality is a Category (A) municipality and is the only metropolitan municipality in the province. It is located at the central interior of the country. Mangaung is comprised of the following towns, Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, Dewetsdorp, Soutpan, Thaba Nchu, Van Stadensrus and Wepener. The main economic contributors in Mangaung are community services sector (35,3%), finance sector (26,8%), trade (16%), transport sector (11,8%) and manufacturing (3,5%) (Main 2019). Table 4.14 provides the demographic information of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

Table 4. 4: Mangaung demographic information 2019

| | |
|--|---|
| Area (km2): 9 886 km2 | Households (No.): 265 561 |
| Population (No.): 787 803 | Grade 12 and Higher Education (%): 46.1% |
| Population Growth (%): 0.37% p.a. | Formal Dwellings (%): 87.1% |

Source: Adapted from Main (2019)

The council in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality has been led by the ANC since its incorporation as the first metropolitan municipality in the Free State after the 2011 LGEs.

Several protests have occurred across all towns of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in recent years. These protests took place at different times and for different reasons; however, all were as a result of poor service delivery and governance. In April 2016, residents from an informal settlement at Dewetsdorp used burning tyres and mattresses, rocks and refuse to barricade the N6 during what was reported to be a service delivery protest (Bloemfontein Courant 2016). According to Bloemfontein Courant (2016), the residents were protesting in demand of municipal services and houses from the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. In addition, the non-responsiveness of the municipality was cited as a concern and residents demanded that their voices be heard. Residents stated that they could provide proof that they have applied for houses at the municipality, but no response had been forthcoming yet (Bloemfontein Courant 2016). In 2018, residents in Dewetsdorp were again involved in violent protests in demand of water and electricity and at least 12

people were arrested for public violence (OFM 2018a). The following year the residents went on a rampage on similar issues (OFM 2019a).

At Thaba Nchu, situated 70 km outside Bloemfontein, residents protested against what was framed as the lack of development (OFM 2019b). The protesters accused the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality of deserting the residents of Thaba Nchu who are faced with unemployment, poverty and a lack of access to basic municipal services. In addition, the residents complained about maladministration and rampant corruption, which was reported to the Hawks, “but the investigation into the matter is yet to yield results” (OFM 2019b). These protests emerged immediately after President Cyril Ramaphosa had stated in his State of the Nation Address that Botshabelo, located over 10 km outside Thaba Nchu, was to benefit from a revitalisation program to stimulate economic growth and this did not sit well with residents of Thaba Nchu (OFM 2019b). Consequently, residents in Thaba Nchu threatened not to participate in the 2019 national government elections until their service delivery demands had been met (SA News 2019).

Soutpan had recently been affected by a wave of protests which lasted over a week in September 2019. Residents of Ikgomotseng Township embarked on what was termed a total and complete shutdown in protest against poor and inadequate service delivery (OFM 2019c). The protesters blocked and barricaded the R7 road and demanded that the Premier of the Free State come and listen to their demands because they no longer had faith in the municipal officials. The police reported that nine protesters were arrested and charged with public violence (OFM 2019d). The municipality deployed one of its officials to receive a memorandum from the community, but he was howled at and the police eventually had to disperse the crowd using teargas. Media reports confirm that the concerns of the protesters related to the unprotected water reservoir, open sewage dumps, a closed library, the separation of a combined school, incomplete community hall, roads construction, sports facilities, unfilled government vacancies, issuing of stands and building of RDP houses. (OFM 2019c)

In April 2018, Bloemfontein experienced protests that lasted over two months across different townships in the Mangaung Township (Bloemfontein Courant 2018a). In February 2018, residents in the Mangaung Township, Phase 6 and 7 areas, had been

protesting for a week in demand of basic municipal services (Bloemfontein Courant 2018b). These protests had elements of violence and disruption with protesters barricading roads with burning tyres and throwing stones at vehicles and buildings. As reported, the protesters were angry because their ward councillors was unresponsive to their service demands (Bloemfontein Courant 2018b). Specifically, protesters were demanding electricity services from the municipality and the eradication of the bucket system (Bloemfontein Courant 2018b). In February 2019, protesters in the Pieter Swartz local community blocked the M10 road with barricades constructed out of rocks, rubble, glass bottles and wire (Bloemfontein Courant 2019). The protesters complained that the ward councillor was unapproachable as her house was even “closed off and they are too intimidated to communicate their concerns with her” (Bloemfontein Courant 2019).

Like many of the municipalities in the Free State, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality faces a number of politico-administrative challenges that have had a negative impact on the overall performance of the municipality. In 2019, Eskom served a notice to terminate electricity supply to Centlec, which is a municipal entity responsible for the supply of electricity to Mangaung residents (Sowetan Live 2019c). This notice came about as a result of a contravention of payment conditions instigated by consistent failures of the municipality to service its debt to Eskom (Sowetan Live 2019c). However, the plan of Eskom was put on hold following the intervention of the MEC of COGTA in the Free State. This followed a meeting between the MEC, Eskom and Centlec, where a payment agreement was discussed and approved (Sowetan Live 2019d).

