INCREASING EFFICIENCY OR CLOSING DOORS?
THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE IN PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The increasing strength of representative democracy in South Africa has acted to profoundly change the nature of the participatory process in urban development. Building on the considerable experience amassed in community participation in the development process in South Africa, we examine the findings from three small- to-medium-sized development projects in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. We then analyse the relationship between the changing role of national government and the nature of participation, in particular, its impacts on institutional change at a local and national level. Findings are theorised in terms of the international debates on urban governance and participatory development.

INTRODUCTION: some international paradigms of participation

The value of participatory development in low-income communities has been widely acclaimed in both the north and south. Through a case study of South Africa, this paper examines the increasing convergence in issues and methods between north and south in the participatory development process, arguing that this convergence may mask fundamental differences in power relationships and historical trends.

Some authors have suggested that the practice and problems of participation have increasingly converged between northern and southern contexts. For example, Mitlin and Thompson (1995, p. 245) argue that "…despite a diversity of participation methods, there is a similarity and exchange of ideas between north and south (as well as within north and south)".

In this paper, we accept that international similarities do evolve, and exchanges of ideas undoubtedly take place in both academic and institutional fora, with regard to appropriate levels and types of participatory processes. However, we argue that superficial similarities may in fact result from different power relationships, and importantly, may mask trends which differ not only between north and south, but amongst countries in both. In particular we analyse the case of the new South Africa. We show that although South Africa's national goverment has withdrawn from direct service provision, much as in northern countries, the institutional changes which have accompanied this change have been qualitatively different from those in northern countries. We also show, that these changes have had a fundamental impact on the nature of the participatory process there.

One major contributor to change in the nature and style of community participation, has been the reduction in levels of direct service provision by the state. Sanderson (1999) has argued that the northern concept of public participation in 1980s grew from, and revolved around, consumerism and the ability to chose among service providers. While this concept of participation is still prevalent in some sectors (e.g. in the public housing sector), it has also been criticised as local government has felt the pressure to extend its relationship with the public to political terms. Sanderson suggests that this has led to the development of parallel, participatory approaches, which have evolved to a more open and equal dialogue between local government and citizens, for example within the urban regeneration and City Challenge programmes (although the efficacy of such dialogue has been severely questioned (Miller, 1999)).

Thus, in addition to Mitlin and Thompson's (1995) conjecture about the existence of a pragmatic, economic link between service withdrawal and the fostering of participation, a further link between the objectives of the state and the incorporation of community

participation in its programmes or criteria may be made. This is the state's requirement for political legitimacy. The withdrawal of direct service provision may be a point at which the state's legitimacy is thrown into question, so that these two needs of the state may reinforce each other.

However, the particularities of past practice and of change in the level and nature of state involvement in service provision or development are substantively different in north and south. For this reason, we would argue that the relationship between withdrawal from service provision and increased reliance on community participation which has been identified in the north, should be seen rather as a case in point.

Instead, we would argue that other major changes in the relationship between state and citizen may equally throw into doubt the state's legitimacy. The election of a new government, the adoption of a new constitution, a change in the structure of government – all these mark points at which the legitimacy of the state may need to be strengthened. Thus, very different political factors within a country may lead to the drive for more participation.

This process is not necessarily ubiquitous and other relationships between the state and the locality can evolve. In principle, a schematic typology of change in government involvement (and the involvement of the various tiers of government) in projects associated with community development, emerges. The diagram depicts the fact that four sectors are involved in the development process at the local level. The nature of their involvement is mutually dependent, and the extent of their involvement can grow or decline. This schematic typology, summarised in diagram 1 below, is applied later in the paper to ideal-type cases of state involvement in community development. Particular examples are drawn from South Africa, and are compared to the UK, already well documented, in order to exemplify the different political factors which may lead to similar outcomes for the structure of the participation process at the local level.

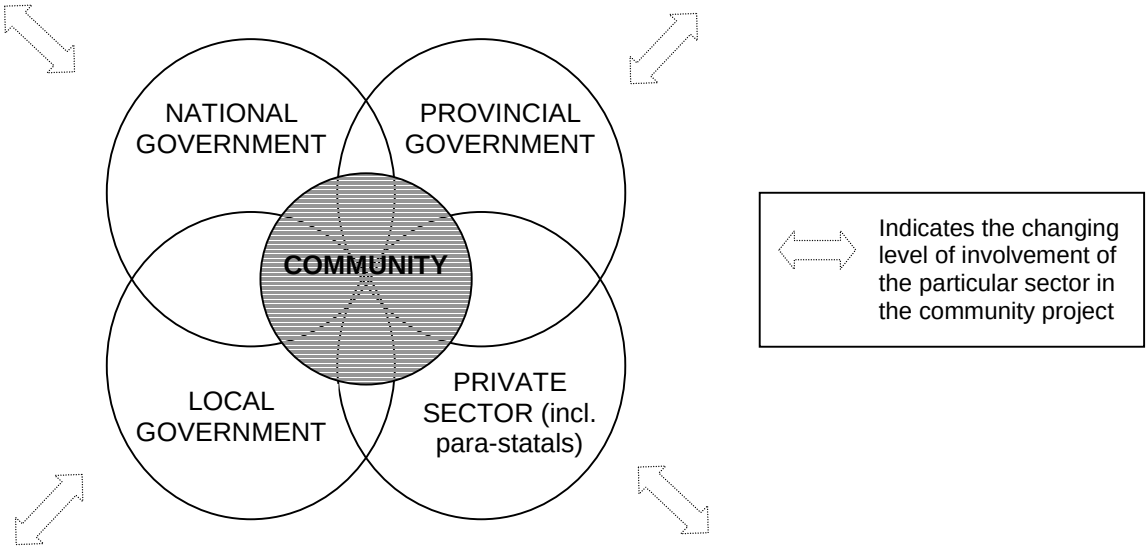

Diagram 1: International paradigms of participation and government

The 1980s consumerist notions of participation involved a withdrawal of government from service provision, an exercise of limited choice by citizens among service providers, and a growth in behaviour regulated by experts in state and business (Sanderson, 1999). These have been replaced in the 1990s with a demand for citizens to have greater influence over decisions

that affect them (provision of services etc.), extending democracy to the local level, allowing for more direct participation, and thus preventing 'unrepresentative' governance (Sanderson, 1999:326). After the dissatisfaction with current forms of representative democracy, the UK government's agenda for local government (White Paper: *Modern Local Government*) promotes strengthened local democracy through public participation with a new duty to local authorities to consult and engage with local communities. Argued from the New Left, this position breaks down/overcomes the boundaries between citizens, the state and other stakeholders, which are replaced by 'a post-modern messiness' (Sanderson, 1999, p. 331).

