# The Role of the Ward Committees as an Interface between Local Government and Community: A case study of Makana Municipality.

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## ABSTRACT

The Ward Committee System was introduced in South Africa in 2001 as a tool to bring government closer to the people and to enhance participatory democracy. The Makana Municipality adopted the system in 2002. Previous research on local government indicates that these structures have not been effective due to the lack of resources to sustain them. This study was interested in furthering such research, using the Makana Municipality as a case study during which unstructured, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with Ward Councillors, Ward Committee Members and Grade 12 learners. The aim of the research was to investigate whether the ward committees did indeed promote the notion of participatory democracy and to what extent grass roots development has been enhanced by this structure of local government. The findings from both the respondents and the observations indicate that, in addition to the lack of resources, the underutilization of the Ward Committee System is a result of the effect of opposing political affiliations within the ward committee system, affiliations that undermine the goal of collaborative decision-making. Whereas the ward committee system is a positive idea, the findings suggest that the government is not supporting these structures by failing to equip the ward committee members with necessary capacities and skills. Therefore, if municipalities are committed to bridging the gap between local government and the community, and are keen to enhance participatory democracy, then capacity building of the ward committees and respect for their role during the decision-making process need to be taken seriously. At present, ward committee members are not influential and active in the decision-making process. In addition, the youth as prospective future ward committee members seemed disillusioned with the notion of participatory democracy, and instead have adopted the mentality that nepotism and corruption, as displayed by those in power, is the only way of governance. This research suggests that the ward committee system, intended to bring government closer to the people, may in fact not only alienate government from the people, but also the people from each other.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ANCYL | ANC Youth League |
| CDW | Community Development Workers |
| CLO | Community Liaison Officer |
| CP | Community Participation |
| DPLG | Department of Provincial and Local Government |
| IDP | Integrated Development Planning |
| MM | Makana Municipality |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PMS | Performance Management Systems |
| PR | Proportional Representative |
| PT | Women's Party in Brazil |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SA | South Africa (n) |
| SANCO | South African National Civic Organisation |
| UN | United Nations |
| WC | Ward Committee |
| WCM | Ward Committee Member |

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 4: CHAPTER 4: DECENTRALIZATION

## CHAPTER 5: CONCEPT OF GOVERNANCE

## CHAPTER 6: WARD COMMITTEES

## CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context of the research

One of the objectives of local government is to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government[1]. This constitutional prescription is endorsed in the 1998 White Paper on Local Government, which defines developmental local government as one that is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve their lives. Lutabingwa and Sabela (2006: 80) also argue that the role of the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) is to develop appropriate policies and legislation to promote integration in government's development programmes and service delivery. The DPLG aims to provide strategic interventions, support and partnerships to facilitate policy implementation in the provinces and local government, and to create enabling mechanisms for communities to participate in governance. It is apparent that the Constitution, White Paper and the DPLG strongly support the idea of community participation when it comes to local issues. Lemon (2002: 18) and Parnell and Peters (2002: 8) support this by suggesting that democracy makes sense when it connects with, and gives expression to, the everyday challenges of ordinary South Africans.

Meyer (2003: 6) states that the involvement of community members in choosing their own collective destiny falls within the ambit of what is referred to as participatory democracy. Furthermore, "participation in the context of local governance means people involving themselves in decision-making about implementation of local governance and development" (Afesis-Corplan, 2002: 2). It is useful to keep in mind some of the core purposes and objectives of participation and what might be regarded as useful participation and these are articulated by Afesis-Corplan (2002: 6) as:

 a) Participants are better able to critically assess the manner in which they are governed.
 b) Well formulated policies for governance and development achieve more legitimacy and therefore greater co-operation by citizens.
 c) Participation enhances scrutiny and accountability.

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[1] Section 152 (1)(e) of the 1996 Constitution (Act 108 of 1996).

d) Participation therefore creates countervailing power to established concentration of power.

This research project refers to the notion of community empowerment and participation as participatory democracy, which refers to a process emphasising the broad involvement of constituents in the direction and operation of the political system.

One important component of participatory democracy is the decentralization of power. Cloete (2002: 276) and Lutabingwa and Sabela (2006: 75) define the decentralization of power as a system that aims at reducing the state's bureaucracy and increasing transparency as government is brought closer to its citizens. Cameron (1986: 4) argues that there are certain general reasons which are advanced in favour of extensive decentralization of power to local government. Amongst them, and most importantly, are that the decentralization of power helps local government to promote democracy; it allows citizens to have greater control over their own affairs and in so doing promotes a sense of self-reliance and self-responsibility. In addition, Meyer (2003: 7) argues that decentralization can help reduce poverty, achieve other development goals and promote social cohesion, peace and national unity.

Although the South African government aspires to these ideals, it has for a variety of reasons failed to implement them, and a lack of social service delivery has an impact on realising developmental goals in the country. This has become the major challenge facing the new democracy. Levels of poverty and inequality have been high and are rising in post-apartheid South Africa. Between 1993 and 2006, 44% of households were trapped in poverty (Adato, Carter and May, 2006). In the Makana Municipality (MM) of importance is that 33% of the population do not have a basic level of literacy (Makana Municipality IDP, 2007-2012). Makana Municipality is a municipality under the Cacadu District Municipality in the Eastern Cape, and it is selected as the case study of this research. Furthermore, in the Makana Municipality the number of employed people dropped between 1996 and 2006, with 42% of the population not economically active (ibid.). Also, the number of people living in poverty in Makana has increased between 1996 and 2006. One of the ways the government has attempted to achieve the decentralization of power, participatory democracy and participatory

development in order to improve service delivery is through the introduction of the ward committee system.

The ward committee system was first introduced in South Africa in 2001 when the former state president, Thabo Mbeki, aimed at strengthening community participation (Ward Committee Resource Book). The role of the ward committees should have evolved over the past seven years to become effective vehicles of both service delivery and participatory democracy. Ward committees are structures which are supposed to be democratically elected by the community members. Through the Ward Councillors who chair these structures, ward committees represent the citizens in the municipal council. Constitutionally, ward committees are required to account to their communities, and inform the people about the decisions taken at the council meetings. Ward committees are structures which are aimed at bringing the government closer to the people. Policies and legislation governing the ward committees stipulate that "such process thus reinforces two of the fundamental mechanisms of sustainable democracy, which is participation of the people and accountability of the local government" (Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005: 39).

The roles of the ward committee members include organising ward committee meetings and community meetings, drafting community proposals and many other administrative duties. Although ward committee members are mandated to carry out these duties, the government does not remunerate ward committee members.

The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005) stipulates that the legislation for local government obliges municipalities to provide support to the ward committees and to build their capacities. The training directed to the ward committees must be in the form of formal training by government or government appointed service providers. Municipalities should also conduct a careful and participatory review of ward committees experiences and local knowledge bases. The National Ward Committee Guidelines identify the following capacity-building and training needs: basic literacy, communication skills, negotiation skills and many other generic training needs (Ward Committee Resource Book: 2005).

Cashdan (2002: 159) emphasizes the need for the ward committee system to effectively promote a democratic government as well as to hold elected representatives accountable for promoting community participation. As such, this study seeks to look at the ward committee system as a means of promoting service delivery and community participation.

Similar structures were introduced both in Brazil and India; which as a result contributed towards these countries' developmental goals. These countries are marked by the re-emergence of forms of participation at the local level. In Brazil, after its re-democratization between 1985 and 1988 the new Constitution introduced participatory devices which led to a few thousand local health and social assistance councils and the emergence of the so-called Porto Alegre experience. In Porto Alegre, people gather every year in regional assemblies to elect councils and to decide on budget priorities (Santos, 1998; Avritzer, 2002a).

Similarly, in India, there is a system of local government that has been in place since the 1950s, called the Panchayat system, in which block and district level councils are responsible for the administration of the deliverance of public goods (Chattopadhyay and Duffo, 2001). The Panchayat system was strongly reinforced by a constitutional amendment which was approved in 1992 and which established a general framework for the functioning of local democracy in India (Matthew, 2000). Since then, local participation has been thriving in many states of India. This system became a civic campaign for decentralization and distribution of public goods to the poor (Franke and Isaac, 2002: 54).

Like these two participatory democratic devices, civil society in the context of South Africa should mobilize and pressure to propel and sustain internal institutional transformation and participatory democracy. This will convince municipal staff and managers that they need to work differently if they want to deliver holistic, appropriate and quality service. Roodt (1997: 6-7) concurs with this and adds that defining the relationship between civil society and local government in South Africa is a critical step towards a developmentally orientated and democratic local government.

## 1.2. Goals of the research

The goals of this research are:

- To ascertain the level of community empowerment and participation in the wards within the Makana Municipality.
- To investigate whether the ward committee system is an important vehicle in advancing service delivery and participatory democracy.
- To determine to what extent ward committees play a meaningful role in decision-making processes.
- To investigate whether MM provides training to the ward committees to build their capacity.

## 1.3. Thesis breakdown

This study is divided into eight chapters:

### Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, an introduction, background, and aims and objectives of the study are discussed. The importance and the problems associated with ward committee system are discussed. Key questions are asked and the objectives of the study are outlined.

### Chapter 2: Methodology

This section describes the manner in which the research was undertaken. It outlines the methods, procedures and techniques that were followed. The study was qualitative in nature: in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions were used as the methods of collecting data. Ward 2 in Makana Municipality was selected as a case study for the research. Purposive and snowball sampling was employed in the study. Lastly, ethical issues are considered.

## Chapter 3: Democratic theory and participatory democracy

This chapter focuses on the overview of the concept of democracy. The concept of democracy is defined through examination of processes such as accountability and transparency. Varieties of democracy are also discussed, such as government by the people, majority decision, and the common good. Lastly, four models of democracy are examined, which are:

- Participatory democracy, which envisages a system in which citizens control their own affairs.

- Strong democracy, which imagines politics not as a way of life but as a way in which human beings live together communally.

- Deliberative democracy, which entails several normative ideals, among them inclusion, equality, reasonableness and publicity.

- Associative democracy, which supports the claim that a free, active and diverse civil society is crucial for democracy.

According to the literature review, these models foster participatory democracy and individual's rights.

## Chapter 4: Decentralization

This chapter argues that decentralization can come in different forms. However, this study will only focus on devolution as a type of decentralization. This chapter also argues that decentralization, including devolution, promotes democracy and good governance by providing an institutional framework to bring decision-making closer to the people. It is also argued in this chapter that decentralization helps to strengthen the role and capacity of local authorities to become more responsive and accountable to the concerns of local communities and groups. Transition to democracy and its link to the global trend are also discussed, and examples drawn from Brazil and India illustrate this global trend.

## Chapter 5: Concept of Governance

This chapter suggests that by governance, we mean the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government in this context is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations. Governance, according to this chapter, need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments, but in conjunction with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and associations of NGOs. Moreover, community participation is also discussed as an essential tool for good governance.

## Chapter 6: Ward Committees

This chapter discusses the nature of the ward committees in South Africa, and how these structures are aimed at fast-tracking service delivery and how they are intended to promote participatory democracy. The roles and duties of ward committee members are also discussed in this chapter. The participation of the ward committees in the IDP process and in the municipal budget process is discussed. It is argued that the purpose of ward committees is to enhance accountability and transparency. The training and the capacity-building programmes that have been designed by the government are argued to be an essential way of empowering the ward committee members.

## Chapter 7: Data Analysis

In this chapter an empirical investigation of the role of the ward committee as a vehicle of enhancing participatory democracy is undertaken. The main issue in this chapter is democracy, which entails the elements of dignity, equality, community participation, decentralization, training and capacity-building programmes, accountability and transparency, and inclusion.

Dignity: especially elderly and illiterate WCMs were not given opportunity to voice their opinions and were largely treated with contempt by the councillors who would simply override opposing views held by the WCMs.

Equality: the relationship between the councillors and the WCMs was characterised by favouritism and nepotism driven by political affiliation. Similarly, community members politically opposed to the councillors were deliberately disenfranchised.

Decentralization: where the intention of the WC system is to broaden decision-making, implementation by the councillors effectively results in an autocratic decision-making process.

Training and capacity-building: while training was provided it clearly was of inferior quality, and instead of capacitating the WCMs it left them without the necessary skills to effectively perform their duties as WCMs as prescribed by legislation.

Accountability: the ward-councillors appeared to view themselves as exempt from being answerable to the WCMs and the community that elected them, and acted oblivious to binding legislation

Transparency: it appears that some of the educated councillors would deliberately obfuscate issues or employ the strategy of obfuscation, especially with regard to issues especially the illiterate WCMs would have difficulty in grasping in order to push through a decision.

In summary, the data analysis and the interpretation of data as reflected in this chapter suggest that the key elements of democracy are absent in the implementation of the ward committee system, and hence undermine the notion of participatory democracy.

**Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The final chapter of the study summarises the key issues of democracy as explored in the study, and conclusions drawn from the results. It is argued that the idea of the ward committee is a positive idea, but that the government is not supporting these structures. The government is failing to take the ward committee members seriously or to provide them with adequate training and resources. It is argued that the government is failing to equip the ward committees with necessary capacities and skills. The study concludes that these structures are designed to fail. Lastly, this chapter argues that if municipalities are serious about bridging the gap between them and communities, and are keen to enhance participatory democracy, they must capacitate and make use of ward committees during the decision-making processes in a more constructive and positive way.

**CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

**2.1. Background to the study**

The Makana Municipality, which is under the Cacadu District Municipality in the Eastern Cape, was chosen as a case study for this research. There were several crucial factors which contributed to the selection of the Makana Municipality as a case study, among which is the fact that the Makana Municipality won a Vuna Provincial Award in 2004 as the best performing municipality in the province. This is an award which recognises those municipalities that are performing well in terms of service delivery, development and other issues relating to good governance. Despite the Vuna Award, it seems that there is still a lack of service delivery in the Makana Municipality. Secondly, since the researcher's mother tongue is the same as that used by the municipal council and potential respondents, it facilitated the methodology envisaged.

The idea of the ward committee system was introduced in South Africa in 2001, and in 2002 the Makana Municipality adopted the system. These were structures which aimed at bringing the government closer to the people to promote community participation.

**2.1.1. Research Design**

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that cuts across disciplines and subject matter. It aims to develop an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the meanings assigned to that behaviour. It thus tries to uncover the reasoning behind the various aspects of human behaviour. Simply put, it investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where and when (Dey, 1993: 12). Four qualitative methods for gathering information were employed, which are (1) participant observation, (2) in-depth interviews, (3) focus group discussion, and (4) case study.

One way of differentiating between quantitative and qualitative methods is that the former deals with numbers, whereas the latter deals with meanings. Meanings are mediated mainly through language and action. Language is not a matter of subjective opinion. According to Creswell (1994: 2), concepts are constructed in terms of an

inter-subjective language which allows us to communicate intelligibly and interact effectively. Such a method was relevant for this research as the researcher was interested in researching the perspectives and the meanings that people attach to participatory democracy.

## 2.2. Data collection

In selecting a method of data collection, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the study population play an important role before the field work is done. Educational level, age structure, socio-economic status and ethnic background of the groups researched were taken into consideration. The respondents in this study included the Council members, Speaker of the Council, Ward Councillors and community members. It was essential to know the study population's interests in, and attitude towards, participation in the study (Kumar, 1996: 105). Therefore the researcher had to be aware of such dynamics and differences that existed between these people. People with little education may respond differently to certain methods of data collection compared to people with high education.

## 2.2.1. Participant observation

Participant observation is employed as a process in which the observer's presence in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation, thus, the observer is part of the context being observed. Furthermore, the observer has to spend a great deal of time in the research situation in order to get in-depth information (Simmons et al., 1969: 91). Participant observation then helped the researcher not to rely too heavily on the subjective view points of the respondents, but to observe what happens during ward meetings and to ascertain the level of community participation.

Such a method is also essential in the sense that it helped the researcher to validate the information recorded during the meetings. Participant observation was appropriate in situations where full and/or accurate information were not elicited by questioning, because respondents either were not co-operative or were unaware of the answers because it was difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction (Abrahamson, 1983: 293) and (Denzin, 1970: 186).

Since the period of participation continued for some months, the range of materials collected was much wider than that gained from the series of the lengthy interview schedule, so it became much easier to understand the context which gave meaning to expressions of opinion, therefore adding to the richness of the in-depth questionnaires.

## 2.3. Interviews

During the interviews, it was essential for the researcher not to alienate his respondents from the interviews, especially the ward committee members, some of whom were impoverished and unemployed. The researcher had to be careful about the way he was presenting himself to his respondents. Carrying files and bringing energy drink during the interviews made some respondents respond differently due to their acting as signifiers of class and education difference. Being alert to these characteristics allowed the researcher at least to change those elements which were under his control in order to acquire information that was required (Goode, 1981: 187).

It was essential to adopt semi-structured interviews, because these indicated awareness that individuals have unique ways of defining their world. To meaningfully understand that world, it was necessary to approach it from the subject's perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2002: 199). In some cases during the interviews it was found that the respondents were raising important issues not contained in the schedule, and at times summarised entire sections of the schedule in one long sentence or statements (Abrahamson, 1983: 335 and Denzin, 1970: 125-6).

## 2.4. The recording of data

### 2.4.1. Narrative method

Most ward committee members (WCMs) did not want to be tape-recorded during the meetings. As a result, only elements that were of importance for the research were noted. Brief notes while observing the interaction were highlighted, and soon after the observation detailed notes were made in a narrative form that interpreted the interaction. Conclusions were then drawn from these notes. The biggest advantage of

11

narrative recording was that it provided a deeper insight into the interaction. The researcher also realised that as an observer, he had to avoid possible bias in his observation.

## 2.5. Sampling

### 2.5.1. Purposive Sampling

The primary consideration in purposive sampling is the judgement of the researcher as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. Only those people who were likely to have the required information were consulted, and who were presumed to be willing to share it. These people included the Municipal Spokesperson, Speaker of the Council, Council members, Ward Councillors, PR Councillors and Ward 2 committee members. This type of sampling was extremely useful as the researcher wanted to construct a qualitative reality, and to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation.

### 2.5.2. Snowball Sampling

Not all the hundred and twenty ward committee members could be interviewed; as a result units of analysis were chosen using the snowball method of sampling. A few WCMs in a group were selected and the required information was collected from them, and they were asked to identify other WCMs. Names were provided by the Ward Councillors, the method was further employed to avoid bias and misrepresentation by the Ward Councillors. The WCMs selected were then asked to identify other people in their wards, and some people selected by them became a part of the sample. This process was continued until the required number or a saturation point was reached in terms of the information being sought (Babbie & Mouton, 2002: 201).

## 2.6. Case study

A case study was essential for different reasons. It served as an experiment in which facts and findings from the general interviews are verified. Nine Ward Councillors

and selected ward committee members were interviewed. A case study was therefore necessary to verify what had been found in general so as to have a point of reference if further information is required.

Ward 2 was selected from the twelve existing wards for the case study for this research for two main reasons. Firstly, the WCMs of the ward are fairly gender and age representative. Secondly, prior to the study, cooperation was ensured by the potential respondents. Issues of generalisation were not paramount in this instance, as the case study was only used to verify what other wards have claimed to be the case with regard to participatory democracy. The case study therefore provided an insight into issues that have been researched more broadly.

## 2.7. Focus group discussion

WCMs of Ward 2 and a selected group of young people (see Appendix A for the youth group discussion) were invited to different focus group discussions. There were a number of reasons why such a technique was employed in this study. Firstly, focus groups have an advantage because of their ability to capture people's underlying explanations and motivations. The possibility of discovering something not even thought of before was a clear advantage. Babbie & Mouton (2002: 207) state that focus groups are ideal for identifying feelings, insights, perceptions and beliefs. Secondly, focus groups created an accepting environment that put people at ease, allowing them to answer questions in their own words and adding meaning to their answers. Lastly, the following advantages were also observed during the focus groups discussions: interaction with the participants was free; information from non-verbal responses was acquired, such as facial expressions or body language; and information was provided more quickly than when people were interviewed separately (ibid.).

## 2.8. Ethics

Potential respondents were assured about the objectives of the research, so as to avoid uncertainties and fears about the research, and assurance was given that the researcher had no political motives, but was doing the research purely for academic purposes. It was also vital that the research was free of bias, in a way that Ward Councillors from

different political parties were consulted to participate in the research. Moreover, it is worth noting the impact of terminology used during the interviews, and of the language that was used during the research. It was observed how different people perceived concepts such as "Comrades", "Honourable Mayor" etc. The researcher had to consider these concepts and words that are in common use that for some people mean praising or assumptions about people. An important aspect of the decision of the participants to take part or not is the quality of the information they receive about the research, enabling them to make a fair assessment of the project so that they can give informed consent. Clarity, brevity, anonymity and frankness were key attributes in providing information on which consent was based (Babbie & Mouton, 2002: 207).

## 2.9. Limitations of the study

Rhodes University students are not always welcomed freely by the community members to conduct research. People, especially in the black townships are "sick and tired of Rhodes students who come and interview them about their living conditions, and ultimately do nothing about their problems"[2]. This was a general trend through-out the research; people were not enthusiastic and willing to participate, especially about local government issues and politics. Many people argued that they have been asked the same questions since 1994, but nothing has changed up to date.

Also, many Ward Councillors were not available for interviews. A series of interviews were set up, but very few honoured the appointments. Out of twelve Ward Councillors, only nine were able to be persuaded to participate in the study, others were not keen or unavailable to participate up to the time of writing up of this thesis.