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality is reported to be in a financial crisis with a total debt of approximately R6,5 billion to several service providers (OFM 2020a). Mangaung is one of the many municipalities that have been placed under administration by the Provincial Executive (Times Live 2019c). This decision came after a letter from the Deputy Minister of Finance to the Premier of the Free State who had raised concerns about the fiscal capacity of the municipality. Specifically, the Deputy Minister identified issues relating to poor governance, financial mismanagement and “corruption, low revenue collection and a cash-flow crisis” (EWN 2020). Ultimately, the mayor of the municipality was voted out and removed from office by the council in August 2020 (OFM 2020a).

4.5.4 Lejweleputswa District Municipality

The Lejweleputswa District Municipality is a Category C municipality and situated to the north of the Free State. The district is the third-largest in the province and comprises approximately 18 towns spread across five local municipalities (Matjhabeng, Tokologo, Tswelopele, Nala and Masilonyana). The main economic contributors in Lejweleputswa are the mining, construction, transport, electricity and trade sectors (Main 2019). Table 4.15 provides the demographic information of the Lejweleputswa District Municipality.

Table 4. 5: Lejweleputswa District Municipality demographic information, 2019.

| | |
|---|--|
| Area (km²): 32 287km ² | Household (No.): 217 911 |
| Population (No.): 646 920 | Grade 12 and Higher Education (%): 37.7% |
| Population growth (%): 0.79% p.a. | Formal Dwellings: 83.2 |

Source: Adapted from Main (2019)

The council in the Lejweleputswa District Municipality has been led by the ANC since the first LGEs in the year 2000 to date. The ANC is in control of all councils in local municipalities.

(a) Matjhabeng Local Municipality

Several protests have emerged in various townships across communities in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality over the past few years. In October 2017, local community protests emerged in Thabong, Nykallong and Kutlwanong (OFM 2017a; b). It was reported that the protesters in these areas had blocked roads with burning tyres, rocks and other objects in demand of municipal services and employment. OFM (2017a) reported that the protesters were mainly youth who were up in arms as a result of dissatisfaction with the lack of job opportunities at the surrounding mines. There was a heavy police presence in the affected areas as protesters began looting, forcing businesses to close their doors. During these protests, a news team from OFM covering the protests were robbed by the protesters who took property, including mobile phones and a camera (OFM 2017c). In February 2020, protests emerged in Welkom when residents from the Bronville local community embarked on protests after they had been without electricity for two consecutive days (OFM 2020c).

The Matjhabeng Local Municipality has been reported to face a critical challenge in service delivery and financial management (Welkom Express 2019). In the 2017/2018 audit report, the AG found some overspending and possible wasteful expenditure related to the rehabilitation and treatment of water plants in the municipality and stated,

Matjhabeng entered into a contract for the rehabilitation and restoration of the Witpan Wastewater Treatment Works in 2009. During construction, the site was flooded by water from a nearby pan, submerging the work-in-progress, and resulting in the project being halted and the contractor abandoning the site after being paid at least R1,9 million. A second contractor was appointed in June 2011 for R60,5 million. Total payments made to the second contractor amounted to R112,2 million, resulting in overspending of R51,7 million, while the project is still in progress. (AGSA 2018: 111)

Moreover, it was reported that the municipality owes Eskom and the Sedibeng Water Board approximately R1 billion each by 2018 (SABC 2018d). By 2020, the debt owed to Eskom by the municipality amounted to R3,4 billion, which led to the municipality ceding 139 farms worth R2,5 billion to Eskom (Business Live 2020).

(a) Nala Local Municipality

In 2018, protests in the Nala Local Municipality emerged after local residents of Kgotsong in Bothaville had taken to the streets as a result of dissatisfaction with the municipality's slow service delivery (Bloemfontein Courant 2018c). According to Bloemfontein Courant (2018c), roads were blocked with burning tyres while some municipal trailers were set alight. A total of six shops belonging to foreign nationals were looted and one shop even set alight and burnt down. Several suspects between the ages of 16 and 35 were arrested for public violence. Moreover, the SABC (2018e) reported that schooling had been disrupted and a local clinic also closed. Similarly, in 2020, protesters in Monyakeng blocked roads with burning tyres, being dissatisfied with service delivery issues and with how the municipality was operated and run (OFM 2020c). This led to the Department of COGTA in the Free State going to the area in an attempt to resolve the concerns of the residents. The protests in Nala Local Municipality are not surprising, considering the findings of the AG that the Nala Local Municipality "regressed from an unqualified audit opinion with findings to a qualified audit opinion" (AGSA 2018). In a media release, the AG stated that the municipality had failed to conduct internal audits for five consecutive years despite paying salaries

of R800 000 per year to internal auditors. This was because the head of internal audit did not have the relevant qualifications and skills associated with the position (MFMA 2019).

(a) Tswelopele Local Municipality

In the Tikwana Township in Hoopstad, protest action had been disruptive to schooling where Grade 12 learners from two schools missed some preliminary examinations as a result of ongoing service delivery protest in the area (OFM 2020d). The protests had been violent and the SAPS reported that “the police were attacked, and the roads were barricaded with stones, rubbish, and burning tyres”. As a result, forces of the SAPS and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) were deployed to monitor and restore calm in the area (OFM 2020d). The Department of Basic Education in the Free State responded by stating that Grade 12 learners who missed their exams would be given an opportunity to write. In October 2020, violent protests emerged once again at Hoopstad and Bultfontein in the Tswelopele Local Municipality after the Mayor of the municipality had survived a motion of no confidence (OFM 2020e).