In its ideal-type conceptualisation, this process is seen as moving from a paradigm of 'instrumental rationality' (solving problems using experts and objective knowledge) to 'communicative rationality' (which shifts the balance of power between stakeholders) (Miller, 1999:PG). A shift between the two may therefore be seen as a shift in the balance between citizens and the state, to *less government and more participation*, represented in the relationships illustrated in diagram 2.

<< INSERT DIAG 2 HERE (UK circle diag) >>

In communicative rationality, Miller (1999) argues, inter-sectoral partnerships replace the role of the state, generating information sharing, improved communication, and a better understanding of stakeholders' needs (see diagram 2). Other benefits include the avoidance of duplication and inefficiencies through sharing of resources, and through group effort to mobilise external resources previously unavailable on an individual basis. Partnerships have increased the role of the private, voluntary and community sectors, and diminished that of the local authority. Miller has, however, identified a range of problems which attend the practicalities of this system.

First, this process has developed unevenly through British society at the local level, varying spatially and by sector. The particular case of public-private partnerships alluded to above (Miller, 1999), has particularly been the subject of criticism in terms of the extent to which local interests have been informed, involved or influential in the development process at the local level.

Second, however uneven its implementation may have been in the UK and in other northern countries, as Sanderson (1999:330) points out, by its nature, communicative rationality requires high levels of awareness, education, and information on a topic in order for citizens fully to engage in democracy. It also requires a will to share.

So far, we have described a 'northern' paradigm, as exemplified in the UK (see diagram 2). However, the necessary conditions discussed above are by no means applicable on a world-wide basis, and the planned and partial withdrawal of state control and involvement is only one means by which the involvement of the state in development may be reduced. That, too, is a process more typical of the post-Fordist, social democratic nations, than of a number of post-communist or developing countries.

The state's withdrawal may be more far-reaching, and may take place where there is little grass roots political structure, or where the alternative structures which exist are unequal to the tasks they face. This concatenation, which we term *less government and less participation*, characterises states where legitimate government has abdicated or been forced out of power, and has not been replaced by a grass-roots system of consensual decision-making and provision. The outcome may be civil strife or even civil war. Although characteristic of many countries, both northern and southern, this paradigm is not the concern of the present paper. Instead, we focus on an alternative paradigm: the dynamics of a process in which local government increases its sphere of control while central government withdraws from direct provision, thus reducing the opportunities for direct participation.

In this paper, we argue that the potential influence of direct participation can decline even while its importance is enshrined in national legislation and policy guidelines. We argue that

this is a direct consequence of increasing programmatisation and bureaucratisation of development work, which, in turn, are a direct consequence of the channelling of development process directly through the state. While central government might no longer be involved in *direct* provision, its involvement is merely less 'visible', largely in setting standards and setting out programmes. Thus, national government is still influencing the process of community development. It is this from this change in emphasis that a more programmatic/bureaucratic approach to development has emerged. Finally we argue that these processes may also have a profound effect on the nature of participation, and on its potential impacts, including sustainability and empowerment.

In the following sections, we examine a process of change from:

- greater state involvement and an ad hoc approach to community development, to
- a withdrawal of the central state, accompanied by devolution of powers to local government, accompanied by
- an increasingly bureaucratic approach to community development and
- less community participation.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to address this, we look at South Africa, and follow the changes which have taken place there since the end of apartheid, in 1994. The New South Africa[2] raised participation to a national value (see below), and as we have discussed elsewhere (Lyons and Smuts, 1999), South Africa presents a diverse approach to community participation in development work.

Within the sphere of community-led initiatives, we have elected to focus on projects within the built environment. There are a number of reasons for this.

- It is now accepted practice in South Africa that a participatory democracy is a prerequisite for investment into built environment projects;
- There is generally a large, reasonably well documented investment involved;
- The local authority is generally involved as a partner in at least one stage of the process, as is a range of non-profit sector organisations;
- A long gestation period is required for construction, which ensures that the participation process must go through a series of transformations and deal with a wide range of challenges – administrative, financial, legal and facilitative – in addition to the implementation of services for which a building has been commissioned.

Within the wide range of community-led built-environment projects currently underway in South Africa, we have chosen projects which aim to address socio-economic imbalances through provision of goods and services. Specifically, these have included extra-mural educational facilities, cultural or recreational facilities, and trading facilities (e.g. for small businesses).

All projects selected have in common a partnership involving the *community*, *local government* (if only as a ground landlord), *funders* (from both public and private sources), *consultants*, who acted in a range of capacities, and to a lesser extent, the central state (see diagram 1).

In view of the importance of local and provincial state institutions in land provision and in establishing project structures, three metropolitan locations were chosen for the study. This enabled the analysis to allow for institutional, demographic and economic differences between projects. Of the fifteen projects involving the provision of small- to medium-scale

[2] a popular term for South Africa since the demise of apartheid and the first elections in 1994 for a democratic and representative government.

public amenities, which we analysed in the metropolitan areas of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, three are discussed in the present paper.

These projects had roots which went back more than ten years prior to the Reconstruction and RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme, see below), and they continued to develop and change after the RDP was replaced officially by GEAR (see below).