Ward 2 councillor, Councillor Madinda, who is also the Speaker of the Council, was contacted on several occasions in connection with the contact details of her ward committee members, for the purposes of the case study. However, it appeared that she was not keen to give me the information I needed. It took almost a month before she could release the information.

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[2] Nonesi Magadla, Ext 9. Grahamstown. A community member.

In addition, lack of cooperation by many Ward Councillors was another major limitation of the research. In January 2008 I went to a WC meeting of Ward 8 which was scheduled for that day. However, the meeting never materialised, and the Ward Councillor, Mrs. Fuku. told me that she would inform me of the next meeting. I contacted her on many occasions after that day, up to the point when she told me to stop calling her. On the 14th April 2008 we accidentally met at the City Hall, and she told me that there have been many ward meetings "but unfortunately in all those occasions I have forgotten about you". She hasn't contacted me since.

Lastly, another Ward Councillor of Ward 9, Ntshiba, was contacted telephonically and asked about the successes and challenges in his ward. He mentioned that he could not answer such questions as a Ward Councillor, and that I must liaise with Mr. Matebese, who is the Communications Officer of Makana Municipality. Having persuaded him to respond, he was then interviewed for a very limited time, as he referred many questions to Mr. Matebese.

# CHAPTER 3: DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

## 3.1. Introduction

According to Reddy (1996: 3) "local government is the third tier of government deliberately created to bring government to the grass roots, as well as to give its members a sense of involvement in the political processes that control their daily lives". Democracy indicates a political system whereby the suitable citizens in a organised society not only participate in choosing the government, but also take part in deciding their government's policies. There are almost forty million people in South Africa, comprised of diverse cultural and political groups (Statistics South Africa, 2005. The need for "effective, democratic local government as a vehicle for development and national integration is imperative" (Hill, 1994: 20). In November 1995 for the first time in South Africa, non-racial and democratic municipal elections were held. For these elections a dual electoral system was applied, "60% of the councillors were elected on ward basis and the other 40% were elected on a system of proportional representation" (Reddy, 1996: 3).

Parnell and Peters (2002: 79) argue that "the implication of the above is that government requires the consent of the citizens whose rights it is bound to respect and protect". Therefore, "that form of government which best protects the dignity of the individual and fosters it, is what this study proposes to call democracy" (ibid.).

This chapter focuses on local government in South Africa, and its objectives in achieving democratization and development at the local level. It also focuses on South Africa's quest for democracy. For example, Reddy (1996: 10) argues that the new South Africa has to go beyond purely representative democracy to address the inequalities of the apartheid era. The new South Africa, Reddy (1996: 10) argues, must bequeath to its citizens a local government democracy giving the majority the fullest opportunity to participate in shaping the country's political destiny. It must try to correct the ills of apartheid by making it mandatory for any political aspirant to obtain a genuine mandate from the people at a local government level (Reddy, 1996: 10).

## 3.2. Defining democracy

According to Weale (1999: 14) democracy is a system of government in which the policies and decisions of government on an important range of issues depend, to a greater or lesser extent, on public opinion as expressed in elections or other forms of aggregating opinion. This means that, according to Weale (1999: 14), "in a democracy important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend, directly or indirectly, upon public opinion formally expressed by citizens of the community, the vast bulk of whom have equal political rights". Weale also stated that a democracy achieves its effectiveness through the formal features of the relevant institutions. Note too that the definition requires an equality of political rights among the vast bulk of the citizens in a democratic community (Weale, 1999: 12-14). In defining democracy, Weale was referring to systems of government.

Arblaster (1994: 6) argues that one common conception of democracy is that it means government by the people, or at least by the people's representatives, since it is generally accepted that in large modern states the people themselves cannot govern. Democracy essentially is a contestable concept: it is an inherently debatable and changeable idea. Arblaster (1994: 8) also argues that, like freedom, equality, justice, human rights, and so forth, "democracy is a term which, whatever its precise meaning, will always signify for many a cherished political principle or ideal, and for that reason alone it is never likely to achieve a single agreed meaning".

Young (2000: 16) believes that democracy is the best political form of restraining rulers from the abuses of power that is often a temptation. She also believes that the democratic process is the best means for changing conditions of injustice and promoting justice. Lively (1975: 18) also argues that the term democracy has been applied to a form of government in which the "demos", the people, rule and political power is held by the many rather than by the one or the few. In other words, it has been used to describe a particular distribution of power within the community.

## 3.3. Government by the people

Weale (1999: 84) and Arblaster (1994: 59) state that democracy has often been equated with a system of government, or recently even more narrowly with a method of choosing a government. In a democratic society, the large numbers involved in the various institutions of decision-taking and law-making, and the choice of members of these bodies, all ensure that participation is not confined to a minority of activists but is spread across the whole citizen body. Similarly, it was Rousseau's conviction that no one could be truly free who did not govern him/herself, and that therefore only some kind of direct democracy provided the framework within which government and freedom could be reconciled (Arblaster, 1994: 59).

## 3.4 Varieties of democracy

According to Weale (1999:19) democracy, whatever it is, is a complex phenomenon, and is bound to take a variety of forms. To understand and account for this complexity requires us to have some typology in mind that will reduce the complexity and clarify our thinking. Second, given the favourable connotations the term democracy often seem to possess, it is not surprising that many people from different ideological persuasions have wished to identify their preferred arrangement of political life with the ideals of democracy (Arblaster, 1994: 9). Whatever the merits of liberalism, socialism, capitalism, republicanism and so on, each ideology will receive considerable intellectual and moral support from being associated with a plausible account of democracy (Arblaster, 1994: 9). For example, a behavioural typology of democracy would focus upon how people act within institutional constraints and possibilities open to them to influence public policy, or whether decision-making in practice is largely concentrated in the hands of a few people (ibid.).

The typology that Weale offers is built on the stage of classification. This stage is simply defined by the familiar distinction between direct and indirect democracies. In a direct democracy the people chose the content of public policy. In an indirect democracy the people chose representatives who in turn determine the content of public policy (1999: 19).

The form of democracy that this study wishes to adopt is that of direct democracy, as conceptualised by Rousseau (1962). Central to this concept is the idea that legitimate government will only exist if citizens determine for themselves the rules and laws that they will be obliged to follow (Weale, 1999: 25-26). Citizens assemble together and decide on the content of laws and public policy. In their decisions, each seeks the common good or general will of all. According to this view, persons are naturally free, and their moral autonomy requires that obligations are self-willed (Rousseau, 1962). As autonomy is the central underlying value of democracy in the Rousseaunian model, it follows that participation is an essential element in the justification of legitimate government. Without participation by citizens in the formulation of the general will, there can be no legitimate way of making public decisions. Public opinion defines the content of the laws and rules by which citizens are to be governed (Weale, 1999: 25-26).

## 3.5 The justification of democracy

Arblaster (1994: 9) and Weale (1999: 42-43) argue that, to justify a practice such as democracy, it is necessary to show either how the practice conforms to a principle or how the consequences of the practice leads to a state of affairs that can be judged good in principled terms. They also point out that it is crucial to consider what kind of justification may be offered for a belief in democracy as a form of government superior to others. Appeal has to be made to at least one "intrinsic value of democracy", namely the sense in which it incorporates the idea of political equality, understood as the "protection of the dignity of citizens" (Barber, 2003: 132).

Arblaster (1994: 9) argues strongly that democratic institutions, for example, are justified as those practices that promote and protect the common interests of the members of a political community, when those persons regard themselves as political equals under conditions of human fallibility. In this sense decision-making over matters of public policy is dependent upon the views of citizens within the constitutional conception of democracy. Democracy seems founded on the idea that each citizen is to be given equal status within the system of collective political authority. The political equality of democracy means not only that everyone is equal

before the law, but that as a subject of political authority everyone should be treated equally. It also means that everyone should have a place in the exercise of political authority (Weale, 1999: 42-43).

## 3.6. Democracy and autonomy

Barber (2003: 132) argues that the capacity for autonomy is the ability to make a number of important and related judgements and to act on them, which requires the right to liberty, so that democracy is the form of social organisation and government in which that right is protected and expressed as a matter of basic principle. This means that if the "core meaning of democracy is the popular control of collective decision-making by equal citizens", then the key value in terms of which it can be promoted and justified is that of autonomy or self-determination (Thompson, 1982: 183). Accordingly, autonomous action as a form of self-government would therefore seem to find its most natural expression in the practice of democracy. Being autonomous means that human beings are "self-determining and that collective self-government" is the most appropriate way of reflecting this aspect of their "moral personality" (Weale, 1999: 64).

## 3.7. Participation and democracy

Although the term participation is widely used within democratic theory, its meaning often remains vague (Weale, 1999: 84). However, for the purposes of this study, it follows the broad definition of Weale, who defines participation as taking part "in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies". On the basis of this definition, the crucial normative question is then the extent to which there should be an institutional capacity for the public at large to have a final say on issues of public policy. This final say, for Weale, involves not simply voting directly on issues of public policy that come on to the political agenda, but also exercising control over which issues emerge on to the political agenda in the first place. It may also involve, as the definition suggests, questions about the role of citizens in the implementation of political decisions (Weale, 1999: 84).

The argument that would obviously deliver the strong conclusion that participation is crucial is the Rousseaunian one of moral autonomy. If human beings are free by nature, and there is no legitimate way of constraining their freedom in the absence of their own decision to limit what they do, then the principle of self-government would be the right one (Weale, 1999: 84).

According to Lively (1975: 135) the democratic process is an end in itself in that it requires, or rather means, the maximum possible participation of all citizens in the activity of public decision-making. Democracy is justifiable in terms of the quality and nature of the governmental decisions that emerge from it. Thompson (1982: 183) argues that the standards against which those decisions are measured, such as social utility, the common good, the satisfaction of factual wants, and the assurance of a broad area of liberty, have varied from one theorist to another, but what has been accepted in common is that the virtues of a political system are measurable in terms of governmental performance. On the other side is the view that the virtues of a polity are bound up with its effects on the characters of its citizens. This means that, "the most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is, to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves" (Thompson, 1982: 185). This attitude towards participation is an outgrowth of earlier contractual views of the state and political obligation. In their different ways, both Hobbes and Locke saw civil society as an artefact, a creation of individual wills, agreed in the construction of a social order and allowing each one of them to achieve purposes anterior and morally prior to the society itself (Lively; 1975: 136).

Weale (1999: 84) and Lively (1975: 136) argue that to participate is then to have one's individual worth recognised. To be an actor and not merely acted upon is in itself a sustaining acknowledgement of moral stature (Thompson, 1982: 185). The value of participation to the individual from this standpoint lies in the possibility it creates of his/her determining the social rules that are to bind them, and the most consistent advocate of the view has been Rousseau. Rousseau, it has been claimed, sought a political system which would direct people away from individual aims and towards collective aims (ibid.). The connecting link between these ideas and between both and the notion of self-government was his concept of freedom. The idea was that people are un-free when they are not following a rule of behaviour, when their actions

are unconsidered and unrelated to any universal principle. The other, more relevant to his political theory, was that they are un-free if the rules they follow are prescribed to them by others. John Stuart Mills, too, would have accepted that people are un-free to the degree they are restricted by politically or socially imposed rules (ibid.).

## 3.8. Democracy and political rights

According to Barber (2003: 133) and Weale (1999: 176) the fundamental rationale for a system of democratic decision-making is the advancement of certain common interests given the circumstances of politics. If this is so, then the chief common interest that the members of a political community will have is in the rights and powers vested in the political institutions that protect and advance those common interests. Moreover, the common interest in question is that of members of the political community considered as equals. This requirement of political equality has a number of dimensions, but a central feature is that the political system does not privilege a particular group of people within society (Barber, 2003: 133). Weale argues that certain rights may appear to have a basis in some independent idea of constitutional government and can in fact be provided with a rationale in terms of democratic practice. It is sensible to establish these rights as constitutional rights, because by doing so we best achieve the underlying goal of advancing the common interest of the members of a society who regard themselves as equal (1999: 177).

## 3.9. Majority decision

According to Lively (1975: 18) Rousseau's object was to devise a political system that would eliminate all ordination and subordination between people. He believed this end could be attained if all people determined the social rules binding them. Only if there were compete agreement on all social rules could all be assured equally of complete freedom, defined at least in part as "obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves". The demand Rousseau is making is for full retrospective equality, and he sees clearly that this can be approached only as decisions approach unanimity (Young, 2000: 16).

## 3.10. The rule of the people

Lively (1975: 30) and Young (2000: 16) argue that not just one meaning but a range of meanings has been attached to the phrase "rule of the people". Lively asks what might be the requirements which need to be satisfied for popular rule to be established? Running from the strongest to the weakest, the range might be:

- "That all should govern, in the sense that all should be involved in legislating, in deciding of general policy, in applying laws and in governmental administration".

- "That all should be personally involved in crucial decision-making, that is to say in deciding general laws and matters of general policy".

- "That rulers should be accountable to the ruled, they should, in other words, be obliged to justify their actions to the ruled".

- "That rules should be accountable to the representatives of the ruled".

- "That rules should be chosen by the ruled, or should be chosen by the representatives of the ruled".

It is clear that the term "popular rule" has been used to cover a large number of different relationships between governments and governed (ibid.).

## 3.11. The common good

According to Weale (1999: 20) many theorists of democracy have seen democracy as a means of reaching decisions based on the conception of the common good. Democracy, in this view, is not simply a mechanism through which all citizens can be best assured of their interests being taken into account, but a method of ensuring

precisely the opposite, that decisions should be taken with reference to some general social principles. Its aim is not to provide all with opportunities to press partisan claims but to provide all with the opportunity of deliberating and deciding on collective rather than individual goods. Also, this view is analogous to a forum in which citizens meet to debate and decide what is best for the community as a whole (Weale, 1999: 20).

Furthermore, Young (2000: 16) argues that if the decisions on which the citizenry decide are of a general nature and are not applicable only to a single person or a particular group, it can be hoped that people will base their judgements on some conception of the public good. Rousseau believed the extension of citizenship would produce decisions based on some general social criteria rather than on the self-regarding wants of rulers. He also believed that a democratic system would achieve this only if citizens were prevented from deciding on public issues on the basis of individual interests. That is, Rousseau saw democracy as a means of excluding purely individuals from the political arena rather than a mechanism for systematically representing them (Weale, 1999: 20. and Lively, 1975: 120).

## 3.12. Political democracy

According to Young (2000: 16) political democracy may be formulated as "public policy to be governed by the freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equal". This articulates a general principle of popular sovereignty and autonomy; the people are to rule themselves. Their explicit preferences therefore constitute the ultimate ground for the legitimacy of political decision-making (Hadenius, 1992: 10). To this is linked a principle of freedom: so far as possible the free, uninhibited will of the people is to be expressed in the political decision-making, and no individual preferences shall then be regarded as superior to others (ibid.).

The principle of equality enjoins that all individuals be treated alike in the political decision-making. This means, firstly, that all will be included, and that, secondly, every individual vote will have the same value (Hadenius, 1992: 11). In other words, there may not be any privileges for certain sections of the population. The argument is

that the majority method alone guarantees that every vote cast has the same relative strength and thereby the same effect on the decisions reached. Thus the majority rule has an obvious correspondence to the principle of democratic equality, the idea that all preferences, as they are manifested in votes cast, should be treated alike. This, as a decision rule alone, guarantees neutrality, i.e. that submitted proposals for decision receive the same treatment (Hadenius (1992: 10) and Young (2000: 16).

### 3.13. Socio-economic conditions

The belief is that economic and social development would result in greater development and generally higher living conditions among masses of the population, which would promote openness and a deeper insight into political issues (Hadenius, 1992: 77-8; Young, 2000: 18). Hadenius (1992: 78) points out that economic and social development was expected to have other positive effects. Through industrialization, Hadenius argues, and generally increased prosperity, formerly oppressed and underprivileged groups would obtain improved political resources, and thereby greater possibilities to hold their own in public life, and an educated, organised working class would emerge. Thus economic and social development would bring about a series of changes at the mass level which, according to the "postulated scenario", could further a democratic development (Young, 2000: 19). Previously excluded groups could, "through increased competence and organisation", acquire reinforced political resources. Moreover, via economic growth, mass communication, and an increasing social and geographical mobility, "the antagonisms in the society could be modulated" and possibilities created for the peaceful mode of conflict-solving that democracy implies (Sorensen, 1998: 42).

According to Arat (1991: 3) "the right to a degree of economic welfare and security, and the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised human being must prevail in the society". These rights, that is, social and economic rights, are positive rights requiring action by government. Government should "maintain a certain quality of life; should prevent unemployment, assume responsibility in providing food, shelter; and other basic human rights" (Sorensen, 1998: 42). Moreover, socio-economic rights are often considered as group rights that can be maintained only where democracy prevails (ibid.). Moreover, Arat (1991: 104-

5) argues that, for example, attention should be directed to the causes of social unrest if an effective and stable solution to democratic decline is to be found. He clearly shows that social unrest indicators are largely explained by economic inequality and instability rather than by the extent of social mobilization.

Arat (1991: 105) and Hadenius (1992: 78) state that classical liberal theory as presented in the writings of J.S. Mill also treated individual liberties as compatible with equality. They believe that freedom and liberty were the most valuable accomplishments of societal development which deserved to be protected, under all circumstances. It is no wonder that they emphasised economic equality in addition to political equality in their definition of democracy. For example, Arat stressed that the basis of democratic development is the demand of equality, the demand that the system of power to be erected upon the similarities and not the differences between people. Then, he emphasised the inadequacy of political equality without the supplement of economic equality. Furthermore, Arat (1991: 105) and Hadenius (1992: 78) stressed that it is because political equality, however profound, does not permit the full affirmation of the common people's essence that the idea of democracy has spread to other spheres.

Sorensen (1998: 44) argues that in the absence of economic equality no political mechanisms will of themselves enable the common person to realise his/her will and interests. Economic power is regarded as the parent of political power. To make the definition of the latter effective, the former also must be wisely diffused (ibid.). To divide people into rich and poor is to make impossible the attainment of a common interest by the state action. Economic equality is then urged as the clue upon which the reality of democracy depends. Hadenius (1992: 78) reached the conclusion that "good evidence that a reasonably high level of economic development makes the success of democracy more likely".

### 3.14. Participatory democracy

According to Cunningham (2002: 124) and Weale (1999: 84) participatory democracy considers breaking down apathy and maximizing active citizen engagement a main task of democracy. Participatory democracy applauds the forging of solidarity as a

principal virtue of democracy (Barber, 2003: 132). This means that participatory democracy envisages a system in which citizens control their own affairs, and carry out their wishes freely and fairly. Almost without exception participatory democratic theorists have appealed to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Cunningham, 2002: 125), and in particular his *The Social Contract*, for support. Rousseau stood against the earlier modern contract theorists, especially Hobbes. In Hobbes' view self-interested individuals in a natural state are motivated by mutual fear to submit themselves to a sovereign authority in exchange for security (ibid.). Observing that for Hobbes, as for Locke, personal liberty is the prime motive for entering a compact, and submission to a sovereign authority is its result (ibid.), Rousseau asked how liberty and submission can be reconciled "if the force and liberty of each person are the chief instruments of their self-preservation, and how can they pledge them without harming their own interests" (ibid.).

Cunningham (2002: 124) and Weale (1999: 84) also state that Rousseau focused on the prior act whereby individuals in the state of nature agree to submit themselves to any form of political authority. He argues that in order to be legitimately binding, this agreement must be unanimous and that to achieve its aims people must give up all their powers, since if anything were left outside potential public control, it could be insisted that other things should be exempted, and the point of the contract to create a public authority would be defeated. Together these conditions, Barber (2003: 132) argues, mean that a legitimate and effective contract involves each person giving up all his powers to everyone else. The effect is to create a "moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains voters and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will" (ibid.). Cunningham (2002: 124) concludes that, the will that this body politic or public person acquires is the famous, for Rousseau, 'general will'. The key is that the general will embodies a moral imperative for people to promote common interest.

### 3.14.1. The general will and the will of all

Cunningham (2002: 124) states that, in a central passage of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau announces that "there is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will. He explains that the latter considers only the common

interest, while the former is no more than a sum of particular wills". Rousseau does remark that the general will is the opinion of the majority, but this obtains only when citizens are using their votes to express an opinion about whether the proposal is in accord with the general will, and only when all the qualities of the general will still reside in the majority. He also argues that citizens ought to look first to common goods and that in doing so they constitute themselves as an 'association' as opposed to an 'aggregation'. Democratic collective decision-making for Rousseau is, therefore, just this undertaking to find out and promote the public good. In form, such decision-making is best seen as an effort in consensus building, rather than as a contest among voters for whom democratic procedures are like the rules of a game each hopes to win (Cunningham, 2002).

## 3.15. Strong democracy

Barber (2003: 132) argues that strong democracy can be formally defined "as politics in the participatory mode where conflict is resolved in the absence of an independent ground through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent, private individuals into free citizens and partial or private interests into public good". The history of the 20$^{th}$ century should have taught that when democracy cannot respond to the needs of the community, other more oppressive political ideologies will step in (ibid.). Strong democracy envisions politics not as a way of life, but as a way in which human beings are living "together communally not only to their mutual advantage, but also to the advantage of their mutuality" (Barber, 2003: 118).