(a) Masilonyana Local Municipality

In 2018, residents in Brandfort protested in demand of water after being without water for almost three weeks (OFM 2018c). The water crisis in Brandfort attracted attention after the ANC and EFF had held a joint memorial service of Winnie Mandela in the area in 2018. The protesters had barricaded the R30 road with rocks and burning tyres and motorists were urged to divert the route. In the same year, the local community in Theunissen embarked on protests in opposition to corruption and maladministration (OFM 2018d). The Masilonyana Local Municipality was placed under section 139 administration, but protesters demanded that the appointed municipal administrator be removed, as he was blamed for the financial crisis in the municipality. Moreover, the municipality owed Eskom R7,8 billion by 2018, which was considered the highest debt in the country owed to Eskom by a municipality (OFM 2018d).

4.5.5 Xhariep District Municipality

The Xhariep District Municipality is a Category C municipality situated to the south of the Free State. In geographical terms, Xhariep is the largest district in the Free State province. The Xhariep District Municipality comprises 21 towns spread across three local municipalities (Mohokare, Letsemeng and Kopanong). Xhariep has significant

water resources and the largest dam in South Africa is located in the district (Main 2019). The main contributing sectors of the economy in the district are agriculture, construction, mining, transport and communication (Main 2019). Table 4.16 provides the demographic information of the Xhariep District Municipality.

Table 4. 6: Xhariep District Municipality demographic information, 2019

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Area (km2): 37 674km2 | Households (No): 44 767 |
| Population (No.): 125 884 | Grade 12 and Higher Education (%): 31.8% |
| Population Growth: 0.72% | Formal Dwellings (%): 89.1% |

Source: Adapted from Main (2019)

The council in the Xhariep District Municipality has been led by the ANC since the first LGEs in the year 2000 to date. The ANC is in control of all councils in local municipalities.

(a) Kopanong Local Municipality

The Kopanong Local Municipality has been a subject of intense service delivery protests in recent years. In 2018, residents in Edenburg went on an almost week-long rampage with the demand for land sites and RDP houses (OFM 2018e). It was reported that the protesters looted several businesses and targeted ANC offices, which were allegedly burnt down during these protests. It is reported that five people between the ages of 19 and 31 were arrested on charges of malicious damage to property (OFM 2018e).

(b) Letsemeng Local Municipality

Protests at Koffiefontein in the Letsemeng Local Municipality emerged in 2019, sparked by dissatisfaction over favouritism in employment opportunities (OFM 2019h). The protesters accused the municipality of hiring people outside the local community to work on a project that was under way at a dam in the area. The protests turned violent and it was reported that the protesters vandalised and demolished the wall of the town hall (OFM 2019h). These protests followed earlier unrest in the area which had disrupted schooling with learners missing the fourth school quarter (OFM 2019h). The protesters were calling for the resignation of the mayor for reasons involving inadequate and poor service delivery, unemployment and corruption relating to tender irregularities. In Bolokanang at Petrusburg, residents embarked on protests over

service delivery concerns (OFM 2020f; g). Specifically, the protesters raised issues relating to running sewage, inconsistent water supply, and the absence of mass street lighting in the area (OFM 2020g). The protesters had confrontations with the SAPS after they had barricaded the N8 road with burning tyres, waste refuse, and rocks, and had forced schools and businesses to close down. Protesters targeted and destroyed municipal infrastructure (OFM 2020f).

(c) Mohokare Local Municipality

In 2014, residents of the Mofulatshepe in Smithfield embarked on protest actions as a result of dissatisfaction over the filling of posts at the Mohokare Local Municipality. Protesters stated that the municipality had promised to consult the local community before making any appointments (Bloemfontein Courant 2014). However, the local municipality did not fulfil its promise and filled some vacancies without consulting the local community. Thirteen people were arrested for public violence after protesters had blocked the N3 and the road leading into the township with burning tyres, rocks and garbage. In Rouxville, residents protested in demand of service delivery and employment (OFM 2019i). The protesters barricaded roads with burning tyres and rocks, demanding that the municipality scrap the application process they had undertaken to fill vacancies in the municipality. The protesters accused the municipality of favouritism in their recruitment and employment processes.

4.6 Conclusion

Citizens' trust in local political institutions and incumbent authorities in the Free State is not only low but also on a consistently downward trend. There are several reasons that may be advanced to explain the decline in citizens' trust in local government. An important reason why citizens' trust in local government is low and in decline across Free State municipalities is that the latter do function and operate in an expected manner. The lack of service delivery, the breakdown in political participation channels, low LED, corruption and financial mismanagement, etc., has led to citizens losing confidence in local political institutions and incumbent authorities. A significant part of the causes of this state of affairs is mainly concentrated around the inability of municipalities to function as expected. This may be indicative of the fact that local government in the Free State is faced with serious challenges of poor, ineffective and inefficient municipalities. The lack of trust in the context of this research report is

evidenced by two interrelated developments: (1) low voter turnout and (2) increased protest action.