In order to address the research question, the data on each project had to provide a multi-dimensional view of that project. These included:

- A comprehensive and reliable view of the *full history of the project management*, throughout the project cycle or cycles (see below), enabling us to identify interest groupings, conflicts of interest, forced changes of direction, etc.
- the *extent of participation* at various times, both in terms of *'breadth'* (i.e. numbers of people involved);
- and, more importantly, in terms of *'depth'* (i.e. the extent of influence and control over the project which was in the hands of members of the local community).
- Finally, it had to offer insights regarding *peoples' reasons for participation* and, particularly, for non-participation.

Data gathered was largely qualitative, and came from four sources described below. Originally chosen in order to triangulate factual information regarding project histories, the use of different methods of data collection had two further advantages, namely providing all actors with opportunities to voice their opinion in an unintimidating environment (Oxfam, 1995), and also, offering insights into different aspects of the process.

Methods of data collection

Evaluation workshops, based on Action Planning workshops (Hamdi and Goethart, 1996) were organised at each site. Members of the communities were invited to present their ideas in these participatory fora. The workshops included representatives of other participating institutions, and aimed to stimulate discussion amongst the community, and between the community and other participating institutions. A range of techniques was used to overcome social, linguistic, and literacy barriers. These workshops proved particularly important in eliciting information about *conflict* within communities, and between communities and external agencies, as they allowed a range of views about conflict to be expressed.

More detailed information on project histories and their relation to structural and institutional factors was collected through questionnaire based, semi-structured **interviews with key informants** from within each community and with operatives in several related sectors. These were particularly useful for allowing detailed understanding of the perceived *constraints* influencing participation, and of the way in which individuals and organisations were able to respond to constraints.

Semi-structured, questionnaire-based **household interviews** were held in six selected projects. These provided detailed information on individuals' and households' levels of participation, *reasons for participation*, and reasons for withholding their involvement in the development projects undertaken in their locality. Where there was participation, we were able to gauge its extent, triangulating this information with data from key-informant interviews and project workshops. We were also able to gauge the influence of a range factors on the extent of individuals' participation in a project, including peoples' relative socio-economic position, their household structure, their migration history, or quite simply, their physical distance from a project.

Finally, ward level **data from the 1996 census** on a range of basic socio-economic variables was used to quantify structural problems in the communities involved, including employment and unemployment levels, income levels, household structure, and basic housing information. Although electoral wards define communities in South Africa, and are the basis of

representation and decision-making at the municipal level, ward level data is not able to shed light on intra-community differences, and this must be considered when interpreting the data.

Any development project has several main phases. In analysing the projects, we examined the **full 'development cycle'** covering the project from the point at which a need was identified, through the establishment of formal structures, the formulation of a brief, the construction of the building, its commissioning and its subsequent operation. The importance of taking such a broad view of the development process is that it allows the process of community agency to be properly identified.

In addressing the research question, it was also necessary to analyse **South Africa's changing institutional framework**, which affects development projects. The data for this analysis included programme documents and a literature review, which were supported with information from key-informant interviews.

In the sections which follow, we present an analysis of changing policy at international and national level; followed by our analysis of the wide-ranging implications of these changes for other institutions and agents in the development process, and the substantial restructuring which has followed in its wake. Finally, using the phases of the building as sub-headings, we present our analysis of three project selected from our sample of fifteen, to show how the changing institutional environment in which it exists, has impacted on the project's own structure and on the levels of participation.

CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Until 1994, the majority of South Africa's population had been excluded from an official role in decision-making. The result is a society, accustomed to top-down planning, labour exploitation and white minority domination, which lacks a tradition of democracy and public participation, particularly at the grassroots level (Khan, 1998; Maharaj and Ramballi, 1998:133). The election of the first democratic and fully representative government in 1994 presented the first real opportunity for equitable participation in decision-making and planning. However, the extent of public involvement depends on an informed and aware society, and true participation in disadvantaged or low-income communities thus requires considerable effort (Khan, 1998:3).

The adoption of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) in 1994, as the official policy and cornerstone of the new government (Blumenfeld, 1996) has been described as "the most important significant statement on South African society since the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955" (Freund, 1994:36). The RDP's main objective was to redress the socio-economic imbalances and extreme poverty that beleaguered many communities after apartheid, ultimately achieving social, political and economic justice through a people-driven process, characterised by 'empowerment through participation' (Blumenfeld, 1996; Carolus, 1994; De Beer, 1996). Attracting widespread support, the RDP quickly became a powerful symbol for reconciliation and reconstruction.

However, the new government was slow to deliver on its RDP and election promises and within a year political and practical difficulties began to emerge (Blumenfeld, 1996). With its failure to meet the high expectations of many South Africans, the RDP policies were officially abandoned in 1996, and replaced a few months later with a new macroeconomic policy: Growth, Employment and Redistribution, known as GEAR (Blumenfled, 1996; Padayachee, 1994).

GEAR aims to re-route the South African economy to ensure (ANC, 1997):

- a competitive and growing economy with sufficient levels of job creation;
- the redistribution of incomes and opportunities in favour of the poor;
- equitable access to social services for all;

- and an environment in which houses are secure and places of work are safe.

According to the ANC (1997), the fundamental goals that underpinned the RDP also underpin GEAR. However where GEAR differs is that it clearly sets out the economic strategies for achieving these goals, namely: to promote growth through exports and investments, and to promote redistribution through the creation of jobs and the reallocation of resources through the budget (ANC, 1997). Policies and objectives centred on implementing each strategy are also presented in GEAR.

Where the RDP aimed to achieve its goals through a 'people-driven process' (ANC, 1994), GEAR is not as explicit about the role or extent of public involvement in its policies which centre on economic restructuring, trade and labour reform. The promotion of partnerships and development of skills appear 'tacked on' to a policy that was introduced in a heavy-handed and distinctly top-down appearance. GEAR essentially advocates decentralisation and partnerships between the state and private organisations. The promotion and institution of a culture of public participation and community development, while central to the RDP, are not identified as an explicit focus of GEAR.