Barber (2003: 151) also states that, under strong democracy, politics is given the power of human promise. For the first time the possibilities of transforming private into public, dependency into interdependency, conflict into cooperation, and bondage into citizenship are placed in a context of participation (ibid.). Young (2000: 22-23) suggests that the future of democracy lies with strong democracy, with the revitalisation of a form of community that is not collectivistic, a form of public reasoning that is not conformist, and a set of civic institutions that is compatible with modern society. Strong democracy, according to Barber, is defined by politics in the participatory mode. Literally, it is government by citizens rather than representative

government in the name of citizens. Barber (2003: 151) also argues that "Active citizens govern themselves directly here, not necessarily at every level and in every instance, but frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when significant power is being deployed". Strong democracy does not place endless faith in the capacity of individuals to govern themselves, but it affirms that the multitude will on the whole be as wise as or even wiser than "the majority of the plain people [who] will day in and day out make fewer mistakes in governing themselves than any smaller body of men will make in trying to govern them" (ibid.).

## 3.16. The deliberative democracy model

Young (2000: 22-23) mentions that a number of important theories of deliberative democracy have appeared in recent years, sparking a renewed interest in the place of reasoning, persuasion, and normative appeals in democratic politics. In the deliberative model, democracy is a form of practical reason. Barber (2003: 151) argues that participants in the democratic process offer proposals for how best to solve problems or meet legitimate needs, and so on, and they present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals. He therefore argues that "Participants arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons" (2003: 152). This model of democratic process entails several normative ideals for the relationships and dispositions of deliberating parties, among them inclusion, equality, reasonableness, and publicity. These ideals are all logically related in the deliberative model (ibid.).

## 3.16.1. Inclusion

Barber (2003: 155) mentions that "a democratic decision is normatively legitimate only if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making". As an ideal, inclusion embodies a norm of moral respect. When coupled with norms of political equality, "inclusion allows for maximum expression of interests, opinions, and perspectives relevant to the problems or issues for which a public seeks solutions" (Cunningham, 2002: 122).

### 3.17. Associative democracy model

According to Young (2000: 190) and Cunningham (2002: 122) this model of democracy supports the claim that a free, active and diverse civil society is crucial for democracy. Cunningham (2002: 122) also states that associational activity promotes communicative interaction both in small groups and across large publics. It fosters democratic inclusion by enabling excluded or marginalised groups to find each other, and express their opinions and perspectives to a wider public (ibid.). According to Young (2000: 192) the public sphere arising from civic organising and communication both serve a crucial oppositional function and develop knowledge and ideas for political actions. Civic organising and public discussion enable individuals collectively to authorize modes and sites in which aspects of their lives are represented in political discussions (Cunningham, 2002: 124). At the same time, such organising and discussion provide one of the most effective ways of holding representatives accountable. Civil society limits the ability of both state and economy to "colonise the life-world", and fosters individuals and collective self-determination (ibid,).

Young (2000: 190) states that particular attributes of civil society make possible its self-determining, oppositional, communicative, and creative aspects. The value of civil society lies precisely in the fact that its activities are voluntary, diverse, plural, often locally based, and relatively uncoordinated among one another (Cunningham, 2002: 123). Civic associations deepen democracy and promote self-development because they are relatively autonomous from both state and economy and from each other, potentially and often actually subject to participatory democratic governance by their members (ibid.). The primary value served by associate democracy is self-governance. The idea is to expand the range of social activity over which affected persons have collective control by means of membership in democratic associations. Citizens relate to them voluntarily. They themselves decide which associations they want to provide needed or wanted services, and which associations will represent them in national, provincial or local governments, or political discussions (ibid.). Thus the general idea of linking civic institutions more directly to state institutions in

formal processes of decision-making and representation may help us to conceptualise how strong states can be better used for promoting ends of democracy, justice and well-being (Young, 2000: 190).

## 3.18. Conclusion

This chapter outlined and contextualised the concept of democracy. It defined the concept of democracy as a system of government in which the policies and decisions of government on an important range of issues depend, to a greater or lesser extent, on public opinion as expressed in elections or other forms of aggregating opinion. Furthermore, varieties of democracy were also discussed in detail. It was also acknowledged that democracy is a complex phenomenon, and is bound to take a variety of forms. However, participatory democracy was chosen for the purposes of this study. In addition, different models of democracy were also discussed which helped in the contextualisation of the subject matter. In the next chapter the concept of decentralization, which is a fundamental requirement for democracy to be effective and efficient, will be discussed.

# CHAPTER 4: DECENTRALIZATION

## 4.1. Introduction

Before defining and discussing the nature of the term decentralization, it is worth highlighting that "at least four different types of decentralization are routinely identified, namely: deconcentration, devolution, privatisation, and delegation" (Tandy, 1991: 1). This means that decentralization can come in different forms. For the purposes of this study, however, the researcher will only focus on the conception of devolution as a type of decentralization which is relevant for the study, and leave out other forms.

According to Cheema (2006) decentralization, including devolution, promotes democracy and good governance by providing an institutional framework to bring decision-making closer to the people. It helps to strengthen the role and capacity of local authorities to become more responsive and accountable to the concerns of local communities and groups. Broadly speaking, decentralization, including devolution, can be the means both to increase efficiency in service delivery and to enhance the values of participatory democracy (ibid.).

## 4.1.1. Devolution

Tandy (1991: 2) argues that "by devolution we mean the allocation of powers to elected local representatives who have both the authority and the means to carry out decisions locally. It is clear that devolution will increase local control over affairs affecting a local community, and signifies relative autonomy from central government". In addition, Bogdanor (1999: 184) argues that, more precisely, it consists of different elements, such as the transfer to a subordinate elected body on a geographical basis. This means that devolution involves the creation of an elected body, subordinate to parliament (Tandy, 1991: 2). A prime argument for devolution is that it will lead to a dispersal of power from government to local authority in the context of local government. Yet this will not be achieved simply by setting up ward

committees, for example, unless the government has a positive desire to decentralize. If the local government was to seek to dominate civil society and to take away its powers, then devolution would lead to the centralization of power and not to its dispersal. An examination of the relationship between the local government and civil society is therefore crucial to any consideration of whether devolution will lead to decentralization (Bogdanor, 1999: 184).

Furthermore, Bogdanor argues that what must be clear, is that devolution will only lead to decentralization if it is accompanied by what other writers called 'a new style of thinking', favourable to devolution and based on co-operation rather than the exercise of central authority (1999: 184. Thus the attitude of the government to local authorities will be a vital element in determining whether devolution leads to 'over-government' or to a genuine dispersal of power (Bogdanor, 1999: 184).

Heymans and Gerhard (1998: 24) state that within the context of local government, devolution implies substantial autonomy and discretionary decision-making power at the local level. Devolution of political power is acknowledged as intrinsically beneficial in all democracies. This is because autonomous local government promotes three fundament values:

> *Liberty: as local government is a vehicle for dispersing political power, avoiding its undue concentration at a single point and diffusing conflict, attributes especially vital in a deeply divided society;*
> *Participation: as local government extends choice and individual involvement in the democratic process; and*
> *Efficiency: as local government, with its greater sensitivity to local conditions, enables the matching of services to the needs and wishes of local communities.*

These values reflect the goals of local government, the advantages it is capable of providing. But whether it delivers these in practice depends, ultimately and essentially, on the nature and extent of devolution (Heymans and Gerhard, 1998: 24-26)

## 4.2. Decentralization and citizen participation

According to Lodge (1999: 87), during the 1994 period the South African government embarked on a dual process of decentralizing its organisational structures and enhancing citizen participation. Neither of these processes can be understood without reference to the other: decentralization was the key to improving citizen participation in South Africa by bringing the administration closer to the citizen, whilst citizen participation was seen as an integral part of, and justification for, decentralization. The drive behind decentralization and citizen participation in South Africa was connected to the wider process of democratization at the level of the national polity following the demise of apartheid. Bogdanor (1999: 185) argues that decentralization and citizen participation were key political values articulated by the various social movements which had formed the backbone of the anti-apartheid opposition. Despite their varying agendas, all these movements demanded the democratization of local government and they all agreed on what this implied, namely decentralization and citizen participation. Second, decentralization in South Africa was framed by a wider process of devolving power from the central state to the regional level. Lodge (1999: 89) states that, the extreme centralizm of the previous authoritarian regime meant that democratization necessarily implied a connected process of devolving power to the regional level. Decentralization of local government was seen as a natural extension of this process, and was a reaction against the centralist and uniform design of local government under the apartheid regime (Lodge, 1999: 87).

## 4.2.1. Decentralization and local governments

Bennett (1990: 17) states that, the best starting point is the common sense definition, to centralize is to concentrate by placing power and authority in a centre, while to decentralize is to disperse or distribute power from the centre. This definition, however, encompasses several quite different types of structural arrangements. First, political centralization/ decentralization refers to the concentration or dispersal of political decision making, that is, "the scope of discretion with respect to decisions regarding policy issues, including the policy to be pursued, the amount of revenues to be raised, and the allocation of available revenues" (Tandy, 1991: 2). Thus,

34

centralized refers to political decision-making authority concentrated in the central, or government relative to subnational units, while decentralized refers to dispersion of authority to subnational units. Political decentralization thus implies that subnational units of government have the discretion available to them to engage in effective decision-making regarding policies affecting their area (ibid.). By this definition, political power is centralized if decisions are concentrated at the central government level, even if decision-making authority is widely dispersed among various institutions within the central government (ibid.).

According to Bennett (1990: 17) presumably structure is important because there are a set of important values that are enhanced or impeded by decentralized as opposed to centralized structures. These values might be categorised as economic or efficiency values, governance values, and political values. For example, efficiency value is the public choice justification of decentralization. Efficiency is defined as the maximisation of social welfare. In order for social welfare to be maximised, individual preferences must be expressed accurately (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983: 20). When public goods are provided, service packages should reflect as accurately as possible the aggregated preferences of community members. If political decision-making is decentralized among subnational units, each unit can tailor its service package to the preferences of its citizenry (ibid.).

However, the study reveals that the average divergence of the public goods preferences of individual residents from the actual service packages is not reduced. The more political authority is centralised and the less citizens' preferences are addressed, the less interest people have in participation in politics. Efficiency and social welfare are thus not maximised under highly centralised political structures (Bennett, 1990: 20 and Cheema et al, 1983: 20). This centralized system of government is defeating the purpose of placing government closer to the people, and does not foster greater responsiveness of policy-makers to the will of the citizenry. As a result public preferences and public policy are undermined (Cheema et al, 1983: 22).

Bennett (1990:20) argues that, decentralized structures may be favoured because they promote diversity in public policies. Policy diversity, in turn, may be valued for either

of two reasons. First, "the existence of policy diversity among subnational governments provides the necessary conditions for the public-choice mechanism" (Bennett; 1990: 23). Policy diversity also may be valued as a contributor to and promoter of innovation. Decentralization, it is argued, provides the opportunity for experimentation with policy innovations by subnational governments (Cheema et al, 1983: 22). Rather than one uniform centrally imposed policy, decentralization will result in a variety of policy approaches among subnational units. Obviously, the extent to which these arguments for diversity in decentralization apply depends critically upon the empirical question of whether decentralized structures actually do result in greater policy diversity among subnational units than do centralized structures (Cheema et al, 1983: 22) and (Bennett; 1990: 25).

According to Bennett (1990:20) and Lodge (1999:55) decentralization is desired, it is argued, because by devolving real decision-making to local levels, higher levels of interests and participation in local government result, thus anchoring citizens to the political system and enhancing democratic values. In short, decentralization performs a systems maintenance function and leads to political stability. Decentralization also encourages political education and debate, prerequisites for the effective functioning of democracy, "by providing the opportunity for citizens at the local level to define, discuss, debate, and decide upon, through a political process, the problems facing their area" (Lodge; 1999:55).

Cheema et al (1983: 22) mention that decentralized structures are sometimes advocated as a means of protecting democracy through assuring countervailing centres of power and influence in a plural society. As this suggests, the critical factor is not decentralization of political decision-making to local governments so that these governments can control local policy, but the entire set of formal and informal constitutional arrangements which define the relationship of national to subnational governments. If countervailing centres of power are to be assured, these arrangements must provide subnational government with the means of effectively checking national government behaviour. The countervailing power argument is thus more concerned with how central government behaviour can be controlled rather than with how much discretion over local policy is available to local governments (Cheema et al, 1983:22).

## 4.2.2. Decentralization and local economic development

Local economic development is defined here as subnational action, usually sub-state and sub-regional, taking place within the context of a local labour market, and often covering an area greater than one local government area, but with activity focused on specific sites and needs for development (Lodge, 1999: 58). The actor involved often includes local government.

Lodge (1999: 55) argues that local economic development policy is emerging as a key subject for discussion within the context of decentralization. Indeed it is argued by many commentators that state/local government economic development expenditures are purely diversionary 'zero-sum' effects in a game which disproportionately burdens those localities which have the least resources to play the game (ibid.). More recent thinking, however, is turning some of these views around and seeking to define an important role for decentralized action. Even if traditional views have discounted local actions, a growing body of practice is showing that appropriate local-government policy can produce significant additional development and hence that some policies are not purely zero-sum games (Bennett, 1990: 225). For example, local government can be an important actor in stimulating, contributing to, organising, and sometimes managing the conditions which allow economic development activities to succeed (ibid.). Also, with growing pressures of economic change which impact directly on local economies, it has become impossible for local governments to ignore the economic development problem. Furthermore, it has become recognised that decentralized government policy may be the appropriate level to stimulate local business interests to play a larger role in local communities as part of their wider social responsibility (Bennett, 1990: 222).

## 4.3. Transition to democracy and its link to the global trend

## 4.3.1. Introduction

In the past few years, South Africa has undergone one of the most phenomenal processes of political transformation. According to Lodge (1999: 22), transformation is a change in the direction of greater social, economic or political equality, a

broadening of participation in society and polity. In South Africa, the transition to democracy is characterised by the simultaneity of two democratic traditions, namely that of traditional parliamentary or representative democracy and that of grassroots participatory democracy (ibid.). Tandy (1991: 4) states that participatory democracy is practised through the forming of sectoral interest groups or stakeholders who draw their members from the different organisations within that sector. This corresponds with the notion of modern pluralism that means extensive participation in the political process through competing and autonomous groups (Lodge, 1999: 22). A further trend in the transition to democracy was the negotiation of a decentralization of power that resulted in the much-debated tripartite (national, provincial, local) structure of government (ibid.). The Constitution, which prescribes relations between the three spheres of government, encourages co-operation and co-ordination and provides areas of exclusive competence and areas of shared or concurrent competence (Tandy, 1991: 5).

Lodge (1999: 22) mentions that the resulting pattern of the transition to democracy in a social pluralistic society where, as is the case in post-independent African states, an intricate pattern of associations prevail in the public sphere, consists of voluntary associations filling the middle ground between the family and the state and thus appears as potential building blocks for an emerging civil society (ibid.). This implies that some form of institutionalization must exist between the state and the informal groupings in society. It can also be argued that the democratization of society is not possible in the absence of civil society, provided that citizens who actively involve themselves in public affairs do not enter the public domain in the pursuit of private interests only but to the benefit of society as a whole (Bennett, 1990: 225 and Lodge, 1999: 22). In this regard two international examples will be used to illustrate this point further, and these are the Panchayat Raj system in India, and the Porto Alegre in Brazil. In both situations, the citizens were actively involved in public affairs and played a major role in decision-making processes.

**4.3.2. Decentralization and local government in India**

Hasan (2002: 17) argues that "the interconnections between democratic practice and social equity have a strong bearing on recent initiatives to promote local democracy

in India". These initiatives, according to Sen and Dreze (2002: 230), "have taken place in the framework of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, the Panchayat Raj amendments, which require the government to introduce certain legislative measures geared to the revitalisation of local representative institutions". Hasan (2002: 17) mentions that these methods consist of obligatory elections at standard periods, seating in village Panchayat for women and members of scheduled castes or tribes, and considerable decentralization of government duties to local government. The Panchayat Raj amendments, which took effect in 1993, according to Sen and Dreze (2002: 230), "have led to a range of interesting initiatives in different parts of the country, undertaken not only by state governments but also by political parties, NGOs, grassroots organisations, women's groups, and other activist formationation".

Chatterjee (1997: 54) states that "These services are often crucial for the quality of life. Their effective functioning, however, depends a great deal on the responsiveness of the concerned authorities to popular demands". The importance of local democracy is not confined, of course, to these and other instrumental roles of participatory politics. The conventional request of several social movements in India corroborates that this essential ability is extremely valued, even between people who lead very disadvantaged lives in "material terms" (Chatterjee, 1997: 54 and Hasan, 2002: 17).

According to Sen and Dreze (2002: 235) "a similar observation applies to the Panchayat Raj amendments. These amendments, like other democratic institutions, have provided a great opportunity to expand the scope of democracy in Indian society". Recent studies of the development "associated with the Panchayat Raj amendments in different parts of the country throw much light on these and related issues" (Hasan, 2002:17). It is, first and foremost, very cheering to discover confirmation of active commitment with the new possibilities of local democracy on the part of the Indian public (ibid.). Panchayat elections bring out enthusiastic communal awareness. "Voter turnout rates have been high in most states, including among underprivileged groups" (ibid.). Local politics, and the various structures of political movements and community activism connected with Panchayat Raj, for example, capacity building programmes for women and political declaration of the planned social groups, have offered new opportunities through which "traditional inequalities can be challenged" (Chatterjee, 1997: 54 and Hasan, 2002: 17).

Like the Panchayat Raj, the ward committees in South Africa should uphold such characteristics of democracy, which consist of for example, the "ability to hold orderly meetings or to deal with the state bureaucracy", the development of a culture of political participation, the formation of new structures of community movements, and even transformation in general awareness of the need for as well as the capacity for new changes (Sen and Dreze, 2002: 362).

### 4.3.3. Participatory democracy in practice: Brazil's Workers' and Women's Party and the participatory budget

It is worth highlighting that one of the roles of the ward committees is to participate in the municipal annual budget processes. The Council should approve the budget only after consulting with the ward committee members. However, it is apparent that in practice the ward committees are not involved in budget processes. Below is an illustration of how the Brazilian Workers' and Women's Party have been able to effectively participate in the budget processes. The South African government can therefore draw advice and suggestions from this effective participatory budget. Furthermore, issues such as patron clientelism, centralized government, and loyalty are still characterising South African politics. Similar issues existed in Brazil, but were eradicated in 1988.

According to Nylen (2003: 49) and Flynn (1978: 68) in the history of Brazil, as in much of the so-called developing world, the collective identity has been repeatedly thwarted by long lasting traditions of patron clientelism or patrimonialism where the game of politics is centred around individual politicians' distribution of patronage and favours, for example, legislative votes, public funds, sector jobs etc., and candidates' promise of such, in exchange for political/financial support. Describing patronage as one of the guiding principles of Brazilian social organisation in the nineteenth century and beyond, some political commentators have defined it as an "exchange of protection for loyalty, benefit for obedience" with obvious implications for social domination. In such a society, the political game is highly personalistic (Roett, 1972: 325).

Nylen (2003: 45) argues, however, that on November 15, 1988, former City Council member, Luiza Erundina of the Womens' Party (PT) was elected mayor of Brazil's largest city, Sao Paulo. Erundina's election was truly a historical event in Brazil's political history. Fully aware of the problems in Brazil, and believing that social/political activism begets political consciousness or empowerment, the PT's agenda for local governance long emphasised the importance of encouraging empowerment and citizen activism by opening up new channels of political participation (Nylen, 2003: 50). Early PT administrations set up Municipal Councils and Popular Councils focused on specific themes, such as education, public health, public housing etc., in the hope that by meeting together in these structures, and expressing "opinions on issues they themselves deemed important, participants could channel those opinions directly into the formal decision-making processes" (ibid.). Other strategic goals included the following:

- Providing governmental access to the PT's core constituency of union and social movement activists;

- Creating alternative channels of communication;

- Creating ostensibly non-partisan networks of popular support and mobilization of supporters active in party politics and organised civil society.

### 4.3.4. The participatory budget

Porto Alegre's PT argued that their objective was to democratize local democracy by disempowering traditional entrenched political elites and empowering non-elites. This means giving ordinary citizens access to the most important decision-making process at the municipal level, spending the city's money. Nylen (2003: 49) describes the way Porto Alegre functioned in its early years as follows: "popular assemblies in 16 city zones bring together 10,000 people and 600 grassroots organisations to debate and vote on municipal expenditure priorities. As a result of this process, the city's residents decided the city should concentrate its resources on legalizing land titles,

providing water and sewage to the poor communities, transportation and environmental clean-up" (ibid.).

Avritzer (2002: 26-28) argues that Porto Alegre's PT seemed to have discovered a means of balancing pragmatic demands that voters perceive government programmes to be in their own vital interests, with ideological concerns for promoting citizens' empowerment and participation (ibid.). Nylen (2003: 55) mentions that the Porto Alegre experience constitutes a political, administrative and cultural revolution. It is a political revolution because it constructed popular democracy leading to greater solidarity, concern for the common good and a redistributive outcome, and an administrative revolution because it directly confronted corruption by bringing in the people to oversee the State: they move from being mere spectators to being actors. Finally, it is a cultural revolution because by increasing the spaces of active citizenship, it changed the mentality of people, giving them greater political and social consciousness (Nylen, 2003: 50).

These case studies illustrate a system of governance which enhances participatory democracy. In the context of South Africa, ward committees were designed to perform a similar role. However, it is apparent that the South African government is not supporting these structures, but simply renders lip service. Both in the Panchayat Raj and Porto Alegre the notion of participatory democracy is implemented, and the government recognises and supports these structures with the necessary resources. South African ward committees are unable to achieve participatory democracy due to the lack of resources. As it will be argued in the data analysis chapter and in the conclusion, if the government is serious about participatory democracy and development, it should respect, recognise and support the ward committees, and equip them with relevant training and capacity-building programmes.