Firstly, citizens' participation in elections is an important input to the fomentation of trust and as a result, LGEs may be an important indicator of citizens' trust in local government (Blind 2007; Cheema 2005). The 2016 LGEs revealed interesting trends, which may be useful in determining citizens' trust in local government in the province. The decline in the ANCs voter-turnout may be evidence that citizens' trust in the ANCs-led government in municipalities is beginning to diminish (Nzewi et al. 2019). Secondly, the extant scholarship illustrates that it would not be far-fetched to describe many townships in the Free State as indefinite scenes of intensified protest action. From 2004 till to date, protest activity over a wide range of service delivery and governance concerns have been a common feature in many townships across the province.

The violent nature of protests in the Free State is a matter of concern, as violence is commonly associated with instability and disruption. It is evidently not clear what distinguishes violent and non-violent protest action, but it may be possible that both are influenced by the same set of factors (Saxton et al. 2006). Nonetheless, it appears that violence is a product or expression of deep dissatisfaction and discontent. To this end, the conclusion of the report's analysis is that there is a vicious cycle where violence creates dissatisfaction and discontent, which in turn fuels more violence. Violence during community protests may be an indication of low and/or declined levels of citizens' trust in government (Hutchison and Johnson 2011). Low political trust or distrust has been found to increase incidents of violence and disruption among the citizenry (Bertsou 2015).

CHAPTER 5: OBSERVATIONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

There is now a lack of citizen confidence and trust in the system. This has been publicly evidenced in the spate of community protests during the course of the year, which may be seen as a symptom of the alienation of citizens from local government. (COGTA 2009)

The central aim and objective of this research report set out to describe and explain how political trust foments protest action in a municipal setting. To reach its logical conclusion, the report adopted a qualitative document analysis as a method to select, analyse and present data relevant to the research topic. The literature review revealed that the concepts and themes characterising the link between political trust and political behaviour are extensive, complex and multi-dimensional. The report conducted and presented an analytical break down of these key concepts and themes and specifically, as conceptualised and operationalised in the context of democratic societies. This was done primarily through the development of a conceptual and theoretical framework based on an extensive review of the literature. The literature review was of crucial importance for tracing the origins and development of the topic of research in the literature across both developed and less developed democratic regimes.

The conceptual and theoretical framework was used and applied to analyse the relationship between political trust and protest action at a local government in the Free State. A key observation emerging from the document analysis was that there is a negative relationship between political trust and protest action. The findings of this report are quite consistent with those presented by previous work on this topic. To be specific, this report confirms the finding that low and/or declined levels of citizens' political trust are responsible for much of the increased protest activity in local communities across the Free State. The widespread protest action in the province is an indication that citizens are losing faith in municipalities and it appears to be a

consequence of a deepening crisis of a poor, ineffective and inefficient local government system.

Several deductions can be made in respect of how political trust foments protest action at a municipal level. The main and important finding is that both the decline in citizens' trust in government and the fomentation of protest action are influenced by the same set of cultural and institutional factors. At the centre of this finding is the issue of dissatisfaction among citizens with one or more aspect related to the functioning of municipalities. This research report identified several cultural and institutional factors that characterise the relationship between political trust and protest action. These factors consist of different elements and strands, but may best be identified and explained under the following broad individual and contextual determinants: (1) social capital; (2) socio-demographic traits; (3) institutional performance; (4) institutional design and quality; and (5) institutional trustworthiness. These factors, individually and jointly, have an impact on the fomentation of both declined political trust and increased protest action. However, the extent and degree of influence that each factor exerts on the two phenomena are not necessarily the same.

This chapter concludes the research report by providing a brief analysis of the major observations and findings of the study in a synthesised manner. In line with the conceptual and theoretical framework, this chapter will respond to the research aim and objective, hypothesis and questions set out in the first chapter. To this end, three hypothesis were tested in this research report. Firstly, the research report confirms that the more citizens are dissatisfied with the functioning of a municipality, the less trust they have in local political institutions and incumbent authorities. Secondly, it is confirmed that the less trust citizens have in a municipality, the more likely they are to engage and participate in protest action. Thirdly, and importantly, the report confirms that the increased incidents of protests in local communities across the Free State are an indication that citizens' trust in the municipality is low and/or on the decline.

5.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings

5.2.1 Meaning and Nature of Political Trust

The descriptive explanation of how political trust foments protest action in a municipal setting requires a sound conceptualisation of trust in its most general and basic form. This is because political trust is an integral sub-concept of broad trust and, by

implication, the former has to be understood in line with the definitional elements and parameters of the latter. The concept of trust is characterised by several complexities in relation to its definition, meaning and nature. This is primarily as a result of the multi-disciplinary attention placed on the concept. This as may be, trust is understood as a belief held by the trusting party that the trusted party will not act in a manner that seeks to cause or inflict harm upon them. This belief demonstrates that the trusting party becomes vulnerable to some power wielded by the trusted party to either fulfil or betray trust. Applied in relation to political trust, this means that citizens become vulnerable to the power that the government holds over them and enter into a risk relationship where they rely on the government to act in a manner that is not harmful to their interests and expectations. In line with these basic and foundational elements, political trust was conceptualised to mean citizens' belief that the government, its institutions and incumbent authorities will operate and function in an appropriate manner and in line with citizens' legitimate expectations.