The two core strategies of GEAR have parallels in the withdrawal of the (national) state from direct service provision. However there has been some privatisation and semi-privatisation, particularly of utilities, but core services, such as education, housing and arts and culture, are provided through provincial or local government. Concomitantly, where international donors previously funded projects on an ad hoc basis, they now fund South Africa government programmes. Funding reaches the local level through the local state and its management is devolved to the local state.

INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING

The policy changes described above have had fundamental impacts on the ways in which parastatal organisations (PSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and provincial and local government institutions, address the development process. In the case of PSOs, there has been a radical change in their roles in the development process. For many reasons, these organisations have progressively withdrawn from direct involvement at the project level.

In some cases, this has been a product of the need for a more coherently focused delivery by government. The Independent Development Trust (IDT) is an interesting example. Founded by the National Party South African government in 1992, before the end of apartheid, the IDT was endowed with a fund of R2-billion, to improve the conditions of the urban and rural poor. The organisation established major development programmes, in which a participatory development approach was used to provide public amenity buildings in low-income areas. In-house professional staff, responsible for overseeing their strategic and financial management managed these programmes. Largely private sector agents, appointed by the IDT (interview, Gideon Scott), carried out community development work, professional work and construction.

However, over the last two years, the IDT has recognised that it will no longer be a conduit for direct delivery of services to communities. While withdrawing from service delivery work (interview Hirsch Fish), the IDT has developed a corporate philosophy based on the skills gap between donors (mainly the government) and the abjectly poor, and is undertaking a role of national development programme facilitator at a ministerial level. Instead it will "…link needy communities to support agencies unable to reach the poor", as well as undertaking "An advocacy role" on their behalf (IDT, 1999).

Another major factor in the withdrawal of PSOs from direct involvement in development at the project level has been the perceived need to reduce exposure to risk (interview, Cor van Royen). Thus, changes similar to those in the IDT can be seen in the work of the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA). While previously charged with direct funding

of development projects, the DBSA has withdrawn from direct involvement at the project level. Instead it acts as a funder to local authorities, provincial authorities or other PSOs, thus externalising the risk of poorly managed development work to the authorities managing the relevant development programmes.

This change of focus has been allied to a fundamental organisational restructuring characterised by downscaling, rationalisation and increased efficiency. Under new leadership for example, IDT has reduced its staff by some 33% over two years and has concentrated its headquarters, previously split between Cape Town and Johannesburg, in the latter. Major restructuring has also taken place at the DBSA, as project teams have been established with specialists in a range of fields, to evaluate funding proposals and oversee their management.

Although these processes have originated from a combination of factors, it has been associated in each case with a fundamental review of the role and nature of community participation in the development process and, specifically, with the roles of these organisation in respect to grass roots participation.

Senior managers at the IDT expressed clearly the view that meaningful participation at the grass roots level with national programmes could only take place if there existed a mediating function between state and locality….develop… (interview, Gwagwa). Implicit in this approach is a standardisation of the content of facilitation practice, and of its structure.

Policy and Local Authority specialists at DBSA were concerned with grass roots participation only in so far as they were satisfied that the organisations funding the development work, generally local authorities, managed development projects in a participatory way (interview de Gasparis). This was seen as a necessary measure to enhance the chances of local stability and long-term sustainability of developments. The DBSA has developed training information for local authority officers and councillors on the meaning, role and management of community participation. At the same time, the assessment of participation levels and effectiveness by the DBSA can only be carried out at a remove from the projects in question, and relies heavily on quantifiable measures. These include the frequency of reporting and the composition of committees to ensure representation of traditionally under-represented groups, for example, women and youth. Assessment of the quality of participation is assumed to have been undertaken by the local authority in question.

In summary, it is evident that the increasing control of the state over funding for development has meant a restructuring of the major PSOs involved, in a manner that promotes increasingly standardised conceptualisation of participation, and an increasingly bureaucratised model of its management.

PARTICIPATION AND THE LOCAL STATE

Institutional restructuring has accompanied not only the increasingly confined role of PSOs in the development process. The increasing pressure on provincial and metropolitan government in urban South Africa to carry out the local management of national programmes has also coincided with substantial restructuring of their boundaries, institutional structures and management methods.

Local government in South Africa has travelled a long way since pre-apartheid days. The sense of confusion and anxiety, which characterised the period immediately following national elections and preceded the local government elections (interview Younge), lasted well into 1996. It was associated with a lingering feeling in townships that neither elected councillors, nor appointed officials, had much *legitimacy* in the eyes of the local populations (interviews Ralarala, Ngwane).

A series of changes within local government have taken place which have had the effect of partially allaying this long-held mistrust. These include the restructuring of metropolitan areas

into municipalities in which wealthy and traditionally disadvantaged communities are incorporated, and an increasing role played by local government in the delivery of services to townships. Particularly important in this process, has been the increasing engagement of the local authority with local residents. As part of a national policy, post-apartheid local authorities are expected to hear and even solicit the 'local' voice, heard directly, as well as through representatives, a growth of direct, as well as representative democracy.

This has been associated with a substantial cultural shift within local and provincial government towards a 'service mentality' (interview Kaplan), part of an ongoing process, which has been associated with the growth of an NGO sub-sector devoted to training organisations and facilitating change within local and provincial government departments.

Alongside the shift in organisational culture and institutional structures, has come an increasing clarity regarding *expectations* from local authorities in the management and disbursement of public funds and in the provision of services. Municipalities are bound by legal requirements to produce an Integrated Development Plan and Land Development Objectives. These require an understanding of the financial implications of choosing different levels of service. At metropolitan and provincial level too, programme funds must be both budgeted and accounted for. Although authorities are free to borrow monies from the private sector, central government has unambiguously distanced itself from supporting any over-spend at the provincial or local level, while provincial government has refused to complete projects stalled because of over-ambitious specification (DBSA, 1999).

Thus, requirements for political and financial accountability have lead to a drive to establish clear-cut funding and development programmes by local government (interview: Lever), and clear-cut lines of accountability among local government officials (interview: Ralarala). Although it is no less widely used than before, inevitably, community participation has become defined and confined, assigned an increasingly pre-determined role in negotiations with local government in general, and within the development process in particular.