## 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Avritzer (2002: 26-28) argues that we can trace a comparison between Brazil and India in regard to membership in voluntary associations. The South African government can therefore see how participatory democracy was tackled in both case studies, and how citizens in both countries were empowered and involved in

decision-making processes. Thus, again it is interesting to compare the institutionalization of participatory legislation in Brazil and India. In Brazil the institutionalization of participation required the defeat of an "authoritarian modernization project and its substitution" by a democratic project that involved decentralization and a "new pact between the union and the states" (ibid.). In India though local participation remained contentious from the 1950s to the 1980s, and only when the Congress Party's grip over the political system was overcome did participatory legislation emerge at the national level (ibid.). The Brazilian and Indian case studies are the most significant examples of how decentralization could be employed. Surely, as can be seen from these case studies, it is essential that the concept of good governance should be present in order to achieve decentralization. As a result, the next chapter aims at examining the concept of governance.

## CHAPTER 5: THE CONCEPT OF GOVERNANCE

## 5.1. Introduction

According to Clayton (1994: 9-10), by governance "we mean the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations". Governance, according to these authors, "need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments and the international organizations to which they delegate authority". For the purposes of this study, I will argue that NGOs, and associations of NGOs, such as civil society, often engage in association with governmental bodies to create governance (ibid.). Hayden and Bratton (1992: 122) argue that governance consequently is concerned with uncovering viable regime forms as well as degrees of stateness, the capacity to entrench the authority of the central state and to regularize its relations with society. In this chapter, the concept of governance will be linked to the concept of public and community participation. For example, this chapter will argue that the notion of a role of the public in democratic governance at all levels of the political systems in South Africa is recognized. In addition, participation and local governance will be discussed, that organized groups have the right to be consulted by government on matters that affect them. Moreover, in this chapter the concept of governance will be linked also to a changing decision-making environment in South Africa. Lastly, governance will be linked to the IDP, which is aimed at formulation of municipal budgets, planning and development priorities.

Governance, according to Hayden and Bratton (1992: 264), was first adopted by practitioners in international development agencies, initially with the limited connotation of effective government performance. Following political independence, African leaders turned to international donor and lending agencies for assistance in setting up government agencies and training public officials to implement public policy. By the 1980s, with special reference to Africa, it was revived under the leadership of the World Bank, as an institutional "capacity-building" initiative under the rubric "governance for development" (ibid.). In practice, the World Bank (1989:

60) defines governance quite narrowly as "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs".

Private development agencies have elaborated a vision of governance which directly addresses the issue of political accountability (Hayden and Bratton, 1992:265). This argument led the way in the early 1980s with a pioneering governance programme, rooted in the belief that effective "government depends on the legitimacy derived from broad-based participation, fairness and accountability" (ibid.).

## 5.2. Public and community participation

### 5.2.1. A definition of community

Simon (2003: 12) argues that today there is frequently some doubt as to the exact meaning of the word community, as referred to in community participation. The meaning of the word has in fact undergone some change and therefore needs redefinition. Traditionally, a community conjures up a body of people living in the same locality and having something in common (ibid.). With the advance of technology that precise connotation of the word in the context of development has been lost. It is now being used very loosely, has become abstract and no longer clearly relates to lifestyle, dwelling, location or living situation. The theory of community participation implies behavioural and social decision-making in a real life context (ibid.).

According to Paul (1987: 2) one aspect of the traditional definition may be seen to still hold true, and that is 'people having something in common'. However, in order to explain community we need to have to treat 'confined locality' and 'having something in common' as two separate phenomena, which may or may not overlap. Simon (2003: 12) argues that in mobile societies it is possible to have something in common with many different people in different places, and thus be a member of many communities.

Simon (2003: 15) argues that the idea of people belonging to many communities at one time is not a common one. The reason for this is simple, since if we study historic

45

communities, the people who did belong to the community were involved in the decision-making process for that community, indeed they were the decision makers. According to Goss (2001: 48), today in modern society many people may say that they belong to 'no community' and such statements may be in most senses true because the people do not participate in decision making, they do not feel part of a community. In order to be a member of a community, one has to feel that one can take part in the decision-making processes. This sense or feeling of community is directly proportional to the feeling of participation (Simon, 2003:15). Most people feel that they are powerless to make decisions about development issues and social problems, and they have a corresponding lack of feeling of belonging to a community. "Community" actually means that it is possible, as a member of a social group, to make decisions affecting the behaviour, life-style and expression of that group (ibid.).

Goss (2001: 46) argues that an example of one of the most common places where people have a very strong sense of community is the home. This is one of the few places where it is usually possible to make some decisions about the environment, even though there may be some difficulties. If then we accept such a definition of community, it is possible to imagine plotting all our 'community feelings' in the form of behavioural tracks. We could outline all the pieces where we feel that we can play an active part in making decisions, and thus we would have a representation of our own individual feeling of community. Many community involvement programmes revolve around how a community can organise itself into citizen groups to "defeat large-scale master plans" (Paul, 1987: 3). A typical example of this is the Chris Hani community in Port Elizabeth, where citizens grouped together and fought an urban renewal programme that proposed to bulldoze and erase their homes.

However, when defining the concept "communities", we should not neglect the sociological explanations that underlie the definition of the word, that is, the issues of class, gender and race. These phenomena are social markers that confer identity and social boundaries that define a community and who may be included in or excluded from the community. They are often categories of oppression or privilege, and as such, they must concern us all[3].

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[3] www.pineforge.com/upm-data/6027_chapter_3.

In the same way, Goss (2001: 44-48) argues that other people formulated ideas of community based on interest around leisure activities, football clubs and religion. Goss also recognises the multicultural nature of the local community and argues that "it's about accepting, nurturing and appreciating cultural differences". Rutherford argues similarly that our sense of belonging is no longer defined simply through class, race or gender, but through all of these things alongside geography, interests, lifestyles, shared experiences and solidarity. As individuals we struggle to make sense of ourselves as a person we are comfortable with, and with whom the world can deal. Sometimes, argues Rutherford, there are real tensions involved in trying to accomplish this since we are often construed or labelled by the outside world in ways that make little sense from the inside (1990: 19).

In addition, Goss (2001: 59) states that exclusion challenges the possibilities of community engagement, since it sets some people outside the arrangements by which civil society governs itself. The response to social exclusion must, to an extent, define the rights and responsibilities that go with citizenship and the sorts of relationships that are expected of both state and individuals within civil society. This means that inequality endangers the possibility of reflexive dialogue, since the weakest, even if they are heard, may be ignored by the powerful.

## 5.2.2. Community participation: a conceptual framework

Paul (1987: 2) states that the definition of participation is a matter on which there is considerable disagreement among development scholars and practitioners. Some use the term to mean active participation in political decision making. For certain activist groups, participation has no meaning unless the people involved have significant control over the decisions concerning the community to which they belong. These diverse perspectives truly reflect the differences in the objectives for which participation might be advocated by different groups (ibid.).

However, for the purposes of this study, I define Community Participation (CP) "as an active process by which people influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income,

personal growth, and self reliance or rather values they cherish". This definition implies that the context of CP is the development programme. People are the objects of development, and it is their involvement in the direction and execution of projects which is of concern here.

According to Paul (1987: 4) and Boaden (1982: 17), in the context of development, CP may be viewed as a process that serves one or more of several objectives. In the broader sense, CP may be thought of as an instrument of empowerment. According to this view, development should lead to an equitable sharing of power and to a higher level of people's political awareness and strengths. Development activity is then a means of empowering people so that they are able to initiate actions on their own and thus influence the processes and outcomes of development. Goss (2001: 59) mentions that CP may contribute to increased project effectiveness. Effectiveness refers to the degree to which a given objective is achieved.

Simon (2003: 14) and Paul (1987: 6) state that it is difficult to incorporate CP into project strategies and for enthusiastic beneficiaries to be active in CP when one or more of the following conditions prevail: the local government does not have a social tradition supportive of CP, inadequate accountability inhibits the delivery of project services, and local government authorities are reluctant to build CP into project design.

Furthermore, Simon (2003: 14) and Paul (1987: 6) state that in the context of poverty eradication, the national government's economic policies have rightly emphasised the importance of increasing the access of the poor to development services. Paul (1987: 8) says that "It is necessary to reinforce this concern by highlighting the role that community organisations can play in improving the access to services for the weaker segments of the population". Simon (2003: 13) argues that civil society organisations may effectively mobilize the demands for services, providing efficient feedback and leading to a more equitable sharing of benefits. Policies also need to be more explicit on the important role of projects in building CP. Sustainability of CP, and in large sense, of development, cannot be achieved without the capacity of the institutions being strengthened in the process. That sustainability provides a rationale for CP in a

variety of project situations needs to be explained and effectively communicated to the community (Simon, 2003: 14 and Paul, 1987: 6).

Even if local governments "are persuaded that CP is appropriate to their projects, they are unlikely to incorporate CP" in project design as long as they have no guidance in terms of the relevant methodologies. It would be a mistake to suppose from this that standard guidelines on CP must be prescribed for all to follow. The procedures and techniques for "operationalising CP may vary by sector and sub-sector" (Simon, 2003: 14).

### 5.2.3. Participation and local government

According to Boaden (1982: 40), quite clearly, the idea of widespread public participation in the process of government is contrary to the idea of representative government. Representative government implies a division of labour in politics in which the ordinary person gives up claims to individual apolitical involvement to the elected representative: the politician, the person for whom politics is a career or an "all-consuming passion". Simon (2003: 14) points out that in return, an ordinary person expects his/her elected representative to look after his/her interests, safe in the knowledge that he/she will have an opportunity at the "ballot box to rid him/herself of an unsatisfactory politician if this should prove necessary", or so the theory would have us believe .Increasingly at the local level, the theory has been modified to accommodate the idea that organised groups have the right to be consulted by governments on matters that affect them, provided particularly that such groups have demonstrated some kind of ability or willingness to help in the policy-making process, or have convinced those in government that they can help. The right to group consultation is reasonably well-established as a cultural norm in this regard.

Moreover, Boaden (1982: 44) mention that another theme underlying democratic local government is that such government is open and accessible to the individual or group. That is to say, those who wish to take part in the decision- and policy-making processes can do so fairly easily and they can have influence over the decisions taken locally which affect them, should they wish to do so (Simon, 2003: 18). For example, during the apartheid era in South Africa, local government was characterised by its

closed, secretive nature, and by the difficulties people faced in dealing with governmental institutions. For example, people often experienced difficulties in learning about planning and development proposals in a particular area or in establishing their rights to welfare benefits. Often people and groups felt unable to influence such proposals and issues, and advocates of open, accessible local government might point to such examples to suggest that the welfare system is somewhat undemocratic (ibid.).

How does the idea of participation fit into this picture of local government? Boaden (1982: 40) argues that it would be wrong to suggest that participation is a solution for all the problems facing South African local government, though there is sometimes a tendency for the advocates of participation to act as if this was true. According to Roodt (1998) participation is an "jargon concept" capable of meaning many things to many people. Indeed, even *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives at least two definitions: one implies the idea of forming part of something, the second that of sharing something in common with others, or taking part with others, in some action or other (ibid.). Essentially, Simon (2003: 15) argues, when we are talking of public participation in local government we are using the word in this latter sense; that is to say, we imply that people are taking part, with others, in their local government. But, as we shall see, even this idea is capable of many different interpretations and meanings. For example, at one extreme, we might say that participation is about power and that public participation in local government is about shifting the balance of power away from those in formal positions of authority in local government towards individual people or groups in the locality or community (Boaden, 1982:44 and Simon, 2003:16).

This means that, according to Boaden (1982: 48), open accessible government involves the idea of open decisions, openly arrived at. In local government terms this would mean committee and council meetings open to the public. Then, say advocates of this view, at least people will know that councillors and local authorities have nothing to hide. Another sense of open accessible government suggests improving and perhaps increasing the channels of communication between the local authority and its public (Simon, 2003: 22). It involves making it easier for elected representatives, officials, individuals and groups to establish contact with each other and exchange

information, views and ideas. Making government more accessible does not necessarily mean greater participation, it only means increasing the opportunities for participation, and people may or may not choose to take up these opportunities.

### 5.2.4. Public participation in democratic governance in South Africa

According to Houston (2001: 2), policy making, budget formulating, legislative and planning processes in South Africa have gone through a number of drastic changes since the beginning of the 1990s. The key feature of these changes is the trend towards participatory and direct democracy. This is evident in the increasing participation of a variety of interest groups in various processes, as well as the establishment of numerous consultative bodies and other mechanisms for public participation at all levels of political structure (Lodge, 1999: 20). These include mechanisms for public participation, for example, through integrated development planning processes, petitions, public hearing, policy-making discussion conferences, and Green and White Paper processes (ibid.). This wide variety of new processes and structures demonstrate that commitment is also evident in the statutory and constitutional obligation that certain government structures have to facilitate public participation in their processes. Thus, "democracy is defined as ongoing and regular interaction between citizens and their popularly elected institutions" (ibid.).

Lodge (1999: 17) notes that the notion of a role of the public in democratic governance at all levels of the political system in South Africa was recognised by the ANC in its policy document, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994. The RDP refers *inter alia* to the development of "strong and stable democratic institutions and practices characterised by representativeness and participation" (Houston, 2001: 2). The policy advocates two very important principles or values of democracy – participation and representation – that are interlinked and interdependent. This implies not only direct political representation and participation through the political process, but also indirect representation through interest groups. Lodge argues that "reconstruction and development requires a population that is empowered through expanded rights, meaningful information and education, an institutional network fostering participatory and direct democracy" (1999: 20). It is widely accepted among scholars that public participation in political processes is a

virtue in its own right. A healthy democracy is generally seen as one in which the citizens participate regularly in formal development and political activities.

Since 1994 the ANC-led government in South Africa has committed itself to creating a political system which includes "an institutional network fostering … participatory and direct democracy" (Houston, 2001: 2). The goals set out in the ANC's policy document before the elections were carried into the new democracy have become policy and, in many cases, statutory mechanisms aimed at fostering participatory and direct democracy (ibid.). The consolidation of democracy in South Africa thus entails achieving higher and higher levels of public participation in the political process and the development of institutional channels that enables effective public participation. The reason for this is derived from the simple fact that a democracy as a form of government refers to "government for the people, by the people" (Houston, 2001: 2).

## 5.2.5. A changing decision-making environment in South Africa

Lodge (1999: 22) argues that the decision-making environment in South Africa has gone through a number of dramatic changes since the beginning of the 1990s. The unbanning of the liberation movement in February 1990 ushered in an era of negotiation and bargaining for a social contract and institutional choices which previously eluded South Africa. After many years of resistance against apartheid the nature of politics swung towards a negotiated settlement (Houston, 2001: 12). The resulting political environment led to the introduction of a variety of new processes and practices as a consequence of a radically different political culture from that which existed previously. The main element of this process was inclusivity (Lodge, 1999: 22).

Furthermore, Lodge (1999: 35) states that the new approach to decision making was aimed at introducing participatory democracy, accountability and transparency, bringing about fundamental changes in the policy environment in South Africa. The general definition of participatory democracy is that it reflects tendencies of 'pure' or 'direct' democracy, i.e. involving the citizenry to a greater degree in decision-making than representative democracy (ibid.). Houston (2001: 12) mentions that "The new

process of policy making was to be substantially more open to public input than under the apartheid state".

Boaden (1982: 17) argues that "Perhaps one of the most significant features of the new decision-making process is the proliferation of statutory and other consultative bodies that aim at involving civil society in decision making". Not only do these bodies reflect the government's intention to extend participatory democracy, to make policy formulation as inclusive as possible, and to encourage transparency, but they also reflect civil society's expectation of participation, consultation and transparency in decision-making processes on issues which affect them. What these demonstrate is an attempt to transform decision-making from a top-down process to a process driven from the bottom (Broaden, 1982: 17 and Lodge, 1999: 17).

## 5.2.6. Public participation in Integrated Development Planning (IDP)

Simon (2003: 20) argues that "the SA government has committed itself to instituting wide-ranging participatory processes in the different spheres and institutions of governance in the country". Municipal authorities, for example, are legally committed to involving civil society formations in the formulation of municipal budgets, planning and development priorities (Houston, 2001: 210). This is largely done through the establishment of IDPs (a planning methodology that the municipality uses to ensure that its planning and the implementation thereof is aligned with community needs) at a local government level, in terms of legislation developed by the national government departments of land affairs and constitutional development (Simon, 2003: 18). The requirement to establish IDPs represents a fundamental departure from previous local authority governance and planning practices, as it is now commonly accepted that apartheid local governments were extremely closed, bureaucratically-dominated institutions (ibid.).

In consequence, according to Houston (2001: 210), measures have been introduced to establish popular participation in the workings of local government structures. Measures have also been introduced to transform the functions of local government in SA to emphasise development rather than regulations, as was the case under the previous dispensation (Simon, 2003: 18). In combination, developmental local

government is defined as "local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives" (ibid.). Municipal authorities are legally obliged to involve civil society formations in the formulation of municipal development issues. The previous system of local government was basically unjust, premised on upholding the standard of living of whites at the expense of the development of blacks. This resulted in the unequal development of the urban environments of white and black people. Apartheid-era local government, with its separate structures for white and blacks, was also characterised by bureaucracy-dominated, top-down decision making. Civil society participation in black local government was totally absent (ibid.).

Houston (2001: 210) observes that, in contrast, the commitment "to participatory democracy, poverty alleviation, the physical development of underprivileged zones of the city and racial redress", and the opening of opportunities for integrated holistic planning underpin the new system of local government. Thus IDP involves new and complex governance and planning processes for SA local authorities. The initial enabling legislation for public participation in the planning process of local government was the Development Facilitation Act (No. 67 of 1995) (Simon, 2003: 20). This Act placed a responsibility on all local authorities to prepare land development objectives that defined the nature and extent of development over a five-year period. Land development objectives were to be created for service delivery, land use control, environment planning and development strategies (Houston, 2001: 215). Local government structures were required to seek public participation in the setting of these objectives under the terms of Section 27 of the Act. The amended Local Government Transition Act (No. 97 of 1996) required municipalities to produce IDPs to serve as the framework for mobilizing and prioritising the use of development resources, and aligning internal capacity and systems with strategic development objectives (Simon, 2003: 20). In addition, the Act stipulated that "local government structures must report to and receive comments from their communities annually regarding the objectives set in the IDPs". The Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998) required municipalities to engage in consultation with civil society in meeting their objectives. According to Section 19 of the Act, each municipality is required to

"develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organisations in performing its functions and exercising its powers" (Houston, 2001: 210).

Simon (2003: 20) mentions that the Municipal System Bill published in the Government Gazette on August 6, 1999, attempts to draw together the various requirements that different pieces of national legislation impose on local government structures. The Bill also makes provision for public participation in local governance and for integrated development planning. Chapter 3 obliges municipal councils to "develop a culture of municipal governance that shifts from strict representative government to participatory governance, and must for this purpose encourage and create conditions for residents, communities and other stakeholders in the municipality to participate in local affairs" (Lodge, 1999: 20). Thus, local government legislation has had two consistent themes: the developmental role of local authorities, planning, implementing and monitoring; and the obligation imposed on local authorities to consult residents, communities and other stakeholders in the performance of their tasks (ibid.). This has been supplemented by the policy framework on local government set out in the White Paper on Local Government. The White Paper, published in March 1998, stipulates that "municipal councillors should promote the involvement of citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programmes" (Simon, 2003: 20). Local government structures must develop strategies and mechanisms, including participative planning, to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups. Public involvement in developmental local government could thus be encouraged. (Lodge, 1999: 20 and Houston, 2001: 210)

## 5.3. Civil society

## 5.3.1. Introduction

Kasfir (1998: 4) argues that civil society can be defined more narrowly so that it includes all kinds of public non-state activity, but only when the members of civil society are challenging the state. This is what Kasfir proposed by simply defining civil society, albeit 'provisionally', as society in its relation with the state … in so far as it is in confrontation with the state, in other words, the social space in which both

the dominated and dominant social groups influence the decision-making processes of the state. Furthermore, according to Tester (1992: 8), at least for introductory purposes, the label of civil society can be applied to all those social relationships which involve the voluntary association and participation of individuals acting in their private capacity. Tester (1992: 10) also mentions that civil society is a coming together of private individuals, an edifice of those who are otherwise strange to one another. In many ways, it is something like the "architecture for the odd". As such, civil society is clearly distinct from the state. It involves all those relationships which go beyond the purely familial and yet are not of the state. Civil society is about our basic societal relationships and experiences (ibid.). According to Stefan, civil society is an "arena where manifold social movements … and civic organisations from all classes … attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests" (Roodt and Savage, 1998: 326).

Kasfir (1998: 1) mentions that the concept of civil society has been shaped to serve the goal of better governance, particularly democratic reform. This means that the existence of an active civil society is crucial to the vitality of political democracy, and the "nurturing of civil society is widely perceived as the most effective means of controlling repeated abuses of state power, holding rulers accountable to their citizens, and establishing the foundations for durable democratic government" (ibid.). For many scholars, civil society is an instrument, perhaps the most important one, that will make African states more democratic, more transparent and more accountable (Kasfir, 1998: 4 and Tester, 1992: 8).