The issue concerning citizens' expectations was isolated as a critical matter to be considered when conceptualising and understanding political trust. An important implication of this perspective on expectations is that political trust emerges as a context dependent matter. This means that political trust is highly sensitive to the political, economic and social context in which citizens exist (Bouckaert and Van de Walle 2003; Christensen and Laegreid 2011). Citizens' expectations will change according to the consistently changing political, economic and social environment in which they live and, as a result, their trust in government will be determined by whether these expectations are either realised or betrayed. The changing social dynamics are indicative that citizens' expectations will not always be the same, but change consistently. With regard to local government, this means that local communities will have different expectations of their municipalities informed by the changes in the political, economic and social conditions.

It is a necessary function of a municipality to perform in a manner that meets the evolving demands, needs and expectations of citizens. Such a local government system would be in a favourable position to attract stores of trust and support from local communities. Citizens' trust in local government is an outcome of their basic evaluative orientations on whether their municipality is functioning in an effective and efficient manner and in accordance with their normative expectations. The extent to

which citizens will trust the government depends primarily on whether local political institutions and incumbent political authorities are responsive to citizens' expectations (Kim 2010). The common basis for citizens' expectations is how well political institutions and incumbent authorities function and conduct the affairs of municipalities (Hetherington 1998; Cheema 2010).

This research report finds that the levels of citizens' trust in local government is a function of the expectations they have of their municipalities. To this end, and in order to determine the relationship between citizens' expectations and municipal performance, this research report had to conduct an enquiry into two interrelated and interdependent questions concerning expectations. Firstly, it was crucial to examine the exact configuration of the expectations that citizens in South Africa in general and in the Free State in particular, have of their local government. Secondly, it was important to establish whether municipalities function and act in line with such expectations. This report concludes that there are serious inconsistencies between citizens' expectations and the performance of municipalities in responding positively to such legitimate expectations. The consequences of this mismatch and gap between citizens' expectations and government performance are low and declined levels of political trust that are, more often than not, coupled with an increase in protest action.

5.2.2 Forms of Trust: The Question of Causality

A distinctively important theme emerging from the conceptualisation of political trust as a sub-concept of broad trust relates to the relationship between the two main variants of trust. The question at the centre of this discussion was the question of causality, which prompted an enquiry into which one of the two variants of trust influences the other. While the complementary role that both variants of trust play in ensuring that durable and stable democracies are well canvassed in the literature, the causal direction of this relationship between the two remains a subject of much theoretical and empirical divergence. Nonetheless, this report finds that there are several reasons why the most attractive perspective on causality is the one based on the institutional approach, which finds that political trust is more likely to influence social trust. This report concludes that the government is crucial in setting the political, economic and social conditions in which citizens interact and ultimately develop social trust.

The contemporary democratic government fulfils several functions, which should enable it to be in a position to facilitate the creation of a conducive environment for citizens to develop trust between and among themselves (Blind 2007; Levi and Stoker 2000). For example, the government could frequently mediate between citizens' competing interests by effectively recognising, protecting, enhancing and advancing their basic political, economic and social human rights. This may lead to heightened social trust, primarily because in such a society, there would be less competition among citizens and, ultimately, limited social conflict over resources. Moreover, the government may be in a position to enhance social trust by creating an environment that promotes cooperation and collective action in society through employing strategies and practices of good governance. To this extent, a trusted and trustworthy government may very well be empowered to promote and enhance social trust.

This understanding seems to be applicable and suitable in the South African context. The report demonstrated that South Africa has historically been characterised by low levels of both political and social trust. The apartheid policy of racial and ethnic segregation was a structural stumbling block to the fomentation of social trust. In an attempt to develop social trust, the first democratic government had to be engaged in an intensive program of action aimed at social cohesion that would be based on political, economic and social integration. The reconfiguration of local government into a single and unified system as opposed to the racially and ethnically fragmented and splintered system was a key intervention. Nonetheless, the failure of local government to function and operate in a proper and good way can be argued to be in part responsible for undermining prospects of a truly non-racial and prosperous democratic society characterised by social trust.

These failures may explain why social trust is still low after almost three decades of democracy. For example, the new democratic government has failed to respond adequately to the skewed apartheid spatial and developmental planning. Residential areas where the majority of citizens are white still receive and enjoy better services than black townships do. An important way that social integration and trust could be achieved is through the consistent and adequate provision of basic services to all citizens, regardless of their social and geographical position. Therefore, only a trusted and trustworthy local government system will be in a position to facilitate an

environment where social trust is enhanced through executing its constitutional and legislative objectives.

5.2.3 Political Trust in New and Less Developed Regimes

From the onset, this research report emphasised the importance of trust in general and political trust in particular to the durability, stability and legitimacy of the democratic regime. Citizens' trust in government is fundamental to cooperation and collective action, which are necessary to foster positive development in society (Bauer 2015). The literature establishes well that it is widely accepted that citizens' trust in government is an important criterion and input for democratic regimes to flourish (Listhaug and Ringdal 2008; Bonner 2009; Van der Meer 2017). However, it was shown that there are several variations in citizens' trust in government across democracies and that developed regimes boast higher levels of political trust than their less developed counterparts. This is an interesting observation, taking into account that political trust appears to be of more fundamental importance for new and less developed regimes.