PROJECT PARADIGMS

Changes in participation are not only in the degree to which it is applied, but also in its fundamental objectives. The concept of participation has not been static. When first developed on a wide scale, during late 70s and early 80s, participatory methodologies were mainly concerned with efficiently gathering accurate and detailed information (Mitlin Thompson, 1995). Emphasis was on rapid appraisal and diagnosis of local problems and priorities, controlled by outside researchers and development agents. With time, local people, previously viewed as passive subjects or clients, were seent to have much to contribute to the research and development process. Therefore, by late 80s, the attention had shifted from rapid to *participatory* research and development (Mitlin and Thompson, 1995:231). While the fundamental objectives of participatory development may be broadly similar, the types of approach vary widely, implying a range of relationships between community and donor / professionals / the state (as depicted in diagrams 1, 2 and 3).

De Beer (1996) distinguishes between two approaches to participation. One approach characterised by 'involvement' and prevalent in the old South Africa, is perceived more as the co-option of communities in the implementation of projects resulting from top-down decision-making. The emphasis is on institutional initiatives with outsiders identifying needs and planning responses, and ultimately results in the 'failure of participatory involvement as a development approach' as very little learning takes place and the ownership of development is never taken (De Beer, 1996:68). The second approach, characterised by empowerment and linked to the new South Africa and the RDP, involves decentralising control and decision-making to civil society. Empowerment is most successful in smaller scale projects and

involves action at the grassroots level, creating self-awareness and the transformation of society (De Beer, 1996:71).

Our concern in this paper is with development paradigms which, ostensibly, set out to involve local people actively. Within this range, two archtypical, ideal-type models of participatory development could be envisaged. At one end of a scale, we might place the 'community agency' model, characterising de Beer's (1996) 'empowerment' paradigm. This, as distinct from community participation, suggests a project which is owned in all senses by the community in which it takes place. Members of the community initiate the project, bid for funding, hold the funds, hire consultants, appoint contractors, manage the development process, own the completed facility and manage the service which it houses. Institutional structures are put in place on a pragmatic basis, to regulate those relationships which are deemed by the community to be necessary to the project.

At the other end of the same scale, and representing the involvement paradigm (de Beer, 1996), we might place a model of development which is initiated and managed by the state. Part of a programme, funding criteria are pre-determined and impact on the definitions of project types, institutional structure within the community, and criteria for the appointment of consultants and contractors.

Clearly, in some senses, a project of the first type is bounded by state regulation. However, as this takes place only at a 'generic' level (e.g. in the regulation of land-use, construction standards or environmental standards), it may be termed 'anarchic' – not because it leads to anarchy, but because it is independent of the state and to a large extent defined ad hoc. The multiplicity of pre-defined aspects of the second arch-type, make it essentially more restricted in terms of the extent and type of influence which can be exerted on the structure, type and process of development, at the local level. We might term this arch-type 'limited' or bureaucratic participation. This is the bureaucratic model, referred to below.

FINDINGS: LESS PARTICIPATION

Since 1996, South Africa has progressively moved from the anarchic, 'empowerment' model towards the bureaucratic model of 'limited' participation. Where, before, developments were defined and initiated at grass roots level, funded ad hoc from a range of sources, led by independent consultants and managed at a local level, a far more state-centred process has now developed. In the sections that follow we will attempt to illustrate this road to a dramatically changed development paradigm.

Three phases are identified in this process of change.

Forming a grass roots structure: Phase 1 characterised the later stages of apartheid government, during which the local state had very little constructive involvement in township affairs, largely because of the mutinous conditions in the townships. It involved the initial stages of project definition and the formation of ad hoc community structures.

Community agency: Phase 2 characterised the later stages of apartheid and the early days of post-apartheid government, prior to, and shortly after, local government elections. Its spirit is enshrined in the RDP (see above). It involved the development of buildings and services, with initiative largely taken by local residents and a small number of consultants working 'on spec', and NGO officials, who became involved through numerous routes. In effect, an 'ad hoc' project structure was developed. A more formal grass roots structure generally emerged from this phase.

Bureaucratic: Phase 3 is characteristic of the policy and institutional restructuring which has coincided with the replacement of the RDP by GEAR as the government's official development policy. The new state financed development paradigm is one where elected councillors, in consultation with local fora and professional officers, formulate programmes.

Programme funds are then bid for by local communities, and drawn down against certificated completion targets. Communities participate in decision making at the various stages, but frameworks established by the state for each stage of the process define the sphere of influence they exert.

We illustrate this process of change with reference to three case studies in South Africa: Gugulethu Central Meat Market in Cape Town, Besters Camp in Durban, and Boipatong School, in Vanderbijl Park, Gauteng.

Table 1: *percent of households headed by females*

area	Unemployed		Households headed by females	
	%	N	%	N
Bester	47.7	2160	37.5	840
Inanda total	33.8	3826	30.5	1680
Durban metro total	31.3	341935	31.2	189703
Gugulethu total	40.7	13725	47.3	4782
Cape metropolitan area	19.6	289333	27.7	272591
Boiphatong	46.7	5236	33.2	1769
Johannesburg	29.1	365030	31.9	222946
Urban	28.8	2674913	31.8	1726060
Non-Urban	44.4	1996733	46.9	1702738
South Africa Total	33.9	4671646	37.8	3428798

***Source**: from tables prepared for the author from the 1996 Census by SSS*

As is evident from Table 1, all three are located in wards which are deprived by national, metropolitan and local standards. Unemployment is high; there is a high incidence of female headed households. Among those employed, a relatively low percentage are found in the top two income quintiles (not shown).