Baker (2002: 20) mentions that collective action in search of the good society is a universal part of human experience, though manifested in many different ways across time, space and culture. Today, civil society seems to be the big idea on everybody's lips, "government officials, journalists, writers, academics, not to mention the millions of people across the globe who find it an inspiration in their struggles for a better world" (Edward, 2004: 24). Cited as a solution to social, economic and political dilemmas by politicians and thinkers from left, right and all perspectives in between, civil society is claimed by every part of the ideological spectrum as its own, but what exactly is it? "Civil Society," says Edward (2004: 21), means "fundamentally

56

reducing the role of politics in society by expanding freedom and individual liberty". Not to be outdone, traditional thinkers like Anthony Giddens (2006: 652) claim that civil society, by gently correcting generations of state and market failure, could be the missing link in the success of social democracy. The United Nations and the World Bank see it as one of the keys to 'good governance' and poverty-reducing growth. Thus writers such as Edward (2004: 22) conclude that the role of "NGOs in the twenty-first century will be as significant as the role of the nation state in the twentieth".

According to Edward (2004: 24), civil society and the state, for example, have always been interdependent, with states providing the legal and regulatory framework a democratic civil society needs to function, and civil society exerting the pressure for accountability that keeps elected government on track. As Theda Skocpol has shown, effective United States social policies between 1945 and 1980 worked through symbiotic ties that developed between government and locally rooted membership associations (Baker, 2002: 28). This does not, of course, mean that civil society is part of the state or vice versa, they are clearly different sets of institutions, but if they are disconnected then the positive effects of each on the other can be negated. Savage and Roodt (1998: 237) conclude that "civil society is not entirely 'separate' from the state".

Edward (2004: 26) states that, in its role as a 'public sphere', civil society is the ground for dispute and deliberation as well as for organization and association partnership, "a non-legislative, extra judicial, public space in which societal differences, social problems, public policy, government action" and issues of society and cultural distinctiveness are discussed and deliberated.

## 5.3.2. The participation of civil society and the legislatures in the formulation of the budget

Bond (2005: 30) and Edward (2004: 26) argue that, during apartheid, South African public budgets were a secret affair. This reflected a Second World War statute that required the government to account for every cent spent without disclosing where the cent was spent. Without power to change the budget and with limited time to assess

the budget, parliament amounted to a rubber stamp (Edward, 2004: 25). Public hearings were rare and consistently reflected private sector interests only. The structure of governance in the country also looked rather different from that of current governance. SA comprised four provinces and ten quasi-independent homelands. Provinces in 'white' SA were merely spending agents of the national departments. Public budgets were primarily designed to meet the needs of white SA (Bond, 2005: 32). In addition, the demands of maintaining apartheid and counteracting the perceived military threat led to a huge build-up of government debt that currently consumes approximately 20% of total government expenditure (ibid.). Further, in the past, government carried on many activities with fiscal implications through public sector entities, the so-called parastatals. Transformation in SA has led to greater attention to budgets, transparency and participation. This is reflected in the Constitution, parliamentary procedure and government policy. It has produced greater transparency and participation of NGOs in budget issues (Rai and Fine, 1997: 65).

Edward (2004: 24) argues that civil society participation in the budget has been growing steadily, but more slowly than improvements in budget transparency. This is not necessarily cause for concern: it takes several years to build analytical capacity in a process not known for broad participation. Prior to 1994, the participation of civil society organisations in parliamentary budget debates was restricted to a small number of private sector interests who regularly presented their case to parliamentary committee hearings (Bond, 2005: 30). This situation is changing. In 1997, three civil society groupings, articulating the priorities of low-income people and women, participated in the hearings of National Assembly's Portfolio Committee on finance. By 1998, this number has grown to six civil society presentations (Bond, 2005: 28). In 1999, 14 civil society presentations were made at the hearings and presented a broad spectrum of macro-economic, poverty alleviation and sectoral interest issues (Edward, 2004: 24).

## 5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mhotsha (2005: 17) argues that governance, therefore, "is about the process of making decisions. It is concerned with a process focusing on the distribution of public responsibility across multiple stakeholders" (Lovan et al., 2004:

xvi). For the purposes and the aims of this study, this conclusion is more appropriate, as I am focusing on the concept of governance in relation to other concepts, such as participatory democracy, accountability, decentralization, civil society etc. Community participation was used as the foundation for effective and good governance in this regard.

Furthermore, Baker (2002: 28) argues that civil society is now frequently perceived in active terms. Pluralists stress its function in serving to guarantee that the democratic state has the information it desires to achieve people as "consumer demands". Liberals indicate that its purpose offsets the state in order to avoid an "over-concentration of power in society". For example, civil society is that place of various non-governmental organisations which is sufficient to counteract the state, and which can stop the state from dictating and manipulating the community. Therefore, civil society is perceived as essentially apolitical and its importance is solely in relation to the state (Bond, 2005: 38 and Rai and Fine, 1997: 65).

# CHAPTER 6: WARD COMMITTEES

## 6.1. Introduction

According to Reddy (1996: 202):

> It is generally accepted that local government is an integral part of the broader issues of governance, transition and development in the South African context. The political events at the local government level contributed in many ways to some of the fundamental political and social changes experienced in the country in recent years. Many local authorities and other stakeholders started negotiations at the local level during the 1980s and the early 1990s. By 1993 the Local Government Negotiating Forum had been established, providing the context for negotiations between the major stakeholders in local government. The Multiparty Negotiating Forum had, at about the same time, also addressed local government as part of the broader institutional programme. Evolving from these processes was the Local Government Transition Act. This Act provided for numerous issues, such as pre-interim and interim phases for the restructuring of local government, and establishment of local forums for negotiating the restructuring of local government in each area for the pre-interim period.

According to Cloete (1997: 30) there were attempts during the apartheid regime to construct local government systems for Africans, Coloureds and Indians separate from the system for whites. However, these attempts were unsuccessful because the local authorities which were established were not accepted by the Coloureds, the Africans and to some extent the Indians. Manona (1997: 105) states that in the end the inhabitants of the African urban areas established civic associations which demanded unified non-racial local authorities for the adjoining urban areas populated by the different population groups. The pressure for unified urban area and local authorities became significant, particularly after the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) was established in 1991 (ibid.).

## 6.1.1. The case of South Africa

According to Rich (1996: 16), the advent of Union in 1910 marked the beginning of a new era in which white settler rule became consolidated under the ideology of segregation. Rich further mentions that the new South African state passed legislation such as the 1913 Native Land Act limiting the rights of Africans to own land and undermining their claims to equal citizenship. After the First World War this was followed by the 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act limiting African rights to reside in urban areas and preventing them owning property there, while in 1927 the Native Administration Act fortified the powers of tribal chiefs and revived African customary law (1996: 16). This legislation forced a rapid expansion in the scale of African politics and hastened the establishment of a political lobby at the national level (ibid.).

By the time the Second World War broke out in 1939 there was a steady resurgence of black political opposition to segregation. The formation of the African National Congress (ANC) on January 8, 1912 in Bloemfontein represented the first serious attempt to establish a national forum to address the political and economic situation of the black population (Rich, 1996). The ANC began to revive after a long period of malaise, though it still proved difficult to weld its diverse factions into a cohesive movement to challenge government policy (Rich, 1996: 105 and McKinley, 1997: 6).

Thompson (1982: 182) stated that the sectional reformist system had roots in the Cape Colony, where the laws had been for the most part colour-blind and blacks had been admitted to the franchise on the common voters roll equally with whites, subject to economic and educational qualifications. After 1910, segregationist laws and practices became more and more pervasive in the Cape Province and the other three provinces of the Union (ibid.).

In 1939, R.F. Hoernlé, a former professor of philosophy at Harvard University who had been head of the department of philosophy at the University of Witwatersrand since 1923, analyzed the segregation policy of the government of the day:

> "Segregation" stands for a policy offensive to all non-Europeans in
> South Africa, viz. for a policy of exclusion, forced upon them by the

61

white group. This is segregation as an instrument of domination; segregation which retains the segregated in the same social and political structure with the dominant white group, but subjects them to the denial of important rights and keeps them at a social distance implying inferiority (Thompson,1982: 183).

Accordingly, the ANC protested each instalment of segregationist legislation, usually making its protests in South Africa but sometimes sending delegations overseas, to England in 1913 and to Versailles in 1919 (Thompson, 1982: 184). On June 26, 1955, three thousand delegates met at Kliptown near Johannesburg and adopted a "Freedom Charter"; which states among other clauses, "That South Africa belongs to all who live in it … no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people" (ibid.).

The African people were not part of the government and did not make the laws by which they were governed. Nelson Mandela proclaimed, "We believed in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of the government"[4].

In addition, McKinley (1997: 16) mentions that "the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was formed in 1944". At the time, young people such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo were proposing, among other ideas, an African nationalism. These young people had a strong conviction that African people would be freed only by "their own efforts". Masses of people were also brought into the fore of these radical struggles. McKinley also mentions that "In the 1970s students fought back against the system" (ibid.). Through their struggle and resistance of the unjust regime, the face of South Africa was changed. The 1976 uprising also led the regime to change its strategy. For the first time reforms were introduced to apartheid (ibid.). The next section aims at contextualising and conceptualising the notion of democracy, by providing varieties of democracy and the different models of democracy.

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[4] Nelson Mandela's statement from the dock at the opening of the defence case in the Rivonia Trial Pretoria Supreme Court, April 20, 1964.

Cloete (1997: 14) argues that the Republic of South Africa underwent fundamental constitutional transformation in terms of the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993, which repealed the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1983. Act 200 of 1993 came into effect on May 10, 1994, and was repealed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The new constitution recognised the values and importance of the local government in South Africa as a sphere of government, a government that is closer to the people. The constitution also outlined the functions, roles and the establishment of the municipalities. For example, Chapter 7 of the Constitution Act of 1996, under the heading Local Government, provides for municipal institutions headed by legislatures known as municipal councils consisting of elected members. Sections 151 and 153 of the Constitution provide for the status of municipalities, objects of local government and development duties of municipalities (ibid.: 24).

The local government transformation led to a new local government system for all nine provinces. The new system started coming into effect after members of the transformed local councils were elected in 1995 and 1996 (Cloete, 1997: 31-32).

According to Lodge (2002: 86), initially considerable effort was invested in participatory development procedures in which local projects such as water reticulation, housing construction or improving local roads would be inspired and managed by locally representative bodies. The adoption of the RDP was accompanied by the assembly of hundreds of local development forums, which were supposed to function in partnership with state agencies in conceiving and funding such projects (Cloete, 1997: 14). However, Lodge argues that the absence of responsive and legitimate local government until its election in 1995 and 1996 also posed an obstacle for the 'people-driven' progress of the RDP. In addition, the ANC's own lack of preparation for municipal politics meant that even after their entry into town halls many ANC councillors were ineffectual, and often corrupt too (Lodge, 2002: 88).

According to Manona (1997: 105), the collapse of the development forums in many neighbourhoods and the evident weakness of community-based organisations make it all the more difficult to engage citizens in development projects. NGOs that might have provided the specialised skills to enable communities to plan their own projects

were incapacitated as they lost staff to state institutions: as many as 60% had left by 1997 (ibid.). However, different initiatives were introduced by the government in order to address the crisis. For example, former President Thabo Mbeki introduced the Community Development Workers (CDWs) as a channel of relaying messages to and from the government. However, different opinions were raised concerning these structures, in which some people viewed these structures as 'Mbeki propaganda', while others perceived them as "true" developmental strategies (Lodge, 2002: 86). In addition, ward committees were also introduced in South Africa in 2001, and these were aimed at enhancing participatory democracy, and functioning as an interface between the government and civil society (Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005: 14). It is against this background that this chapter aims at studying the nature of ward committees, and to understand their objectives, duties and establishment.

In the Resource Book (2005: 1) it is stated that the Ward Committee System is a formal part of local government and it is not an option, but a constitutional requirement that all the municipalities should adhere to. This requirement is promulgated in various documents including The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (Part 4 sections 72-78). The Act provides a powerful legal framework for participatory local democracy, and for ward committees in particular. For example, the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005: 14) states that:

> Chapter 2 (section 19) of the Act requires a municipality to strive, within its capacity, to achieve the objectives set out in Section 152 of the Constitution, namely to:
> - Develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performance of its functions and exercising its powers; and
> - Annually review the needs of the community and municipal priorities and strategies for meeting those needs and involving the community in municipal processes.

The Resource Book further states that Chapter 4 (Part 4) is the section of the Act that requires the establishment of ward committees. The objective is to enhance

participatory democracy in local government. This chapter also provides that a Ward Councillor shall be the chairperson of the ward committee, and obliges the municipal council to make rules regulating the procedure to elect members of the ward committees.

South African President Thabo Mbeki argued that "we must engage one another in a similar manner on a whole range of important specific issues such as improving service delivery and strengthening local government, including the Ward Committees. The Committees, whose members are ordinary workers, play a critical role in ensuring the necessary contact between the people and our institution of government"[5].

According to the Resource Book (2005: 1) the idea of the ward committees started in 2001, during which time there was a change in local government in South Africa, after the local government elections which took place in December 2000. The idea of ward committees was to bridge the gap which existed between ordinary citizens and their government. For example, in the past, especially during the apartheid regime, ordinary citizens had no say on things which were affecting them directly. However, the government of unity, which came into power in 1994, established the ward committees in 2001. Resource Book (2005: 1) states that "we correctly positioned this as the sphere of government that is best placed to give practical meaning and substance to the basic political commitment that people shall govern". Therefore, one can see that the ward committee system aims primarily at having a representative structure servicing the primary functions in different wards: this primary function is about people receiving information about the council's decisions and plans that affect the communities.

The Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 4) mentions that "each ward will have a ward committee, made up of not more than 10 members". This means that these 10 members of the ward committees should be the voice going out to the council, i.e. getting the information in, and getting information out, and reporting the information to their communities. Mhotsha (2005: 72) outlines the duties of the ward committees

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[5] Address at the opening of the 3rd COSATU Central Committee Meeting, Ekurhuleni, August 15, 2005.

as, but not limited, to identifying and discussing local needs, helping communities to prioritise their needs, formulating proposals for the solution of identified local needs, determining the extent to which the people can satisfy their needs on a self-help basis, and developing a plan of action for their community areas. Through council, ward committees can solicit the assistance of donors and other development agencies. The ward committees also formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate community action plans.

## 6.2. Ward committees on IDP

In addition, the Handbook (2005: 10) states that ward committees participate in local government related programmes, for example every local government's municipality participates in local development planning, which is reviewed and modified every year. This plan starts with planning by the council and is followed by consultation with the ward committees. The purpose of this strategy is to assess the needs of every ward, and the priorities of the constituencies, therefore ward committees feed in to the municipality (Mhotsha, 2005: 72). It is evident that in the new system of ward committees, instead of one superpower making decisions on behalf of the people, there are now eleven community members who decide on the issues that affect them directly. This means that there is a participatory process in which the ward committees are involved. Ward committees serve as an extensional government that links the municipality with different wards or constituencies. During this process of the IDP, the IDP experts or officials inspect each ward and its infrastructures, for example the number of clinics, taverns, gender dynamics etc. These experts bring this data back to the ward committees for verification, and this results in a dialogue between the IDP experts and the ward committees. This means that the municipality feeds back to the ward committees, and gives them a chance to verify any missing or incorrect data (Handbook, 2005: 10).

## 6.3. Ward committees and municipal budgets

Prof Wells[6] stressed that, on the issue of budget, the municipal officials are required by law to consult with various stake holders before submitting a final budget. However the budget system becomes difficult to operate on a ward by ward basis. For example, a library in Grahamstown is not a certain ward's project, therefore things that need to be budgeted for cannot simply be divided ward by ward. One of the priorities, for example, especially in the Makana Municipality, is the tarring of roads. This project is not simply a certain ward's initiative, so this is an example of a major issue that makes it difficult to involve ward committees entirely on the issue of budget. However, by the time the draft budget has been put together, there is a time around March in which input is invited from the councillors. The councillors therefore take the draft budget to their respective ward committees for input, and this is how the ward committees become effective and influential with regard to the budgeting process. Ward committees recommend inputs to their councillors, and these are eventually forwarded to the council for consideration (Mhotsha; 2005: 88). One of the things which is in the budget plan for the financial year of 2007/8 in the Makana Municipality, is that every Ward Councillor should be able to set up an office in their wards, in which a Ward Councillor will be available at fixed hours, allocated and agreed upon between him/her and the community. This will be another way of promoting accountability and accessibility, and bringing government closer to the people. Even the ward committees might be able to use these offices for their meetings (Handbook, 2005: 10).

## 6.4. Ward committees enhance accountability

Przeworski (1999: 131-133) argues that the principle of accountability in the municipality is at the forefront of most governmental documents. Accountability at local government level aims at providing open and good governance to the citizens, and eliminating a closed and bureaucratic government. During the apartheid regime, people were not fairly represented, and there was a lack of accountability (Mhotsha, 2005: 75). This means that the previous government made decisions without

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[6] Prof. Julia Wells. PR Councillor in Makana Municipality. Interviewed October 12, 2007, Grahamstown.

consulting with the communities, which the current system of government is trying to rectify and redress. In the system of ward committees, the element of accountability is visible, in which ten members represent the needs of the community to the municipality, and in return report back to the community on issues that have been discussed in the council (Przeworski, 1999: 133). Furthermore, citizens are invited to the public meetings and hearings, in which they get opportunities to question their representatives directly. Councillors are required by law to perform these duties, that is, to organise public meeting or hearings, and account to their constituencies (ibid.).

Mhotsha (2005: 75) argues that decentralization development planning is incomplete if it stops at the district level. To increase public participation in development activities and policy issues, greater attention needs to be paid to ward development committees. This is because there is consensus within a developing community that, until local people themselves take charge of their own lives, effective local development as a goal will remain elusive (Przeworski, 1999). The Ward Councillor provides the link between the council and the community through the ward committee. The councillor also reports to the ward committee and community on council decisions and other important development programmes. Thus, the Ward Councillor plays an advisory role, assisting ward committees in promoting bottom-up planning and implementation of community projects. In consultation with the community through the ward committee, the Ward Councillor formulates motions to be presented to council on community needs (ibid.).

According to Przeworski (1999: 131-133) we take it for granted that modern government must be democratic in the sense of deriving its authority directly or indirectly from the people. But democratic governments differ greatly in producing policies that are responsive to the popular will. In parts, this variation may be traced to the diverse representational structures of various democratic governments. Electoral institutions are employed not only to choose good public officials, but as mechanisms to hold incumbents accountable to the public, and they may make policies more or less responsive to public wishes (Mhotsha; 2005: 98). Accountability is, in this view, "a property of institutional structures, whereas responsiveness is a consequence of interaction within such structures. Put it in another way,

responsiveness is a measure of how much accountability an institutional structure permits" (ibid.).

## 6.4.1. Accountability and manipulation

Przeworski (1999: 157) mentions that "democratic governments are accountable when citizens can judge their record retrospectively at election time, and punish or reward them accordingly. Politicians anticipate such judgement when they undertake policy initiatives and pay attention to the interests of the voters. So, rather than looking at promises, citizens assess past performance".

Przeworski (1999: 198) and Holland (2006: 6) both argue that we may conceive the relationship in principal-agent terms. The principal, the electorate, wishes policy responsiveness from its agent, the elected policy maker. The agent is motivated to avoid such things as ideology and commitment to the collective goals of a political party or faction. The principal can sanction shirking behaviour through the mechanism of election. Holland (2006: 6) argues that two models of agent accountability are "adverse selection", whereby agents who have strayed too far are eliminated in the election period following their actions, and "moral hazard", in which the agents themselves enforce the principal-agent relationships by moulding their behaviour to anticipated preferences of the principal in order to sustain the flow of benefits from the relationship.

Przeworski (1999: 220) mentions that our purpose is to examine the empirical validity of two propositions, that democracy is a political regime distinguished by the accountability of rulers to the ruled, and that elections are the mechanism through which this accountability is enforced. These propositions are obviously related. The first follows from the second one by the definition of democracy as a regime in which rulers are selected by elections. Hence, the structure of the argument we intend to examine is that democracy is a system that enforces accountability because democracy is a regime in which rulers are chosen by elections, and accountability is enforced by elections (Przeworski, 1999: 222).

## 6.4.2. Responsiveness, accountability and responsibility

This study utilizes the concepts of accountability and responsibility in the context of the principal-agent relationship between elected and administrative officials to explore how this relationship translates public preferences, as defined by elected officials, into policy. Both Przeworski (1999: 298) and Holland (2006: 8) argue that mechanisms that impose accountability and provide definitions of responsibility ultimately seek to achieve responsiveness. How do accountability and responsibility help achieve a bureaucracy responsive to elected officials' preferences? According to Holland (2006: 9), "accountability at its most basic means answerability for one's actions or behaviour. Accountability focuses on the obligation owed by all public officials to the public, the ultimate sovereign in a democracy, for explanation and justification of their use of public office and the delegated powers conferred on the government through constitutional processes". The accountability plan should define to whom one must answer. Such arrangements vary widely across modern democracies, but they commonly require that the representatives of the public owe the public an explanation of their tenure in office (Przeworski, 1999: 298 and Holland, 2006: 8).

Holland (2006: 10) argues that, for accountability to sustain responsiveness, it must be supported by sanctions and wards. In the relationship between the electorate and elected officials, the electorate can sanction by withholding or withdrawing support, and ultimately possibly defeating elected officials at the next election. Removal from office constitutes the obvious ultimate sanction. In the principal-agent relationship between elected and unelected officials, however, elected officials have sanctions other than, or in addition to, removal from office. These include demotion, investigation, and budgetary penalties, among others. Principals can also provide positive rewards for those who account well for their work (ibid.).