Political trust is associated with other phenomena important to democratic development and consolidation such as good governance, political support and political participation. The cumulative effect of all these concepts in democratic settings ensures the highest levels of regime stability and legitimacy (Hetherington and Husser 2012; Lenard 2015; Landmark 2016). It is for this reason that political trust emerges as crucial in new and less developed regimes that face critical challenges on matters related to good governance, political support and meaningful political participation. New, democratically elected governments confront several political, economic and social challenges, and these lead to periods of poor and ineffective government performance a few years after transition (Mishler and Rose 2001; Landmark 2016). The effect of these challenges is detrimental and, in most instances, operates to limit the ability of the new government to function as expected, which inevitably foments low and/or declined levels of political trust.

The South African case may fit this description in relation to the challenges confronting new and less developed regimes after transition. Democracy in South Africa has only been the political system in the country for a relatively short period. The transition to democracy was accompanied by citizens' legitimate expectations that the new

government would reverse past injustices and realise the political, economic and social human rights enshrined in the new Constitution. However, as the new government grappled with ensuring good democratic governance, it often fell short of meeting these expectations, which has culminated in a loss of citizens' confidence, support and trust (Gouws and Schultz-Hezernberg 2016). With regard to local government, municipalities have demonstrated high levels of incapacity to fulfil and realise their constitutional and legislative mandate of creating a developmental system of governance. The deficiencies in the performance of municipalities has had a negative bearing on citizens' evaluative orientations of local political institutions and incumbent authorities. This has culminated into widespread declines in political trust across local communities.

5.3 Common Factors of Influence

A full and proper understanding of the relationship between political trust and protest action required an in-depth analysis of both cultural and institutional factors (Braun and Hutter 2016). To this extent, there is a common set of factors that seem to re-occur as decisive in both the fomentation of citizens' trust in local government and increased protest action across many democracies. This set of factors is best understood through two distinct and divergent approaches based on cultural and institutional theories, respectively. A comprehensive understanding of how political trust foments protest action required the concurrent application of both the cultural and institutional approach.

In order to describe and explain the link between political trust and protest behaviour, this report posed three fundamental research questions:

Question 1: What individual and contextual level factors are the most dominant in the fomentation of political trust at a local government?

Question 2: What are the most dominant causes leading to increased incidents of protest action at a local government level?

Research Question 3: Are protests an indication of low and/or declined levels of citizens' trust in local political institutions and incumbent political authorities?

The responses to these important questions of research required a two-pronged and interrelated approach. Firstly, to determine the individual and contextual factors

dominant in the fomentation of citizens' trust in government, this report adopted the "developmental or lifetime learning model", which explains political trust through the combined application of both cultural and institutional theories (Mishler and Rose 2005). Secondly, to determine the causes of protest action at a local community level, this research report adopted an integrated application of three dominant theories based on the Grievance, Political Opportunity Structure (POS), and Resource Mobilisation theories that were combined into what is referred to as 'contentious politics' (Tarrow 1998; Mayer 2015).

For the purposes of this report, an important finding is that the 'developmental or lifetime learning model' and the 'contentious politics' approaches are interrelated and mutually reinforcing in determining the link between political trust and protest action. Both these theories reveal that the link between political trust and protest action is established as an outcome of an interplay between (1) cultural and exogenous factors and (2) institutional and endogenous factors. This is very important, on the basis that cultural theories emphasise early life experiences, while institutional theories pay specific attention to present-day life experiences (Mishler and Rose 2001; Van der Meer and Dekker 2010; Landmark 2016; Asfaw 2019). Although based on two divergent approaches, the application of both cultural and institutional factors provided a complete picture of how political trust foments protest in a municipal setting. These theoretical approaches have been developed within the context of industrialised and developed democracies. However, this research report confirms that they appear to be applicable in new and less developed regimes such as post-apartheid South Africa. Political trust in South Africa should be informed by (1) the early-life experiences under the apartheid era and (2) the present-day life experiences under the democratic government.

The decisiveness of either cultural or institutional factors in the fomentation of political trust could not be established beyond reasonable doubt. However, on a balance of probabilities, the qualitative analysis in this report deducts that institutional theories appear to be more decisive. This does not mean that cultural theories are irrelevant or insignificant to the fomentation of citizens' trust in government. To this end, and based on the document analysis, it appears that widespread dissatisfaction and discontent with government performance in areas such as the reduction of unemployment, poverty and inequality; the adequate provision of basic services; the reduction of

corruption; and the facilitation of meaningful political participation have led to drastic declines in citizens' trust in government and an increase in protest action.

5.4 General Observations and Findings

5.4.1 Civil Society and Social Networks

(a) The conceptual and theoretical framework identified social capital as one cultural factor that has commonly been found to be positively related to an effective and efficient democratic regime. However, the relationship between social capital and political trust is context dependent. Specifically, the relationship appears to assume a positive character in relation to industrialised and developed democracies and a negative one in relation to new and less developed regimes.

(b) In new and less developed democratic societies, civil society operates as a critical platform for citizens who are dissatisfied by one or other aspect relating to the political, economic and social governance of society. Civil society provides citizens with an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction and discontent with the government. To this end, civil society may be described as kernels of citizens' scepticism, dissatisfaction and lack of trust towards municipalities.