The projects were small-to-medium public amenities sited in these townships. They were:

Case study 1: Gugulethu Central Meat Market, Cape Town

- *objective*: to provide shelter from the elements for a meat market which had successfully operated in the open
- *funds*: R1,7-million
- *funders*: in grants (Escom, British High Commission, Reconstruction and Redevelopment Programme for the City of Cape Town) and loans (Development Bank of South Africa)

Case Study 2: Bester's Camp, Inanda, Durban

- *objective*: to provide amenities (library, school, workshops, community hall, payment office for utility company) in a recently settled, informal township of Inanda, 200,000 inhabitants, of whom 50,000 live in the close vicinity
- *funds*: approximately R8-million for the development of the whole site
- *funders*: in grants (Tongaat Hulett, IDT) and subsidies (Provincial Education Department, City of Durban Library Services, ESCOM)

Case Study 3: Boipathong School, Vanderbijl Park, Gaoteng

All three projects, the Gugulethu Central Meat Market, the public amenity centre at Bester's, and the Boipathong secondary school at Vanderbijl Park, have been active projects over a period of ten to fifteen years, and their development reflects several key changes in development philosophy in South Africa. Very crudely, their history could be reviewed in the three main phases.

PHASE 1: TOWARDS A GRASS ROOTS STRUCTURE

Case Study 1: Gugulethu Central Meat Market, 1984 - 1985

1984 onwards: Police increasingly frequently harassed meat and beer traders on the streets of Gugulethu. Initially unaligned and trading effectively in competition with each other, Gugulethu's street traders were forced by these external pressures, to consider their shared needs.

1985: Having elected a committee and chair, street traders concentrated their activities in an empty lot, provided by Gugulethu mayor, close to hostels (controlled by Umzamo), they were now, in effect, a community, rather than a group of individuals, with mainly competing interests. Police harassment continued. Discussion developed about ameliorisation of trading conditions, protection from the elements, and the need to regulate standards, in order to improve position with the police.

Case Study 2: Bester's Camp, Inanda, Durban, 1990 - 1993

A different path was followed by the residents of Inanda on the outskirts of Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, in forming an independent local management structure for development.

1990: The provincial government appointed the Urban Foundation's Informal Settlement unit, to ameliorate housing conditions at Inanda, a newly invaded, informal township.

1992: The Urban Foundation, which a development trust for Inanda, in order to be eligible to bid for development funds to IDT (see above). Its remit was expanded to include a service centre at Bester's Camp, for this community of some 50,000 residents living in the immediate proximity of the site.

The Board of Trustees comprised of fourteen members, of whom only one was a local inhabitant, the others being professionals in the employ of the Urban Foundation and representatives of the site's owners. A master plan was developed for Bester's Camp. Projected developments included a library, a school, a community hall and workshops, in a large site recently vacated by a construction company and donated by a major business interest. In parallel, large-scale shelter upgrading was being carried out in the area, also initiated and managed by the Urban Foundation.

1993: Although the plans were developed in consultation with local residents, enormous resentment was aroused by what was seen locally as the imposition of planning decisions and a management structure by outsiders, tarnished by association with the Nationalist government. The local, area-based pyramidal political structure developed by SANCO, the national movement of civic associations, took effective control of the township. For a period of several months, all work was brought to a standstill.

Case study 3: Boipatong School, Vanderbijl Park, Gauteng, 1988 - 1990

1988: A number of residents of Vanderbijl Park, a formal township on the outskirts of Johannesburg, decided to work towards their own high-school building in 1988. At that time,

for ten years, their secondary school had been 'platooned' with Lebohang Secondary School in a neighbouring township. In 1988, a third school was 'platooned' with them. While the original buildings had been designed for a school of some 900 children, there were now more than 3,000. Physical over-crowding was not the only problem. With three schools sharing the same facilities, it was difficult to maintain systems of order and discipline within each school, over a range of issues, including truancy, uniforms, and punishment norms.

1990: A project committee was formed, including interested parents, one of whom was also a local authority councillor. Many parents boycotted the committee because of strained relations with this councillor. Despite frequent and prolonged demonstrations, only partial progress was made. Although the then Transvaal Provincial Authority allocated money for the school, the fund was used to pay council expenses, in lieu of the boycott on service charges. In the face of this defeat, only a small number of residents remained involved. These were a councillor and other 'involved' people.

Summary

All three projects share a background of adversity, in the face of which they formulated agreement over issues and initial priorities. The three were very different in the initial stances taken by the community as it formed its grass-roots structure, and in the extent of their achievements. In Gugulethu, a system of early warning and mutual aid developed into the kernel of plans for a market. In Bester's, resistance brought work to a standstill. At Boipathong, residents succeeded in obtaining a funding allocation for their school. All projects were similar, however, in having developed an internal ad hoc structure to define their problems and determine solutions.

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY AGENCY

Gugulethu Central Meat Market, 1991 - 1996

1991: Formulating a development agenda and an institutional structure from within the traders' community only, was not possible in the highly politicised climate of the times. The project was taken up by Umzamo, a locally based NGO, dedicated to the improvement of nearby hostel dwellers. It joined the steering committee and encouraged/led initial attempts to formalise activities of busy local meat market. These efforts were followed by a relapse into inactivity as other projects to foster local business gained priority with Umzamo.

1993: Encouraged by Umzamo, traders approached development consultants. They formed a Section 21 non-profit company and initiated twin processes of planning and fund raising. This phase exemplifies a process in which local people, directly concerned with the development, have a large measure of autonomy in formulating a planning and architectural brief; in identifying an appropriate management structure; and in establishing reporting practices which validate the work of representative members.

1995: Success with fund-raising (R1-million in grants from several donors) led to the establishment of funds, managed by the traders' Section 21 Non-Profit Company. The executive committee had legal control over the Company's bank account, from which consultants and contractors were paid. As often happens, the injection of funds into a hitherto unfunded project, sparked renewed interest from other factions in the community (Lyons and Smuts, 1999). In this case, Umzamo's rekindled interest led to a struggle for control between market traders and Umzamo. Funders (particularly South African Breweries) because aware of this struggle, and delayed the release of funds for building programmes funding delayed until the executive committee was restructured to reflect both parties.