## 6.5. Conclusion

Ward Committees promote accountability in the sense that the government is accountable to its citizens, when the government is obliged to inform its citizens about governmental actions and decisions, to justify them, and as a result to eliminate cases

of eventual misconduct. Furthermore, in leadership roles, accountability is the recognition and supposition of duty for performance, conclusion, judgment and policies, including the management, governance and carrying out within the capacity of the task or employment situation and surrounding the requirement to account, clarify and be responsible for resulting consequences. Ward committees are therefore these types of formations that uphold good governance. In politics, and mostly in "representative democracies, accountability is an important factor in securing legitimacy of public power" (Holland, 2006: 10). Accountability restricts the degree to which "elected representatives and other office-holders" (ibid.) can badly diverge from their imaginary duties, thus eliminating dishonesty. The connection of the notion of accountability can thus be interrelated to ideas like the rule of law or democracy.

## CHAPTER 7: Data Analysis

## 7.1. Introduction

The central research question sought to assess the level of participatory democracy in the Makana Municipality. This chapter is presented according to themes and subheadings which were interrogated during the study. It is worth noting that the quotations provided in this chapter assume the unanimous agreement of all the members, unless indicated otherwise. There was a consistent thread which ran through the WCMs, the thread of the lack of participatory democracy. On the other hand, most Ward Councillors refuted such a thread. It should be also borne in mind that there were numerous issues that arise from the findings, however, this chapter only considers those that are relevant to the study.

## 7.2. Meaning of democracy

According to Crick (2002: 1) "many meanings attach to the word democracy. If there is one true meaning then it is, as Plato might have said, stored up in heaven, but unhappily has not yet been communicated to us". This means therefore that the concept of democracy is quite controversial, as there is no single definition that can be attached to the word. For example, different countries define the word according to their political, social and economic context. In the context of South Africa, for instance, the basic definition of the word would include aspects such as: better life for all, service delivery, and fair treatment of all different races, especially those previously marginalized (social and political democracy). This system advances the idea that the people of the country should enjoy democracy in all aspects of life (Smith, 2006: 1). Furthermore, it also emphasizes the principles of freedom, equality and social justice.

Most philosophers agree that there are essential aspects that need to be addressed when defining democracy, irrespective of the countries' different contexts and backgrounds. For example, Beetham (1994: 6) argues that "a more promising and universal route might be to define democracy according to certain basic principles". Even though there is no agreement on these "universal basic principles", many

countries acknowledge these principles as essential. They recognize that "international co-operation based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) should be developed and strengthened in order to find solutions to the world problems and to build an international community based on these principles" (World Conference of the International Women's Year, 1995).

For the purposes of this study I adopt these "universal basic principles" of democracy, which are Dignity, Equality, and Participation. These principles were chosen based on the assumption that "discrimination against anyone is incompatible with human dignity and the welfare of the society, prevents their participation, on equal terms, in the political, social and economic life, and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities in the service delivery and of humanity" (United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Moreover, these principles will be applied in the context of South Africa, specifically in the Makana Municipality in which the study was conducted. The next sections outline these principles, and try to juxtapose them with the findings gathered during the processes of the research.

## 7.3. Dignity

Reddy (1996: 3) mentions that one of the aspects of democracy is that the dignity of people is best manifested when they determine and control their affairs. In the context of this study, such a statement would mean that the local government should respect the dignity of people. For example, Crick (2002: 2) argued that people's dignity is respected when their voices are being heard. This view was also shared by the majority of Ward Councillors interviewed in Makana, who agreed that, in a democratic country, citizens should not only vote their representatives into office, but in the words of one should also participate in decision-making processes in order for them to become sovereign and active citizens[7]. Therefore, such people should oversee the ways that those in power govern, and also influence government policies. When people are not involved in the processes of governance, Reddy argues, people's

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[7] (1) Councillor Zonwabele Mantla. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.
  (2) Councillor Luyanda Nase. Interviewed on November 2, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.
  (3) Councillor Ntsikelelo Stemper. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

dignity is not respected, and people become disempowered and underestimated (1996: 3).

However, in ward committee meetings that the researcher attended[8], the observations suggested that to a great extent the dignity of some ward committee members (WCMs) was not respected. Most of the WCMs at both meetings were old people , whereas the Ward Councillors were middle-aged. Respect refers to the ways in which those who are in power treat people with dignity, and is reflected in the degree of dignity afforded to citizens, especially the elderly, by those in power. However, in a series of ward committee meetings attended, it was clear that elderly people were not treated with dignity. For example, during one incident in a meeting, a WCM asked a question that was directed to the councillor. This issue had been addressed in a previous meeting and concerned the pensioners of the ward. This WCM was representing the pensioners' sector, and wanted to know whether the paydays that have been changed affected all grant holders, or a specific group. However, the Ward Councillor responded in a very hostile manner, pointing a finger at the elderly member, and said *"The issue has been discussed in the last meeting, and you must consult the minutes of the previous meeting, you are wasting my time, and you are out of order"*. Even though the member was "out of order" according to the councillor, he was not treated with respect. As a result, that WCM automatically "switched-off" and became less active during the course of the meeting. What the example shows is that by disrespecting the people, the enthusiasm of the WCMs to participate is affected as they feel that their inputs or contributions are not considered.

Furthermore, in another meeting, elderly members were not following the discussion; as a result they asked the ward councillor if he could slow down or reduce the pace of the meeting. However, the councillor said that it was not his responsibility to teach the committee members listening and writing skills and continued with the agenda. Although he was not hostile, as in the previous example, he simply ignored their concern and carried on. Even the younger committee members who were present did not intervene, since some of them were not following procedures either.

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[8] Ward Committee Quarterly Meeting held in the City Hall on Thursday, May 31, 2007 at 17:30 pm and Ward Committee Quarterly Meeting held in the City Hall on Tuesday, June 12, 2007 at 17:30 pm.

Such findings in 2008 clearly oppose what Nelson Mandela stood against in his Rivonia Trial of 1964, when he announced that

> "Basically, we fight against two features which are the hallmarks of African life in South Africa and which are entrenched by legislation which we seek to have repealed. These features are poverty and a lack of human dignity".

Weale (1994: 64) talks about an autonomous human being that must be respected in all aspects of governance. For example he mentions that "being autonomous creatures, means that human beings are self-governed and that collective self-government is the most appropriate way of reflecting this aspect of their moral personality". In this regard, some WCMs stated that people must be treated as free and autonomous human beings under democracy[9]. Moreover, people have the right to ask for any clarity, in the case of the findings, and to ask for further explanations on issues or decisions that have been reached or taken on their behalf.

The above-mentioned findings also suggest something else which the researcher observed during the same meeting. For instance, in a democracy it is argued that all the citizens should be treated equally, and not discriminated against based on their class, race, gender etc. During the meeting, a contrasting view was observed. In the course of the meeting, another WCM needed clarity on something else which was discussed in the past. The content of the question was not part of the agenda on that day. Instead of the Ward Councillor responding in the same manner as he did to the pensioner representative, he was more "kind" toward this WCM. He simply asked the members whether they recalled anything in that regard. This clearly demonstrated how certain members of the committee were receiving privileges and better treatment than others, whereas others were more vulnerable and treated unfairly. The notion of equality was lacking in such situation, according to the observations. Also, education and age played a major role in most situations during the WC meetings. For example, elderly people were not treated equally compared to young members who were much more educated than them. Equality is therefore discussed in the next section, as

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[9] (1) Dr Heather Davies-Coleman. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on November 7, 2007, in the office of the Dean of Research at Rhodes University.
 (2) Mrs. F H. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed telephonically on December 7, 2007.

Beetham (1994: 12) mentions that the assumption of equality is the basis for the definition of democracy within the broader theory of democracy.

## 7.4. Equality

Hadenius adopts an approach and arrives at a conception of political democracy which holds that public policy is to be governed by the freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equal (1992: 7-9). Therefore, in democracy people must not only be treated with dignity, but all the citizens must be equal. All Ward Councillors interviewed agreed that all those who are legal citizens of the countries must not be unfairly treated, but all should appear equal, irrespective of their race, gender, class etc.[10] For the aims and objectives of this research, the main focus is on the ward committee members of the Makana Municipality, and to assess whether they are treated equally. In this regard, Beetham (1993: 7) mentions that popular control is underpinned by the value that we give to people as self-determining agents who should have a say on issues that affect their lives. Secondly, political equality is underpinned by the assumption that everyone has an equal capacity for self-determination, and therefore an equal right to influence collective decisions and to have their interests considered when such decisions are made.

However, many wcm WCMs during the interviews argued that they were not treated equally. These members argued that there were other WCMs who were favoured by the councillors for different reasons. Some complained that party affiliation played a role. For example, it was claimed by some WCMs that the African National Congress (ANC) WCMs were divided, as a result there were inequalities. For example, a WCM during the interview mentioned that:

> "We are all belonging to the same municipality, but among ourselves there
> are different ideologies and opinions. For example, within the ANC
> organization, there are different camps, those who are supporting the Mayor,

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[10] (1) PR Councillor Prof. Julia Wells. Interviewed on September 20, 2007, in her office in the History Department at Rhodes University.
  (2) Councillor Nomazwi Fuku. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.
  (3) Councillor Melikhaya Phongolo. Interviewed on November 19, 2007 telephonically.

and those who oppose him. So your treatment as a WCM will entirely depend on the camp you are supporting. Therefore, the way we are treated here is determined by the camp you are supporting. If for example, your Ward Councillor is supporting the Mayor, you must also support his camp; otherwise you will be treated very badly in the ward committees. Therefore, we are truly not treated equally at all. There are favourites and the enemies in the ward committees"[11].

In another interview, a WCM shared the same sentiment as the above interviewee. For example, he mentioned that other factors include different ideologies and opinions. He stated that:

"I know that I am not in the Councillor's good book because I always ask questions, as a result we became enemies. Some members in the committee do not challenge the Council's or the Councillor's decisions that have been taken. They always accept what ever issue is brought before them. Unfortunately I am not that stupid; I know that I have a right to ask questions"[12].

The issue of inequality was also confirmed strongly during the focus group discussion[13]. For example, it was concluded collectively by all committee members that:

"There are existing inequalities in the Makana Municipality; as a result there are camps which came into being. For example, there is a Mayoral camp, those who support the ideas and the decision of the mayor. On the other hand, there is the Speakers camp, Councillor Madinda, who is against the mayor. The members mentioned that the tensions and crisis started from the top and had trickled down to the bottom. They argued that these divisions do not only exist in their ward committee, but almost all the wards are

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[11] Mr. M F. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 3, 2008 at 3pm. 9 Anglo-African Street.
[12] Mr. S M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 14, 2008 at 3pm. Makana Municipality Council Room.
[13] Ward Committee Members Focus Group Discussion (Ward 2). Held on May 20, 2008 at Extension 7 Community Clinic. 5:30pm- 8:00pm.

experiencing the same problem. Furthermore, the councillors play major roles in recruiting their members to affiliate to their respective camps. The members also mentioned that, depending whether you are supporting your councillor, you will reap the benefits of being a good and loyal ward committee member. If for example, you do not associate yourself with the municipal politics, you will be labelled as an undercover spy".

Therefore, during the focus group discussion it was argued that this division also exists between the Ward 2 committee members. What is worse in this ward is the fact that the Speaker of the Council is the Councillor of the ward. This means that she is directly involved in the municipal political tension. The Speaker of the Council is the one who doesn't see eye to eye with the Mayor, and the one whom the members believed wants to become the next mayor. Moreover, the members mentioned that some of the committee members are not invited to any gathering of the committee by the councillor, especially those who do not belong to her camp.

The members argued that it becomes very difficult to draw a line between the ward committees' issues and what is happening in the municipality. For example, if you oppose the councillor, even in the ward committee meeting, she will automatically label you as a mayoral camp candidate. Many committee members do not challenge such ideologies, but a few members do, and as a result they become the worst enemies of the councillor. These members also argued that among them some are badly influenced by the councillor, and perceive each other as destructive in the committee. The members mentioned that the Councillor had informed others that those who do not support her are causing crisis and conflict in the committee, and that she is striving for better service delivery and development for the people[14].

A similar view was also shared by the Makana Municipal official during the interview. He argued that:

"Ward committee members are always invited to the decision-making processes. However, due to the internal politics and factionalism in the

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[14] Ward Committee Members Focus Group Discussion (Ward 2). Held on May 20, 2008 at Extension 7 Community Clinic. 5:30pm-8:00pm.

Makana Municipality, some members do not honour such gatherings, especially things which do not affect them directly. As a result those members miss out on important issues, and such behaviours have a negative impact on service delivery and governance"[15].

This statement was also confirmed by the Makana Municipality spokesperson, who said that:

"The municipality does invite everyone to the meetings. But some people don't come to such meetings if there are no issues affecting them, or issues which they think are not important. Many reasons are attached to that explanation. For example, geographic setting plays a role in that regard, that means, white and coloured communities have different expectations from those of black communities. Another factor is the lack of satisfaction by the people, which causes unrest; as a result people follow certain individuals…"[16]

The next section therefore tries to gauge the level of community participation in the Makana Municipality, using the WCMs as the agents of participation.

## 7.5. Community participation

According to Paul (1997: 4) "participation has no meaning unless the people involved have significant control over the decisions concerning the community to which they belong". This means that people have to be informed about any decisions that have been taken that might influence their lives in the community. However, this statement contradicts the views of many respondents who believed that people in the community do not have a significant role in terms of influencing the decisions taken by the council. For example, one respondent stated that:

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[15] Mr. Mthetheleli Nkohla. Makana Municipality IDP Manager. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

[16] Mr. Tandy Matebese. Makana Municipality Spokesperson. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

"Yes I am a member of the ward committee here, but that does not give me any influential power in terms of influencing the decisions of the council. In theory I suppose you know that we are supposed to be part of the decision-making processes, but in reality that is not so. In most cases things are just reported to us, we are not involved at all"[17].

In addition, another respondent also mentioned, and confirmed also during the focus group discussion that:

"We as the WCMs we are very aware of the things that are in need in our constituencies, we know what our people need. But we are not given opportunities to express our feelings freely. Every time we try to intervene, we are reminded that we do not have powers to change decisions. But I think the council should at least respect our voices because we represent the people. So, our level of participation as WCMs is very limited"[18].

Both respondents strongly outlined the challenges that are faced by people on a day-to-day basis. Even though the legislation and acts governing community participation proclaim the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, it is evident that in reality and in practice that is not happening to a great extent. In cases where the people are not involved, surely development will not be realized. Furthermore, people will be disempowered and their needs and challenges will inevitably not be realized.

During the interviews and during the focus group discussion, all WCMs were asked about the concept of community participation. All of them mentioned that community participation means mobilising the community and involving them in decision-making processes. Furthermore, most of them mentioned that ward committees (WC) are another way in which the government is aiming at enhancing community participation, by establishing these structures that relay the information from and to the council and the community. When the WCMs were asked whether in essence or in practice what they were telling the researcher does happen in reality, most of them

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[17] Mrs. J N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on April 23, 2008 at 3pm. Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) Seminar Room. Rhodes University.
[18] Mrs. N I. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 5pm. Ext 7.

said that it does not. The researcher asked them to elaborate on that. For example, one WCM argued that:

> "Community participation does not simply mean that people should participate, but it means that they must participate in an influential and effective way. This means that people must be able to influence the decisions made by the municipality, and that the municipality must listen to the people"[19].

Moreover, in one interview the WCM stated that:

> "Sometimes we are invited to the meetings for example, and we are given a platform to express the community's concerns. But for me that is not what is meant by the concept of community participation, when our participation becomes ineffective. People blame us as WCMs, and in some meetings they leave the venues because they are angry, and see no need to further attend the meetings when their needs are not addressed. For me community participation means people deciding on their own what their needs are, and what they think is a priority in their wards. We as WCMs we don't want the councillors or the council to decide on our behalf without consulting us"[20].

There were mixed feelings in this regard from the WCMs that were interviewed. Some, for example, stated that they do participate in decision-making processes, but people are not always happy. Some WCMs mentioned that the municipality does give the community a platform to participate, but due to the limited resources, there are always limits to their participation. These WCMs also mentioned that there are more twelve wards in the Makana Municipality, and surely their needs will not be addressed all at once. For example, one WCM mentioned that:

> "People are not aware that their needs will not be addressed immediately and that the municipality is faced with the challenges of all the wards, whilst each ward needs their challenges to be a priority. People must know that

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[19] Mr. M P. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 4, 2008 at 7pm. 4150 Ext 7, Joza.
[20] Mrs. N M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 13, 2008 at 2pm. 5966 Ext 7, Joza.

community participation means that people should participate in the process, but that does not guarantee that everything they say will be addressed immediately, that is a major problem we are facing as WCMs. People want to see change immediately; however, change is a very long process"[21].

This statement raises questions about the meaning of community participation that both the Handbook for Ward Committees (2005) and Ward Committee Resource Book (2005) outline. For example, the Resource Book stipulates that the purpose of all the pieces of legislation is to make sure that citizens participate fully in the decisions that affect them at all levels. Furthermore, in discussion about South African local government, the Constitution sees workable principles for participation in the call to empower citizens to fulfil their potential as partners with government (1996: 10). In the same way, the Makana Municipal official confirmed such an idea when he stated that:

"Municipalities should therefore create such partnership during the IDP process. For example, municipal IDP is sometimes reflective of the actual developmental intentions of the municipality. This clearly shows that people in democratic local government must not be treated as mere citizens, but as partners"[22].

However, the statement from the above WCM interview confirms the fact that people are not partners with the government, as most people "want to see the change", and are do not take into consideration or are not aware of what is actually happening within their municipality. In addition, the respondent also mentioned that some WCMs and some people are not aware that their needs will not be addressed immediately. This demonstrates a lack of partnership between the community and government. People are not aware of the municipal budget, and assume that the municipality can address their needs at once. This lack of partnership creates a tension and misunderstanding between the municipality and the people; as a result protests will inevitably occur. For example, most of the WCMs were not aware about the

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[21] Mr. M P. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 4, 2008 at 7pm. 4150 Ext 7, Joza.
[22] Mr. Mzolisi Pasiya. Makana Municipality PMS & TQM Manager. Interviewed on November 13, 2007 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

budget of the financial year 2007/8[23]. This showed that the budget information does not trickle down to the people, and thus the principle of partnership is lacking in such situations.

A good example of participatory budget can be found in Brazil. For example, as was discussed earlier, Porto Alegre's objective in Brazil was to democratize local democracy by disempowering traditional entrenched political elites and empowering non-elites.

According to Boaden (1982: 44) "another theme underlying democratic local government is that such government is open and accessible to the individual or group". In this view, decisions need to be reached on an open forum or platform, in which people are informed and able to approve such decisions. In local government, people participate in different forums in the decision-making processes. For example, people can attend the public hearings which are supposed to be organized by the council. People can also participate through the processes of IDP. Furthermore, through the structures such as the ward committees, people can participate in decision-making processes. However, from the observations during the ward general meeting, it became clear that in some critical issues and decisions the WCMs were not informed, for example, on the issue of the RDP housing project that was part of the agenda. The councillor announced that a tender has been given to a certain contractor for building the houses in the area. It became evident that the WCMs were not informed about this decision. People did not approve the decision because the same contractor had erected houses in another area which were of a poor quality, and WCMs themselves were furious about the decision. A WCM was asked to comment on the principle of open government:

> "In the first place, we are not told about many decisions. We have tried in many occasions asking the councillor to address us about the housing project. She did not respond to our call. Instead people were evacuated from their informal settlement (eThembeni) by the Ward Councillor.

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[23] During the focus group discussion, the issue of budget was discussed with the Ward Committee Members. However, they agreed that they were not aware of the budget. They also mentioned that even with the projects in their wards it is not known how much is budgeted.

Furthermore, the Ward Councillor also announced in one of the general meetings that the community clinic was going to be renovated and extended. We were very surprised when that was announced to the community, because we as WCMs we were not informed. Therefore, surely such governance is not open at all"[24].

In another interview, a WCM mentioned that:

"My councillor does not come to us when critical decisions have to be taken. We go to her house time to time as WCMs, but she's not available. We want to know what she is reporting to the council, because we do not have even WC meeting minutes. We feel that we do not know what is happening in the municipality. We only hear from other WCMs from other wards about critical decisions, and when we ask her, she does not give us straight forward answers"[25].

When most Ward Councillors were asked their perspective on community participation, they argued that the issue of open and accessible government is a critical and most essential aspect of democracy. In local government, for example, municipal councillors are expected to liaise with their constituencies concerning all matters of local government. They must inform the community about the municipal programmes, and be able to answer any questions or queries that the community might have in relations to municipal matters. If the councillor is not accessible, the WCM should be able to respond to such queries[26]. However, from the respondent's responses and from the observations, the opposite was noted. As a result WCMs in most cases become unable to support their councillors because they are not informed either. It is clear that what is happening according to the respondents and what the researcher observed is a lack of implementation of community participation. Such

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[24] Mr. M F. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 3, 2008 at 3pm. 9 Anglo-African Street.
[25] Mrs. J N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on April 23, 2008 at 3pm. Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) Seminar Room. Rhodes University.
[26] (1) Councillor Nomazwi Fuku. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.
    (2) Councillor Melikhaya Phongolo. Interviewed on November, 29 2007 telephonically.
    (3) Councillor Ntsikelelo Stemper. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

lack of implementation opposes the idea that since 1994, the ANC-led government in South Africa has committed itself to creating a political system which includes an institutional network fostering participatory and direct democracy (Lodge, 1999: 17).