(c) Historically, local government and its municipal system in South Africa have always been confronted with local community protests organised and mobilised by various social movements and civic organisations. Be this as it may be, it is important to note that these social movements and civic organisations have been able to transform in line with changing political, economic and social conditions post democracy.

(d) An important finding is that the various civic organisations existing at a local level cannot yet be referred to as fully functional social movements. This is primarily because many of these organisations are still functioning in isolation and are highly disorganised and fragmented. In addition, due to several political, economic and social challenges faced by these movements, most of them have a serious limitation of resources available to fully mobilise local communities.

(e) Civic groups in local communities seem to be generally opposed to the government and often challenge the government on several issues of concern. When citizens are dissatisfied with the government and need to raise their concerns, civic groups are often a reliable platform to express shared dissatisfaction. Consequently, the role that

local civic groups play in the mobilisation of local communities across the country has increased significantly since the emergence of local protests in 2004.

(f) There has been a steady increase in the emergence of local civic groups in local communities across the Free State, which have been at the forefront of protest mass mobilisation. An interesting observation is that several of these local civic groups have also begun to register their participation in LGEs, which has changed the political landscape in the province. The most valuable resource available to these local groups is the ability to initiate and sustain regular face-to-face interaction with communities at grass-roots level as a means to mobilise protest action.

5.4.2 Socio-demographic Traits

(a) The importance of socio-demographic variables in the fomentation of both political trust and protest action lies in the fact that these variables reflect the political, economic and social conditions of individuals in local communities. This report finds that there are several socio-demographic traits that are found to influence citizens' attitudes and political behaviour. These include age, income, education and geographic location.

(b) An important finding of this research report is that citizens in black townships appear to have less trust in the government than those who reside in high-income areas. A significant number of community protests take place in black townships and rural areas where unemployment and poverty are a daily reality.

(c) Another critical observation is that the older generation in local communities appears to have more trust in the government than the younger generation does. One reason that may be advanced to explain this finding is that the older generation has spent most of their lives under the old apartheid regime and, as a consequence, appears to value the contribution of the ANC towards the struggle for liberation. Contrastingly, the younger generation, ordinarily referred to as the 'born-free generation', does not seem to display the same loyalty towards the ANC. Conditions of unemployment, poverty and inequality and the lack of educational opportunities among youth have had negative effects on their evaluative orientations of local government.

(d) The participation of youth in electoral politics has declined, while their activism in protest has increased. Young people across local communities are getting agitated

and impatient with the government's inability to address their deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

(e) The analysis of protests across the Free State indicates that young people are at the forefront of local community protests. This is indicated by the age groups of those who are arrested for public violence and the age groups of victims of police brutality during these protests.

5.4.3 Lack of Economic Growth and Development

(a) Economic growth and development are associated with high levels of citizens' trust in government and, in contrast, poor economic conditions are associated with low political trust. Economic growth and development are inextricably linked to democratic consolidation and challenges relating to unemployment, poverty and inequality that are detrimental to regime stability and legitimacy.

(b) In South Africa, unemployment rates are at an all-time high since 1994. Poverty is extremely high and the country is considered one of the most unequal societies in the world. These challenges have been detrimental to the development and consolidation of South African democracy. The combined effect of the triple challenges on local communities may lead to greater feelings on deprivation and marginalisation and, most importantly, declined citizens' trust in government.

(c) Functions related to the economy are ordinarily considered a competency of the national government based on the understanding that the macro-economic policy direction of the country is managed at that level. However, with the development of local governments since 2000, several functions relating to LED have been decentralised to lower spheres of government. It may be that the shortage of skills and technical expertise in municipalities is responsible for the inability to direct LED in townships and local communities.

(d) The Free State is not immune to the economic challenges facing the country and as a rural province, little economic activity takes place, specifically in townships. There is no tangible LED occurring across the province and this exacerbates the deteriorating economic conditions in local communities. This has led to declined levels of citizens' trust in government and increased protest action.

5.4.4 Poor and Inadequate Service Delivery

(a) Local governments are best placed to provide local communities direct access to various public services. Basic services are critical inputs towards improved life in local communities and are important for realising the constitutional right to human dignity and redressing the imbalances of the past.

(b) The majority of local communities depend and rely on their local government for the provision of basic services that are important for their daily living and survival. However, most municipalities display a performance deficiency in delivering quality services to local communities.

(c) Some of the challenges relating to service delivery may in part be associated with the service backlog in most black townships and rural areas as a consequence of deliberate marginalisation during apartheid.

(d) The adequate delivery of basic services has always been identified as instrumental to redress and transformation; however, poor and inadequate delivery of basic services continues to be a stubborn crisis of the post-democratic dispensation. For at least over a decade, the ANC led government has been faced with growing citizen dissatisfaction with the poor and inadequate provision of services across local communities.

(e) The reasons for this state of affairs are manifold and include in the main poor financial management, corruption and maladministration across municipalities. The inability of the government to deliver its service mandate to communities has led to a political and social crisis of unrest throughout the Free State. Almost every single protest in the province is triggered by poor and lack of adequate services in local communities.

(f) This report concludes that dissatisfaction with the provision of adequate services is the single most dominant factor that leads to declined political trust and increased protest action across local communities in the Free State.