1996: Construction began in 1996, managed by the steering committee, who report to public meetings and were assisted by development consultants. Members of the committee underwent

training in a range of management skills, while local contractors and building workers were employed by the project. In the course of construction, spending on the project was over-extended following misinterpretation of agreement with DBSA (R7-million), and the project accumulated debts to suppliers and contractors. The difficulties of engaging in prolonged negotiation with DBSA were significant for a community of this size and scope.

Bester's Camp, 1994 - 1995

1994: Resentment against the Urban Foundation having developed into boycotts and threats, this led the UF to withdraw from Bester's Camp, well before its planned withdrawal. It was replaced by the locally established ICDT, Inanda Community Development Trust, only four of whose members are not local residents. A clearly structured, area-based reporting and consultation structure supported it and governed the appointment of its members. ICDT now became the landlord for the whole service site, which included a library, school, community hall and workshops, in variously advanced planning phases. The Trust appointed an executive director who would manage rent collection, manage the site, and negotiate with external agents.

1995: Inanda township, with its service centre at Bester's Camp, was transferred from the provincial administration to the newly formed Durban Metropolitan Structure. New councillors were elected, but their influence on events at ICDT was small. ICDT was still largely influenced by its traditional representative structure, funded independently by NGOs and regarded the council as a service provider. School, library and hall were designed in close consultation with ICDT and the broader public, with service providers, e.g. Library Services Department of the Durban Metropolitan Council, moving in as tenants of ICDT.

Boipathong Secondary School, 1994/5

1994: A largely stagnant phase followed in the township. While committees came and went, for this and other projects, internal political rivalries and suspicions, as well as a general apathy and hopelessness, greeted most initiatives.

Summary

This phase corresponds to the period leading up to, and immediately after, the institution of the RDP. The enormous upsurge of hope and grass roots activity enshrined in that policy was evident in Gugulethu and Besters, and was accompanied by a burgeoning of activity and major achievements. Local conflicts arose, but were largely overcome through processes of mediation and arbitration. In contrast, the Boipathong School project languished throughout this period. The difference is stark and begs some comment. First, both successful projects had access to funds, and were not dependent on government funding. Second, the democratic structure in both was more permeable, allowing new ties with potential funders and political allies to be formed, while at Boipathong, power was held by the same person throughout. To some extent, this may be a reflection of the smaller size of the community there, making changes in entrenched power relationships more difficult.

PHASE 3: ENGAGING WITH STATE BUREAUCRACY

Gugulethu Central Meat Market, 1997 - 1999

1997: Developments in this phase closely reflect the changing climate of opinion in which grass roots development projects were increasingly to operate. Following the project's financial difficulties, the local municipality was approached by the development consultants, on behalf of the executive committee, and asked to provide ablution blocks and underwrite the outstanding loan from DBSA. The local authority agreed, but several conditions were attached to its intervention. First, the steering committee restructured to include traders, Umzamo and local authority representatives. This meant that the local authority no longer stood in relation to the

market as a regulatory authority (in terms of planning and environmental health), as it might with any other urban market and had done previously. From this point on, it was actively involved in strategic and day to day management of the project, and was in addition, landlord of some of the buildings (the ablution block). Furthermore, a manager was installed on the premises who was a local authority employee. It was unfortunate that the appointment was seen as sectarian, thus widening rather than bridging the gulf between the two factions in the market.

1997: Construction proceeded and the building was completed under management of newly constituted executive committee.

1998: The building was now commissioned under auspices of the local authority and Umzamo. The traders moved in to their new stalls, according to the plan agreed in public consultation in 1995. The market now began to operate under the new steering committee, supported by a manager employed by the local authority. The formalisation of trade has been extremely successful as a whole. However, while grocery shops and *spazas* (bars) are paying their rents regularly, sometimes in advance, the meat traders are not meeting their own, lower rent payments. Interpretations differ as to whether this results from the lower profit margin they enjoy now, in other words, a concomitant risk of much regularised informal trading, or whether this is a passive protest against management practices. The loan repayments to DBSA are still outstanding, and the local authority, which has under-written the loan, plans to take over the management of the market unless rent payments are substantially met.

Case Study 3: Boipathong School, Vanderbijl Park, Gaoteng, 1996 - 1999

1996: With the new provincial government, came hope that old debts would be written off and the promise of new funding became more realistic. A project committee was formed representing school staff and students and all major civic and business organisations in the townships. Despite the promises made by the new government, intense competition in the province over limited funds meant that the committee, supported by large numbers of local people, was forced to carry out demonstrations and attract publicity in the press in order to secure funding for the new school building.

1997: Funding was eventually agreed, consultants were appointed, the committee was trained individually and collectively. Reporting to the community throughout this process was by means of public meetings.

1998: However, the freedom to make decisions was within clearly defined parameters. Standard school plans were insisted on by the province. Only minor alterations were allowed. Project management was channelled through the Department of Public Works.

Within these parameters, the local community was allowed a say in the procurement system to be adopted. The pressure to use local labour was intense, and a compromise solution was reached which resulted in four contractors being appointed. This led to problems in allocating responsibility.

1998: The building was eventually occupied, although not officially completed. In 1999, although a full complement of students has enrolled, it has been subjected to a great deal of vandalism. Staff are demoralised and security measures are being hotly debated.

Summary

This third phase corresponds to the introduction of GEAR. It is characterised in all three cases by a growing importance of the local (or provincial) government, in the affairs of the project, although the mechanisms through which this came about varied across the three cases. The three projects differed radically in their ability to benefit from the increased intervention of local

authorities in their management. In each case, however, the outcome has been improved predictability, at the cost of reduced scope for community involvement.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

At the start of this paper, we posited that the argument put forward by some scholars, i.e. that what we are now witnessing is a process of convergence between north and south in the pressures and mores driving development policy, may be premature. While the central state has indeed stepped back from full involvement in development in South Africa, this has largely been through an orchestrated delegation of powers to local and provincial governments. Unlike the experience in the north, the level of state involvement in service provision to low-income communities has not diminished with the growing legitimacy of the state, but grown.

Furthermore, we argued that the increasing legitimisation of the South African state, following the end of apartheid, would have set in motion a process of formalisation of development. This, we posited that this would have the effect of limiting the range and scope of community participation in the development process.