Even though some WCMs argued that they are involved and consulted in decision-making processes, it was very interesting to see the reactions of many people in their constituencies who did not agreeing with what the WCMs together with the Ward Councillor were saying. People had a perception that WCMs were not effective and were only listening to what their councillors were saying. For example, in a general meeting attended, community members were very angry and accused the WCMs of being "puppets" and not representing them, instead they were simply manipulated by the Ward Councillors. In addition, some community members left the venue complaining that *"they were expecting the WCMs not to be the subjects of the councillors, but to fight for their rights"*. The Ward Councillors dominated the meeting, as a result many people felt left out because they were not given enough time to raise their issues. Such things clearly undermine the provision of the White Paper on Local Government, for example, which stipulates that "municipal councillors should promote and respect the involvement of citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programs".

The Makana Municipality spokesperson, however, refuted the idea that there is a lack of community participation at the Makana Municipality. He argued that:

> "Even though there is no such thing as perfect communication, but the municipality does communicate openly with the members of the community via the ward committee members. Furthermore, there is a forum which is championed by the Speaker of the Council whereby the committee members lodge complaints and issues from the community members. In addition to that, we are in the process of introducing the community development workers as a way of enhancing participatory democracy from the grass root

level. So all in all, there is a room for community participation in the Makana Municipality"[27].

The Makana Municipality IDP manager also mentioned that:

"The WCMs are always involved in decision- making processes. For example, on the initial stages of the IDP in the financial year 2007/8, all the ward committee members were invited to attend the meeting, which was a success"[28].

IDP is a planning methodology that the municipality uses to ensure that its planning and the implementation thereof is aligned with community participation (Mhotsha, 2005: 31). Therefore community participation in the context of local government is enhanced and promoted to a great extent through the IDPs. The process followed by a municipality to draft its IDP, including its consideration and adaptation of the draft plan, must include community participation, and other local authorities must be identified and consulted during the drafting phases (ibid.).

In order for any municipality to achieve its objectives, it is true that powers must be equally divided among all the people. Therefore, one of the crucial and critical ways of promoting and enhancing community participation is through decentralization. This means that the power is shifted from the centre (government) to the periphery (people). To put it in a simplistic way, power should be divided between the government and the people. The next section critically assesses the concept of decentralization in the context of local government.

## 7.6. Decentralization

Decentralization in the context of South Africa means that government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive,

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[27] Mr. Tandy Matebese. Makana Municipality Spokesperson. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

[28] Mr. Mthethelelei Nkohla. Makana Municipality IDP Manager. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

interdependent and interrelated. All spheres of government must observe and adhere to the principles in the Constitution and must conduct their activities within the parameters that the Constitution provides (Act 108 of 1996: 40-41).

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on local government which is purely an instrument of service delivery. Bennett (1990: 20) mentions that the concept of decentralization of local government is embedded in the idea that power must be decentralized, meaning that it must not be concentrated in the centre only, but on the periphery as well. This means that, according to the PR Councillor,

> "Decisions and mandates should not be taken at the centre without the involvement and the consultation of the periphery. In the context of local government, decentralization means to shift power from the municipal council, towards the community at large"[29].

This means that the municipal council must involve its people in the processes of decision-making. However, because not all people can govern simultaneously, ward committees are primarily designed to play a participatory role of relaying the complaints and the concerns of the community to the municipal council. In the same way Lodge (1999: 87) mentions that decentralization and citizen participation were key political values articulated by the various social movements which had formed the backbone of development and democracy.

The above discussion on decentralization in essence means that people in all areas of the community must enjoy their democracy by having a say in municipal matters. *"This means that the municipal council shall in all respects exchange ideas and ask for the views and the opinions of the citizens"*[30].

In situations where the municipal council, in the context of local government, concludes and makes decisions without consulting the citizens, such situations will be referred to as a centralized system. A centralized government has a danger of

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[29] PR Councillor Julia Wells. Interviewed on September 20, 2007, in her office in the History Department at Rhodes University.
[30] Councillor Rachel Madinda. The Speaker of the Council, Makana Municipality. Interviewed on December 7, 2007 telephonically.

misrepresenting the needs of the people, and might result in severe protests by the citizens. To avoid such outbreaks, it is important that people should be brought into the system of governance. To illustrate this point further, a WCM during the interview stated that:

"We do not ask for more or impossible things, this is simple. We must be involved in the process as the people who represent the community. We should not even request such privilege as it is written in most governmental legislations and acts that every one must be part of the governing system. But I must say the council does not have a confidence on ward committees. They take decisions that are crucial and critical, and matters that are of urgency. We are only informed of minor decisions as people who do not have capacity to be engaged on controversial matters. I wish just for once we can be respected as equal citizens, and be informed about decisions that are affecting out constituencies"[31].

Furthermore, when another WCM was asked to elaborate on the decision-making processes in the Makana Municipality, she said that:

"They always decide on our behalf, and we have to accept those decisions. There is no point of arguing with the municipality, because what is agreed upon is final and no one will change that even if it will not benefit the community. There have been many wrong decisions that have been taken here that have caused much unrest among the people, but who cares about the feelings of those who are poor and affected about those decisions"[32].

These findings therefore are not in line with what Lodge (1999: 88) envisaged when he said that "efficiency is defined as the maximization of social welfare. In order for social welfare to be maximized, individual preferences must be expressed accurately".

Moreover, Bennett (1990: 20) maintains that "decentralized structures may be favoured because they promote diversity in public policies. Diversity may also be

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[31] Mr. K B. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 28, 2008 at 6pm. 9 Anglo-African Street.
[32] Mrs. N I. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 5pm. Ext 7.

valued as a contributor to and promoter of innovation". In essence this idea holds the belief that in a situation where the majority rule, and where not only few people make decisions, but the collectiveness, in such situations people will be able to come up with new ideas and fresh opinions on issues that are of importance in their communities. People will be able to come up with alternatives and change those policies and decisions that are not working in favour of the citizens. Decentralization therefore helps government to come up with working and effective ideas by involving people in most decision-making processes. A diverse community will definitely need diverse ideas and inputs in order to address the issues and challenges of such community.

The Constituency Officer of the Makana Municipality shared the same sentiment when he said that:

> "A single government or a group for example will not be able to understand all the needs and problems of a diverse population. It is therefore vital in the context of local government that ordinary citizens are involved in all aspects of governance and of government. Ward committees for example are supposed to play such role of involving the community in a decentralized government"[33].

Many writers perceive decentralization as a way of promoting and fast-tracking the processes of service delivery. For example, Robinson (2007: 1) argues that decentralized service delivery is now a key determinant of the scope for less-developed countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, since many of these goals are premised on outcomes that are increasingly within the realm of responsibility of local government. This means that in order to realize these goals, there is a need to involve the broader community in decision-making processes, and to listen to the needs and the challenges of these communities. However, many WCMs that were interviewed strongly argued that the government is very centralized in the Makana Municipality, and it therefore becomes very difficult to deliver services

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[33] Mr. Rea Mthinkhulu. Makana Municipality Constituency Officer (Wards). Interviewed on October 17, 2007 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

because those who are affected do not form alliances with the municipality. For example, when one WCM was asked to comment on the notion of decentralization of powers, he argued that:

"Every one in this municipality knows who is making decisions, you can even ask the street sweepers, they will tell you that there are autocrats who dictate the decision-making processes. Big decisions are not reached collectively, for example, on the issue of the appointment of the municipal manager, not everyone was involved in the process. Even the former municipal manager, many of us did not know what happen, but we were just told that he was fired; some of us read the story from the Grocott's Mail. Our local government is absolutely closed, and few people have access to the important information, I mean even us as WCMs, we are limited when it comes to accessing information"[34].

In addition, another WCM during the interview said that:

"Makana Municipality is very centralized. Take for example the issue of housing in extensions 8 and 9. People were not consulted in many occasions, and were only told how the housings were built, and who qualified to occupy those housings. People were not involved in the process. For example, I know that many people would prefer their houses to be divided inside at least. However, for those houses, you found for example that the toilet and the kitchen were not separated. When the people tried to complain about the issue, those issues were not considered. So, all in all I believe that our system of government in the Makana Municipality is very centralized. Having said that, I haven't seen anywhere in South Africa a decentralized system of government, I mean all our local municipalities are so centralized"[35].

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[34] Mr. S M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 14, 2008 at 3pm. Makana Municipality Council Room.
[35] Mr. M F. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 3, 2008 at 3pm. 9 Anglo-Africa Street.

Such findings clearly oppose what is generally believed to be taking place at the local government level. Robinson (2007: 1) for example, says that most efforts to promote democratic decentralization are premised on the assumption that local governments will be more responsive to the needs of the citizens and take their preferences into account in determining the type of services to be provided, the level of resources required, and the optimal means of ensuring effective delivery. Decentralization therefore promotes some of the principles of democracy, which are participation and accountability. *"The level of community participation in a decentralized local government is maximized, and the government becomes accountable to the citizens through this process"*[36]. However, the findings suggest that there is a lack of decentralization in the Makana Municipality. For example, even if people are not happy with what they are receiving from their government, they must accept it as a final offer, or else they will lose out. In essence this means that few people are taking decisions on behalf of the larger community.

Such a system of centralized government was strongly affirmed during the focus group discussion. For example, it was argued that in most cases the municipality does not follow the proper procedures and guidelines when implementing the policies. For instance, on the tarred road project which was aimed at creating jobs for the Ward 2 residents, it ended up being a city project, where everyone benefits irrespective of their geographical area. Furthermore, it was also found out that the Mayor had appointed the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) who was responsible for overseeing the tarred road project. The members strongly argued that procedurally the mayor has no power or authority to appoint the CLO, but the WCMs together with the community members must decide who should be the best CLO for the project. However, when they confronted the councillor in that regard, she told them that the Mayor had appointed the CLO, and that she couldn't veto the decision and the CLO was already in place performing the duties.

To realize the aims and objectives of democracy, decentralization, one cannot achieve this in isolation. For example, in the context of local government one can decentralize

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[36] Mr. Mzolisi Pasiya. Makana Municipality PMS & TQM Manager. Interviewed on November 13, 2007 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

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the power, but that does not guarantee democracy or development. For example, a Ward Councillor concurred with this statement, and argued that:

> There is therefore a need to monitor the process of community participation, and one major way of doing that is making sure that those who participate receive proper training and capacity-building programmes to achieve such goals. Ward Committees are the vehicle of service delivery and development in local government. The training and capacity building programmes of the ward committees should address the issues of IDP, Budget and the Performance Management System"[37].

Ward Committee members therefore need proper training in order to understand these issues. Without an understanding of these issues, it is difficult for the ward committee members to achieve the objectives of participatory democracy and service delivery. Therefore, WCMs will be assessed in the next sections as to whether they are capacitated enough for their roles.

## 7.7. Training and capacity-building for Ward Committees

One of the functions of the Ward Committees, according to the Resource Book (2005: 36), is to function as the structures that are aimed at relaying complaints and grievances from the community to the council via the Ward Councillors. This means that this process requires a "skilful" and well-trained person, a person who will be able to understand the needs of the community, to interpret and contextualise these, and to distinguish realistic from unrealistic complaints. Many wards in the Makana Municipality are very large, and in most cases cover different constituencies. It is inevitable that people from these different constituencies will have different expectations and needs. It is therefore up to the WCMs to prioritise these needs. For example, Ward 4 includes a rural area as well as many urban areas, and therefore one might expect different expectations from these different areas. People from this ward

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[37] (1) Councillor Zonwabele Mantla. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

surely will bring forth different and diverse challenges to the ward committees for attention.

However, in the Makana Municipality, many Ward Councillors argued that the ward committees do not receive adequate budgets from the council[38]. Therefore, they will need to prioritize, and address those needs that are pressing and need immediate attention (almost all the WCMs interviewed shared the same sentiment in this regard). This process surely needs very critical thinking and a lot of compromise. From the observations during the visit to the ward committee meetings, it was observed that many WCMs lacked training and 'proper capacity', excluding the Ward Councillors, of course, who are well educated in most cases. For example, in one meeting, the Ward Councillor asked the WCMs, why the community was not attending the public hearings, and what should be done. One of the skills that WCMs need to acquire, according to the Resource Book on ward committees is strategic skills and negotiation skills (2005: 68). However, many WCMs were unable to identify the causes of poor attendance by the community at those public hearings, and were also unable to come up with any alternatives. They were mainly listening to the councillor, who did most of the talking. Such findings reflected a lack of training and capacity from the WCMs. During the interview, a WCM was asked her view on the issue of training and capacity-building programme. She argued that:

> "Ward Committee Members must receive a proper training, because we are the voice of the community. For example, many people in this ward do not understand how the municipal budget works. Therefore, we must translate and interpret these things to the community member"[39].

When another WCM was asked a similar question, about how they had tried to convince the community in this regard, it was found that the WCMs lacked some strategic skills. For example, she mentioned that there is nothing they could do if the municipality cannot respond to their needs. However, the researcher repeatedly asked the same question. Unfortunately, there was no demonstration of strategic skills, as the WCM failed to address the question adequately, but only said that:

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[38] Councillors: Mantla, Nase, Stemper, Fuku.
[39] Mrs. N M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 13, 2008 at 2pm. 5966 Ext 7, Joza.

"If people want service delivery overnight, then unfortunately there is nothing we can do as WCMs. People in this ward do not want to listen to us"[40].

This was an illustration of the lack of communication skills, as the WC failed to communicate well with their community. That was a very critical problem, which did not only affect that ward, but was a national problem. The issue needed to be addressed in a crucial and critical way, so that the community knows that the issue for example is beyond the capacity of the WC.

Another example of lack of training was observed during a WC meeting. For example, the Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 14) outlines that "you will learn about the legislation relevant to ward committees. If you don't know this legislation, you may very well end up doing things that are not legal". It is also mentioned that each WCM shall acquaintance themselves with such provisions. However, one of the WCM in a meeting insisted that his membership must be retained, after a group of community members voted him out of the WC.

After the meeting, the researcher asked the member to clarify the matter. This WCM was very angry that this group of people undermined him, and that they had some "personal issues against him, and that has nothing to do with his duties as WCM". He assured the Ward Councillor that he would not lose his membership, even if this group of people persists. However, the Resource Book (2005: 64) chapter on Termination of membership and filling of vacancies states that "A complication may arise where the representative is from an interest group and that interest group cannot, without consultation, withdraw the elected person from the committee", the councillor in this regard can use his discretion. However, in this situation the group did consult with the WCMs as a whole and the Ward Councillor, and stipulated that they had no confidence on their member, and needed to replace him. This member only argued that his term in office was not over, and that he could not be removed from office. His argument was mainly based on the term, neglecting other clauses which deal with the

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[40] Mrs. N Q. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 6:30pm. 4316 Ext 7, Joza.

termination of membership for example. The findings therefore suggested that the WCM was not aware of this clause in the Resource Book. The Resource Book is a document which is aimed at providing critical guidance on how to establish ward committees and, specifically how to make them functional. One would therefore expect all WCMs to be acquainted with such legislation.

Another interesting observation in this regard was that the Ward Councillor did not mention the clause to the members. Firstly, it might happen that the councillor himself was not aware of the clause, or secondly, that he did not "take issues seriously". For example, that was a very critical issue which needed to be addressed adequately. From the meeting, and from the subsequent interview with the member, it was clear that the group did not want the member to continue representing them in the WC. One would expect such an issue to be tabled and critically discussed. However, it ended up being a joke.

The question of training and capacity building programme goes beyond just simply providing training to the WCMs. For example, there should be a follow up strategic planning to make sure that all the members are acquainted with the training that they have received (Resource Book). Another observation in this regard was whether WCMs have the skills or capacity needed to be effective. For example, a WCM who was in her early 50s was interviewed. This member mentioned that of course they were given training, in the form of a workshop, on issues relating to ward committees, such as their duties and roles. However, she mentioned that most issues were read out loud to them, which they did not really understand. She argued that their councillor together with a "government appointed service provider" only gave them a pile of books, which they did not understand. She said that she thought that their training session was overdue; hence the councillors overloaded them with information. Training that was supposed to take place over a week, only took one day. One might say, therefore, that the training was not effective as it did not achieve its goal of empowering the WCMs[41].

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[41] Mrs. N I. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 5pm. Ext 7.

During the interview, it was also observed that this WCM was not fluent in reading and writing English. This confirmed the fact that she relied on the workshop in order to understand completely her roles as she could not read the manuals on her own. The fact that she failed to grasp everything which was discussed during the workshop meant that she was an ineffective member, because she did not fully understand what was expected of her, and what her role exactly entailed. These findings also proved in this regard the problem of practicality. For example, trainers assumed that by telling WCMs how to go about doing things, the WCMs would automatically implement the trainings and skills accordingly, failing to understand and take into consideration the practical exercise, especially for elderly people. Capacity-building is a learning process which often takes some time to achieve familiarity with the logistics and dynamics involved.

In addition to that, both the Handbook and the Resource Book for the Ward Committees are pieces of legislation which require a minimum of proficiency in English to be understood. These books contain information which is technically advanced, and need critical reading. If therefore WCMs do not have adequate capacity in order to understand the legislation, one would expect thorough and comprehensive training and workshops for the members. This will enhance the understanding of the members about what is contained and entailed by the legislation. However, the opposite is happening, whereby most members felt that they never received adequate information or training, but the training was haphazardly organised, which ended up being ineffective and never achieving the primary goal. These findings refute what is contained in the Resource Book, which states that "the legislation for local government obliges municipalities to provide a thorough support to the ward committees and to build their capacity". Furthermore, the findings also confirmed that most Ward Councillors did not care much about capacitating their WCMs.

WCMs are community members who should work hand in hand with the Ward Councillors in order to speed up the service delivery processes, by bringing government closer to the people. Therefore, in situations where you find that Ward Councillors do not make an effort to make sure that their WCMs receive appropriate training and capacity-building programmes, one might have a feeling that either the Ward Councillors are not enthusiastic about development or they do not have the

expertise to speed up the process, while others might suspect that they (Ward Councillors) do not take their WCMs seriously.

Moreover, even in situations where some WCMs did get "decent" training, they felt that the workshops and training did not cover the most crucial and urgent skills that are needed for day-to-day experiences. For example, it is stipulated in the Resource Book that the National Ward Committee Guidelines identify conflict management and negotiation skills as a capacity-building and training need. A WCM during an interview also shared a similar sentiment that the training that was given to them was not practical to deal with day-to-day situations. For example, he said that some people come to his house every time they have problems and that some of these problems are very emotional, and need someone who has been trained to deal with such problems. For instance, he told the interviewer that:

> "Because I am a WCM people expect me to be able to deal with their problems. I think of course I must be able to bring harmony in my ward and act as a mediator. But I cannot remember a proper training offered that equip us as WCMs to deal with such issues when they occur"[42].

It became clear from the interviews that the WCMs were not happy about the training that they had received. During the focus group discussion, it was highlighted and restated that there was a single training course which had been offered in the previous year (i.e. 2007). The training was in a form of a workshop, and some issues were raised during this workshop. For example, the ward committee members argued that the focus of the workshop was on different skills such as communication skills and personal skills. The roles and duties of the ward committee members were also outlined during the workshop. However, the members felt strongly that there was a lack of follow-up on this workshop, and they believed that the workshop was not properly organized. For example, the duration of the workshop was not adequate, and many essential and crucial issues were simply browsed through without getting into details. For instance, one WCM mentioned that they were not fully told about their roles as ward committee members, and the roles of the councillors. They said that

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[42] Mr. M K. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 10, 2008 at 2pm. 4393 Ext 7, Joza.

they were simply given handouts to read on their own without proper guidance on how to go about reading and making sense of those handouts. As a result, they argued that in most situations, their roles as ward committee members overlap with those of the Ward Councillor, and they are unable to draw a distinction between these duties.

During the conducting of the interviews and participation in the WC meetings, the question of training and capacity building programmes arose. Most WCMs seemed not to be entirely enthusiastic about what they were doing. Many possibilities could have been associated with such an attitude, and the researcher needed answers to better understand the problem. As a result, many WCMs mentioned during the interviews that they were not getting paid. The issue of remuneration and its effects and impact on WCMs was therefore interrogated. For example, the researcher observed during the meetings that democracy and community participation have to live up to all expectations through the availability of resources. Resource allocation is an attempt to strengthen local democratic governance through community participation. Remuneration is another form of resource that this study seeks to explore in the context of community participation. Therefore, the study aims at assessing statements such as that by Bonginkosi Masiwa[43] that "ward committees cannot be expected to carry out their functions with no resources". The next section tries to investigate the impact or effect that the remuneration has on the process of community participation.

## 7.8. Remuneration

The Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 9) states that "there is no payment for services rendered by the WCMs, but reasonable costs incurred e.g. transport and catering should be reimbursed". In addition, all the Ward Councillors agreed that Section 77 of the Municipal Structures Act prohibits WCMs from getting paid[44]. When the WCMs were asked whether they thought they should be remunerated for their services, their responses were diverse. This means that some members were not concerned about the remuneration, whereas some felt that there should be incentives.

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[43] Bonginkosi Masiwa is a Senior Researcher at Afesis-Corplan, East London. South Africa. The article is published in the local Government Transformer. Vol. 13. No.3. June/July 2007.
[44] Councillors: Mantla, Nase, Spemper, Fuku, Pongolo, Ntshiba, Madinda and the PR Councillor Wells.