5.4.5 Compromised Political Participation

(a) Political participation is generally low in South Africa, which may be due to the deliberate and exclusionary nature of the apartheid-colonial system that denied the majority of citizens a say in political affairs. The previously disfranchised majority of

citizens does not yet appear to have developed a strong and sensible culture of participation.

(b) Protest action is a reflection of the lack of confidence and trust that citizens have in the official platforms of public participation facilitated by the government. The lack of confidence in formal channels of participation occurs when citizens believe that the government is not responsive to their demands when expressed through, for example, voting in elections.

(c) Political participation at a local level across municipalities in the Free State may be described as less meaningful and superficial. This compromised system of public participation has given rise to a problematic eventuality where genuine public participation platforms are used to rubber stamp the wishes of the incumbent political authorities. There appears to be limited opportunity for citizens to influence policy formulation and implementation at a municipal level, which has led to declined political trust and increased protest action.

5.4.6 Financial Mismanagement and Corruption

(a) Corruption, which is often facilitated through financial mismanagement, is one of the factors with the most corrosive and eroding effect on citizens' trust in government. Corruption is a reflection of untrustworthy political incumbent authorities and feeds the narrative that the responsible individuals are preoccupied with their own selfish personal interests and not those of the public.

(b) The prevalence of corruption is particularly evident at local government level in the Free State as indicated through municipalities' poor and unimpressive audit outcomes. Unabated corruption at a municipal level has created a vicious and continuous cycle where corruption leads to low political trust and which, in turn, enables more corruption to occur.

(c) Corruption in municipalities has had negative a effect on good governance and, moreover, detrimental consequences for sustainable political, economic and social development. Most importantly, corruption at this level has been deleterious to the ability of municipalities to provide adequate services to local communities; thus, leading to widespread citizen dissatisfaction and a lack of trust. It is for this reason that in almost every local community protest, corruption is often isolated as a cause for concern.

5.4.7 Unfulfilled Promises and Unresponsiveness

(a) The expectation is that trustworthy governments will be positively related to political trust and untrustworthy governments will be negatively related to political trust. There are several standards that influence the evaluations of trustworthiness; however, the literature emphasises three elements that seem to constitute a major portion of trustworthiness, namely ability, benevolence and integrity.

(b) There is a huge problem of a lack of skill in municipalities and this is argued to be in part created by political deployments and appointments of unskilled persons who are politically trusted. This has had a negative impact on the overall functioning of municipalities.

(c) Another important factor indicating the untrustworthy nature of municipalities relates to unfulfilled promises by the government, which has resulted in the lack of trust in politicians. The government has been accused of making promises on issues relating to service delivery, job creation and building of houses, which are hardly kept and fulfilled.

(d) Based on the unrealistic and impractical promises made by politicians and government officials, citizens develop reasonable and legitimate expectations that the government will deliver and fulfil its promises. An unresponsive local government is not only a cause for concern in relation to declined levels of trust, but has also been found a recurring theme during local community protests.

5.4.8 Institutional Design (Openness)

(a) The most important finding related to institutional design is that the institutional openness of the political system is found to have an impact on both the political attitudes and behaviour of citizens. Institutions function and operate to maintain social order and stability through the development and implementation of laws, policies, rules and procedures governing the society. The conglomeration of all these institutional factors making up the design of institutions operates and shapes the attitudes and behaviour of actors inside and outside institutions.

(b) Within the context of this report, the South African political system seems to be conditioned by a degree of openness which, to a certain degree, allows citizens to raise their concerns and demands through various platforms. The right to protest is

now a fundamental constitutional right that citizens may use to register their concerns and demands with the state and government.

5.5 Topic for Future Research

There are only a few empirical studies on the relationship between political trust and protest action in South Africa and this should present opportunities for establishing a deeper understanding and insight into this important topic of research. The enquiry into the relationship between political trust and protest action brought several other, related questions and issues to the fore that may have not been relevant for this report, but could be crucial areas for future research. These issues are presented below in the form of questions relevant for future research.

- (1) What are the main causes of violence, disruption and criminality during local community protests?
- (2) Are there any variations in the levels of political trust among Africans in South Africa based on ethnic diversity?
- (3) Are there any variations in the levels of political trust between men and women in South Africa? If yes, what are the main contributing factors to these differences?

5.6 Conclusion

The decline in citizens' trust in government is an indication that there is a need to address very important systemic and structural challenges at a municipal level. All in all, it seems that local government is characterised by poor, ineffective, and inefficient municipalities conditioned by too many cases of underperformance. The deficiencies in performance across municipalities reveal the failures of local government to achieve its developmental mandate. By implication, these conditions have led to widespread dissatisfaction among citizens who assess government performance negatively. Consequently, the more local communities are dissatisfied with the functioning and performance of municipalities, the less trust they have in local political institutions and incumbent authorities. Dissatisfaction and discontent are crucial in explaining the stimulation of protest action.

Protest action is an important tool in the hands of the weak and marginalised sectors to register their political demands and concerns. The rise in protest action as an increasing alternative form of engagement and participation in local government would

require the government to adapt to these changes and find suitable strategies to respond adequately. This approach will be more beneficial to new and less-developed democracies that have to balance their adaptation to these forms of participation in a way that citizens' political expressions are considered without a threat to the stability and legitimacy of the democratic regime. The popularity of protest as an alternative mode of political expression may even cause the government to respond better to organised collective political interests and demands.

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