We defined the process, within which three main phases were identified, as a movement from an 'ad hoc' framework, to a 'bureaucratic' one. The histories of three long-term projects, one from each of the three provinces studied, were then analysed with reference to these phases.

Findings were that each of the projects studied changed in its management structure in general and the scope of participation in particular, as external changes impacted on it. Certain parallels were evident in these changes. As the RDP was replaced by GEAR, and as the power of local, or provincial, government was increased, the funding for the projects came increasingly from local government, or other state providers, rather than from private or semi-private funders. The management structure of all projects became increasingly formalised. Local authority figures, whether elected councillors or appointed officials, played a greater role in this new structure than they had been in the past. Finally, all projects experienced a limiting of their autonomy, and a channelling of their initiative into pre-defined courses of action.

Also interesting, were the qualitative changes in terms of participation and community empowerment. While the two projects which had developed a strong internal political structure and a clear agenda have been able to survive, the limiting of local autonomy, which has coincided with a reduction in funding opportunities, coincides also with a reduction in opportunities for training, for

At the same time, the analysis revealed some very interesting differences, showing that a range of factors can have a significant impact on the way in which increasing bureaucratisation has affected the participatory development process at the local level.

The application of a bureaucratic model can vary among local communities. Thus, the growth of a programmatic approach to development had different effects on the opportunities open to Gugulethu Central Meat Market and to Bester's Camp. In the former, internal rivalries resulted in lack of proper financial controls. The two combined to ensure that, not only was the Market subject to the financial and programmatic limitations of the new state culture, but it had also largely lost its independence of the state. There were local government officials on the board and in the management, and no strategic decisions could be taken independently of local government.

On the other hand, Bester's Camp, with its strong grass roots structure, was able to remain largely independent of the state in its internal affairs, retain ownership of its assets, and maintain a relatively united front to all outside agencies, not least local authority services.

The bureaucratic model adopted by the state is not, nor is it intended to be, a method of controlling all development. As explained in the introduction, it attempts to apply controls to the management of state funds. Thus, local groups are still free to apply for funds independently of the local authority, the control of which is a matter between them and the funding agency. However, in a climate where NGO funding is much reduced, and in which many NGOs which previously provided funds and services direct to development projects are now operating in a facilitating mode instead, this is more difficult to do.

Under these difficult conditions, advocacy is crucial to success. Both Bester's Camp and Gugulethu Central Meat Market had had some success with this process. In the former case, this was attributed by all people interviewed, to the clarity, articulate presentation, and contacts of the executive director of the project. In the second, all interviewees stated that the consultant architects on this project had had a decisive role in formulating the applications and mediating them.

As we pointed out earlier, the state has three main objectives in the restructuring of development work in the country. In the light of our case studies, it is interesting to consider not only the impact of institutional changes on the development process at the local level, but to comment on the efficacy of these changes in terms of the state's own objectives.

In our introduction, we argued that a prime objective of the incorporation of development work into state programmes has been the establishment of the new government's legitimacy at the local, as well as the central level. In other words, the state institutions needed to be *seen* to be instrumental in the delivery of development. Our projects suggest that institutions of the state are now widely perceived as central to the instigation and maintenance of successful development. Local councillors and local residents who are employed in state institutions also benefit from the enhanced credibility which arises from this. However, local government and provincial government are also seen as forums at which localities must compete for resources. While success in the bidding process enhances the government's image, failure must damage it. In the long run, the credibility of the government, and of its top-down approach to development, will be tested by results. If the government can not deliver, initiative (and funding) may return to the grass roots

We argued that the adoption of the development process by the state must be associated with its bureaucratisation. One prime objective of this process of bureaucratisation undertaken by the state, must be seen as a gain in predictability. Control on spending at the local level in the projects we examined appears to have improved. It is no longer simple for functionaries on their boards to succumb to extreme pressure to vire monies intended for development into unpaid salary accounts, for example. Where the local authority has acquired an asset, as in the case of the Gugulethu Central Meat Market, it also has a measure of influence on rents, rates, and maintenance levels. At the same time, this transformation is not complete. The local authority's relationship with a project can never be based strictly on business lines. Thus, in the Gugulethu Meat Market, again, it is difficult to enforce rent payments due from reluctant tenants. From our findings it appears that the bureaucratic model has nowhere been fully adopted, which may mean that the system cannot reach full predictability.

As we have discussed elsewhere (Lyons and Smuts, 1999) some of the obstacles to accountability and predictability arise from the application of this model. The sustainability of programmes over a wide area or over a longer range of time depends on predictability of costs and timing. Thus, a tension arises between the long-term sustainability of a project and the long-term sustainability of the programme, which funded it.

One very interesting outcome of this tension between the two models of development, which we have juxtaposed, is to throw into question notions of 'sustainability'. Clearly, evidence at the local level suggests that the adoption of community agency can be more empowering to local people and reinforce local democracy and its competency to engage with the state and other external agencies. Further evidence has suggested that projects developed through this system have a longer life, are less likely to be targets for vandalism and more likely to enjoy local respect and participation. Thus, the first model may well better serve sustainability at the local level.

The preceding analysis has policy implications as well as theoretical implications. In the introductory sections of this paper, we suggested that government policy may heavily influence the opportunities for empowerment through development. The role of government in this approach is to 'support people so they can be empowered' (De Beer, 1996:77). "If real people-centred development is to guide development efforts, a valid question is to ask why central or provincial government should be involved with local-level co-ordination. Or are we reverting to a dispensation of participation as involvement?" (De Beer, 1996:76).

However, despite its criticism, the government who introduced GEAR as a non-negotiable policy, remain steadfast: "The RDP and GEAR will remain the basic policy objectives of the…government to achieve sustainable growth, development and improved standards of living" (Mbeki, 1999).

If GEAR is to follow through with the 'participation as empowerment' paradigm, the role of grassroots action and real community involvement and participation will need to be more clearly outlined in its policies.

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