Different explanations were given in this regard. For example some of those who felt that they should get stipends argued that they were doing most of the work, while the Ward Councillors "spend most of their times in their permanent jobs somewhere or in most cases in the City Hall". These WCMs felt that they sacrificed their homes and attended "endless meetings which sometimes end around 11 in the evening". They said that they had families and children to look after, and if they sacrificed that much, surely "they must get something as a reward".

Furthermore, those who said "no" strongly believed that "development is not about you getting something, but you getting something for your community". Another member said that "we believe that our government is lacking sufficient fund, hence I decided to volunteer to take part in my community". However, during the interviews, the same people contradicted themselves, although unconsciously. For example, when the researcher asked one member about a particular decision which was taken at the City Hall during the public hearing that the researcher attended, this member responded by saying:

> "Oh! I recall the meeting but unfortunately I couldn't make it because I didn't have money. You must remember that we do not get any money from the municipality"[45].

Another member, during our interview, claimed in a joking manner that:

> "Yes of course I would love to get something from the Municipality. You know that it is very difficult to carry out your duty if you do not get anything in return. But money does not stop me from performing well in my ward. But yes, I do need money"[46].

The same WCM further argued that some members were "dropping out and resign along the way without valid reasons". These findings suggested that people were not motivated and it was easy for them to just leave the ward committees because they were not gaining anything from these "useless structures that are wasting our valuable

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[45] Mr. P P. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 4, 2008 at 7pm. 4150 Ext 7, Joza.
[46] Mr. A N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 6, 2008 at 3pm. Duna Library, Joza.

times". This is one of the challenges that is facing many wards, according to a Ward Councillor, where members of WCs *"simply disappear and decide not to continue with their duties"*[47]. She confessed that one reason can be linked to the lack of remuneration, but there are of course other factors. This means that there is a lack of sustainability when it comes to the WCMs due to the fact that they are not motivated to carry out their duties and functions effectively and whole-heartedly.

Some members tended not to mind remuneration, but the fact that they were not getting anything had an impact in terms of their effectiveness and performance. Some of them suppressed the fact that they do not have money, but that frustration manifested itself in different ways. From the observations during both the interviews and WC meetings, it was noticed that there was a lack of enthusiasm and dedication by the WCMs. For example, when the researcher went to a WC meeting which was scheduled for the day, to his surprise there was not even a single member who had honoured the meeting. When the councillor was asked to explain why, she mentioned that WCMs were not paid, and when the weather is "inclement", they as Ward Councillors do not expect the members to attend the meetings[48].

## 7.9. Lack of motivation

A lack of motivation was experienced when the WCMs failed to attend a "crucial" meeting. The meeting was organized and chaired by the PR Councillor Julia Wells, who stated that invitations were distributed to all the ward committees. The meeting was held on November 8, 2007 at the City Hall, and the following issues were part of the agenda: (A) Draft Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy for MM; (B) Draft Rates Policy for MM; (C) Draft Assistance to the Poor/Indigent Policy for MM.

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[47] Councillor Nomazwi Fuku. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

[48] A meeting was scheduled for ward 8 by the Ward Councillor Fuku. However, the meeting did not take place. The researcher was invited by the Ward Councillor to observe during the course of the meeting.

However, during the focus group discussion, when the members were asked why they had missed such a "crucial" meeting, they said that such policies were not initiated with the community members, and therefore, their presence at the meeting was not essential, as they were not involved on the initial stages.

Because WCMs in most cases, from the interviews and observations, are not influential in decision-making processes and because they do not get paid, they tend to lose motivation and dedication in carrying out their duties. They know that if they participate indirectly in decision-making processes, their voices will not be heard, and they will not be able to relay the needs and the challenges of the community to their local government. They end up feeling powerless and failing to "help out their communities"[49]. As a result this becomes the major obstacle toward realisation of development and service delivery. WCMs are aimed, for example, to fast-track the processes of development and service delivery. When the WCMs become less motivated and less dedicated, it is therefore inevitable that the processes of development and service delivery will be highly affected, due to the fact that the grass root level suggestions and recommendations will not be adequately addressed and critically taken into consideration[50].

Furthermore, WCMs are also expected to report back to their communities on any decisions taken by the council. If these people are not part of the decision-making processes, they will not be able to report back to the community, thus they tend to feel unsafe or unwilling to report those decisions and mandates to the people. They lack motivation and drive to convince the communities about these mandates. In most cases they do not want to report because they too did not agree with the council, or were not respected or given enough time to think about the issues.

In one general meeting, the angry residents shouted at the committee members who were sitting in front that "they were like the councillors as well, and they should be removed from their positions". These committee members felt humiliated and insulted, and felt a need to protect themselves by proclaiming that councillors must

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[49] Ward Committee Members Focus Group Discussion (Ward 2). Held on May 20, 2008 at Extension 7 Community Clinic. 5:30pm- 8:00pm.

[50] Ibid.

respond to these grievances. Instead of them supporting the decisions that were taken by the council, they only supported the community members who were not happy at all.

It was also found that even some Ward Councillors themselves were not honouring other WC meetings. However, for them there were reasons other than remuneration, because they get monthly salaries. Below are the views and the highlights of the WCMs about this issue.

## 7.10. Lack of attendance at ward committee meetings by the Ward Councillor

According to the Handbook for Ward Committees, under the heading "understand the role of Ward Councillor", it is stated that the Ward Councillor is the chairperson of the ward committee, and is responsible for calling WC meetings. Furthermore, Ward Councillors are responsible for ensuring that schedules for meetings are prepared (2005: 7). This means that Ward Councillors should be fully involved in the processes of preparing and organising the ward committee meetings. However, during the interviews with some of the WCMs, it was mentioned that some Ward Councillors are not available for meetings, and as a result ward committee members organise the meetings on their own, and the councillors do not honour these meetings. For example, a WCM stated that *"my Ward Councillor did not attend the last two meetings we had, she did not communicate why. However, that did not stop us in organising the meetings"*[51]. Another WCM argued that *"Our councillor only attends the meetings when she thinks that there are urgent issues to be discussed, otherwise, she never calls the meetings"*[52]. When the WCMs were asked whether they have informed the speaker or the council about this issue, many stated that these issues are not considered, because these Ward Councillors "belong to the African National Congress", which is the dominant party.

However, most Ward Councillors refuted these statements and argued that they always respect the ward committee meetings. But, since they are very busy people,

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[51] Mrs. J N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on April 23, 2008 at 3pm. Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) Seminar Room. Rhodes University.
[52] Mr. M F. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 3, 2008 at 3pm. 9 Anglo-African Street.

they acknowledged that they sometimes miss some other meetings. They also mentioned that in the ANC there are governing policies and laws, and anyone who deviates against the party's policies is dealt with accordingly. In addition, the Ward Councillors argued that the ANC does not discriminate but treats all members equally. Therefore, if a member needs to be punished, the party will do that impartially[53].

Many political writers, such as Cross and Mallen, refer to such a political system as "party politics" (1998: 97). Such a system surely does not form part of participatory democracy, and does not create a platform for opposition and alternatives[54]. In a democracy, there are underlying values that are essential, for example, the concepts of accountability, transparency and inclusion. Furthermore, these values also provide a healthy environment for a better participation. The following section contextualises these in the context of local government

## 7. 11. Accountability

Przeworski (1999: 131-133) argues that the principle of accountability in the municipality is at the forefront of the most governmental documents. Accountability at local government level aims at providing open and good governance to the citizens, eliminating a closed and bureaucratic government. This means that in a democracy the principle of accountability is one of the most important and crucial. For example, the government is expected to be accountable to its citizens both in decision-making and in policy formation and implementation. In return the community has to respond to these formations and decisions by playing an influential role. Furthermore, the government has to involve the community in implementation of the IDP, for example, in the case of the local government. If this principle or element is missing, one can argue that such a situation is undemocratic, and there is a lack of accountability[55].

During the interviews, when the WCMs were asked to comment on the notion of accountability, most of them mentioned that the principle of accountability is

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[53] Councillors: Mantla, Nase, Spemper, Fuku.

[54] PR Councillor Julia Wells. Interviewed on September 20, 2007, in her Office in the History Department at Rhodes University.

[55] (1) Councillor Nomazwi Fuku. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

   (2) Councillor Melikhaya Phongolo. Interviewed on November 19, 2007 telephonically.

implemented by their councillors. When they were asked to give examples of such accountability, most of them said that the councillors do take the complaints and recommendations to the council. When the interviewer asked how they get feedback from the councillor, one committee member said that:

"My councillor takes her time to respond to the communities needs, and sometimes she would leave things unattended, and never gets back to us"[56].

Another WCM said that:

"We just talk and talk during the WC meetings and forward all our resolutions to the council via the councillor, however, what we get from the councillor is not satisfactory in most cases, and when we want clarities and explanations, she always tells us that the council is busy and cannot only listen to our complaints in isolation, and that she cannot always ask the same question over and over, and that we must wait for the next meeting"[57].

From both these interviews the researcher asked the WCMs the basic definition of the concept 'accountability", and what they think accountability means. It was discovered that they misunderstood the meaning of accountability. From the interviews and observations, the researcher realised that for the WCMs accountability meant telling the councillor what the challenges are, without understanding the process itself. For example, in some cases the Ward Councillor does not give the WCMs full feedback, and some times the WCMs never get satisfactory feedback from the councillors, and when they ask for more clarity, the councillor fails to give them clear answers.

During the focus group discussion, all the members mentioned that their councillor is not accountable; as a result there is a lack of service delivery in their ward. For example, they mentioned that the last meeting that the councillor organized was in February 2008. Up until the time of the focus group discussion, which was in May 2008, there had not been any ward committee meeting. They argued that the

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[56] Mrs. N I. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 5pm. Ext 7, Joza.
[57] Mrs. J N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on April 23, 2008 at 3pm. ISER Seminar Room. Rhodes University.

Councillor's focus was not on service delivery, but on the political tension that exists in the Makana Municipality. For example, there are political tensions and divisions on the appointment of the new municipal manager, and the members argued that their councillor, who happens to be the Speaker of the Council, is also involved in those political instabilities. As a result, she does not care any more about the ward issues and development, and only focuses on what is going on in the municipality.

In response to the above findings, most Ward Councillors said that they are accountable to their committee members. However, they also argued that they are aware that there are those members who are not happy about other issues. Furthermore, they also said that they do not take decisions as Ward Councillors, but the council is responsible for such roles. All in all they do account to their committee members, whether the decision is accepted or not by the committee members. The Makana Municipality spokesperson also concurred with this statement when he said that:

> "The municipality as I have outlined above does account to the community members via the ward committees, who are led by the Ward Councillors. Such process surely is a fundamental way of accountability"[58].

## 7.12. Transparency

Solomon and Liebenberg (2000: 188) argue that democracy and principles of governance require sensitivity to issues of accountability, transparency and civil responsiveness in public decision-making. Governance also describes the relationship between people. During the interviews with both Ward Councillors and WCMs, it was found out that most Ward Councillors did not object being recorded, while most WCMs did not want to be recorded. The researcher mentioned clearly from the

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[58] Mr. Tandy Matebese. Makana Municipality SpokesPerson. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

beginning during the interviews that the confidentiality and anonymity of WCMs would be protected.

However, most of the WCMs were not comfortable to be tape-recorded. The researcher tried to explore this issue further by asking questions, but all the WCMs did not give satisfactory reasons. From the observations during the interviews, participant observations and meeting attendance, the researcher noticed factors that might contribute towards this reluctance by most WCMs. For example, loyalty was one of the possibilities which was observed on different occasions.

## 7.13. Loyalty

Political loyalty can be twofold: it can be voluntary or coerced. One can be loyal towards something that he/she feels that it is worth their loyalty, for example, a loyalty can be voluntary. On the other hand, coerced or forced loyalty is when one uses his powers or authority to enforce loyalty against others. Those who are powerless find it difficult to resist the powers or authority, as they might be dependent on the powerful actor for their survival.

From the observations during the meetings and during the interviews, the researcher noticed that many WCMs were coerced to be loyal to their Ward Councillors. This was done in a subtle way by the Ward Councillors themselves. For example, when one WCM was asked for an interview, he said *"I must first consult with my councillor whether to take part in the interview or not"*[59]. The researcher however, mentioned to the member that a confirmation letter from the speaker of the council has been granted that gave the researcher a go-ahead in term of the research. Another WCM insisted that the researcher give him some time to consult with his councillor because, he argued, *"You know man; you don't know these people ... come back later"*[60]. It was observed that although this WCM wanted to say something, he was subject to the consent of the councillor.

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[59] Mrs. F H. Ward Committee Member, Interviewed on December 7, 2007 telephonically.
[60] Mr. M P. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 4, 2008 at 7pm. 4150 Ext 7,    Joza.

The researcher believed that WCMs have discretion to discuss issues with other people, and to inform the community about progress and challenges that are facing their wards. In addition, one member was asked to comment during the research interview, and she said that *"I almost lost my membership last year when a Rhodes student interviewed me on service delivery. I told him everything, and the councillor was very upset that I sold him out"*[61]. These findings therefore confirmed that most WCMs were not free enough to have a say on many issues without first consulting their Ward Councillors, and that they must say what the Ward Councillor feels is appropriate and relevant, but they cannot freely express their own feelings and opinions.

## 7.14. Inclusion

WCMs are supposed to work hand in hand with their Ward Councillors, and the decisions taken during the ward committee meetings must be reached collectively, without the Ward Councillors undermining the WCMs. However, during the meeting that the researcher attended, it was observed that some of the WCMs were greatly marginalised and excluded from the process. For example, these WCMs were mainly old and uneducated people, while the Ward Councillor was highly educated. Even though the meeting was in Xhosa, the process and the terminology that was used during the course of the meeting was too advanced, as a result many members were unable to participate during the process. As the researcher was sitting in the meeting he observed that many decisions were taken without collective participation. The Ward Councillor would ask, for example, "any other inputs?", and if there were none, he would continue to the next point. These WCMs were marginalised and excluded from the decision-making processes, as the councillor did most of the talking and took decisions alone. This showed how these WCMs were too submissive towards their councillor and did not ask questions. For example, one of the things which were discussed during the meeting was the introduction of "liquor bill that was still in the pipeline".

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[61] Anonymous, Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on December 10, 2007. (Public Library; Grahamstown).

The Ward Councillor enforced his ideas about the bill, and how the bill would "reduce the consumption of alcohol and how it will reduce the crime rate in the ward". The WCMs were literally listening to the report by the Ward Councillor, and literally agreed on what has been discussed in the council, of which the Ward Councillor was part. The Ward Councillor constitutionally is supposed to relay the messages from the council, and let the WCMs discuss the issues and listen to the views and opinions of his committee without influencing them. In such situations one might begin to question even the role of the WCMs if they do not have any influence on the decisions of the council. One of the key functions of the WC, for example, as stipulated in the Handbook for Ward Committees is to "have a say in decisions, planning and projects that the council or municipality undertakes which have an impact on the ward". If such a role is not carried out effectively, one can argue that WCMs do not fulfil their primary roles.

## 7.15. Conclusion

The subversion of democracy is observed in this chapter. This is a process which undermines the capacity and intellectual capacity of the WCMs. The findings also show that Ward Councillors even though they gave the WCMs chances to express their opinions and views on certain issues, ultimately the Ward Councillors made most of the decisions. On one occasion, the council decided against the will of the WCMs that the tourism should be the priority instead of the bucket eradication and tarred roads projects.

Another observation was that WCMs are not consciously aware that they are being oppressed or undermined. Here oppression is very subtle, so that it becomes difficult for less capacitated people, such as most WCMs, to notice. This study also reveals that most Ward Councillors used their educational skills to oppress and undermine the WCMs.

One might argue that this is a form of apartheid which is indirect and implicit. For example, most black people were deprived of opportunities for better and good education during the apartheid regime, and most white people were privileged to acquire advanced education. In return, most black people were oppressed by white

people who had better education. However, the findings revealed that in the post apartheid era, black leaders are oppressing other black people. This situation clearly defeats the ideas of some of the South African freedom fighters such as Steve Biko, who argued that "We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulu, Xhosa, Venda or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group. We must cling to each other with a tenacity that will shock the perpetrators of evil" (1979: 97).

This statement therefore leads us to our next process of democracy, which for the purposes of this study is referred to as a democracy of impotence.

### 7.15.1. Democracy of impotence

Democracy of impotence simply means a democracy that is ineffective, a democracy that does not result in any changes or betterment. Most WCMs mentioned that they do not feel like part of the decision-making process. Everything they recommend to the council does not succeed, instead their ideas are ignored. Thus the study argues that most WCMs enjoy what can be termed as "impotent democracy".

WCMs enjoy democracy in the sense that their membership is constitutionally determined, and that they have a constitutional right to question the decisions taken by the council. They also enjoy democracy in the sense that they are informed of plans and programmes implemented by the council, and that they must report these initiatives to their respective constituencies. However, their democracy does not guarantee them any effectiveness or efficiency, and they are only to a very small extent, if at all, able to influence the decisions taken by the council.

This is almost the same as when the white governments remained unmoved, and the rights of Africans became less instead of becoming greater. In the words of Chief Albert Luthuli, who became President of the ANC in 1952:

> "Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation? The past thirty years have seen the

greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all" (Mandela, N. 1990).

### 7.15.2. Disillusionment with democracy

Participants during the focus group discussion, that is, young and old people, knew the principles of democracy, and how things should be done in a democratic country. However, they all shared the same sentiment that in practice there is a lack of implementation of those principles of democracy as discussed in this chapter. It became clear that people are losing faith in the current government. When the government of national unity came into power in 1994, people expected a better life for all. It also emerged that when democracy was presented, it was portrayed as a positive thing, but today it has become a bad thing.

### 7.15.3. Moral deception of democracy

People felt betrayed and deceived by the government. It was argued that councillors and the municipal council were expected to address the needs of the people; instead they addressed personal interests at the expense of the collective goals. As a result, people lost trust in and loyalty towards their leaders, and so they decided to take responsibilities. It became clear that community members realized that their salvation is within themselves. However, such people said that they lacked the capacity and the necessary tools to carry out such responsibilities, so they often fail. In such situations, frustration and devastation lead to fights and unrest among the people of the community.

### 7.15.4. Anatomy of oppression

Oppression leads to disempowering, less active and deprive people access to information and resources. Ward councillors suppress the committee members. They block the ward committee members' access to information, and make them less active in decision-making processes.

To achieve such oppression, and to sustain it, the Ward Councillors utilize certain tools, such as power and authority. Ward councillors used these tools to oppress the people and manipulate the WCMs, and adopted an attitude that through power and authority, they should not be challenged. Unfortunately, as mentioned many times, most WCMs are old and illiterate people. WCMs were unable to challenge such bad governance and abuse of power and authority.

## 7.15.5. Parasitical relationship

As a result of "dictatorship" by most Ward Councillors, as WCMs argued, committee members become totally dependent on the Ward Councillors. Ward councillors also use their authority and powers to gain WCMs' trust and loyalty. This study refers to such a relationship as parasitical. This parasitical relationship was also observed when it was argued that some WCMs are loyal to their Ward Councillors because they are gaining rewards and benefits. According to the findings, those WCMs who were not loyal to their Ward Councillors were not informed about ward committee meetings, therefore some WCMs seemed to submit to this parasitical relationship by pledging their loyalty to the Ward Councillors.

## 7.15.6. Disempowerment

This parasitical relationship, and denying the WCMs opportunities to participate in the processes of governance, surely undermines the capacity and the ability of the WCMs. WCMs end up perceiving their duties as valueless, and to a great extent also perceive themselves as worthless. Democracy is a system which ideally promotes a self value and self-determination. WCMs realised that they are not empowered; they lose faith in the process, and simply disrespect the process by compromising the power of the people vested in them. Instead WCMs simply watch the municipal council taking decisions on their behalf.

# CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

## 8.1. Introduction

The popular discourse in the context of contemporary South African local government is the notion of participatory democracy, which this study sought to investigate. In this regard, the ward committee system was investigated as an interface between the government and the people, as a vehicle for enhancing participatory democracy. The concept of participatory democracy in the context of South Africa was introduced after 1994 when the government of national unity came into power. As a result of this transformation, the Constitution Act of 1983 was repealed. The new constitution recognized the values and importance of local government as a sphere of government, a government that is closer to the people. The Constitution also outlined the functions, roles and establishment of the municipalities. Among these roles are to involve citizens in decision-making bodies, and to promote active community participation. This is stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Constitution Act of 1996.

A participatory democratic process in the local government sphere consists of different structures. Firstly, the Council is the official structure, and is a decision-making body which has powers and authority to determine local government issues, such as the budget, IDP etc. Secondly, there are Ward Councillors, who chair the ward committee meetings. Ward councillors represent the ward committees in the Council, and must account to their respective committee members. Then there are ward committee members, who are democratically elected by the community members to represent them via the Ward Councillors in the council. The ward committees are advisory structures which lack decision-making powers and authority, and can only recommend to the Council. Lastly, there are community members, who are supposed to be the "customers" of the local municipality. One of the main ways in which community members can participate in decision-making processes is through the ward committee system.

However, during the interviews, participatory observation and focus group discussions, it became apparent that there was a lack of participatory democracy in the Makana Municipality. The Ward Councillors, municipal officials and ward committee

members seemed to like the idea of ward committees, but ward committee members argued it is what happened to the idea in practice that is the problem.

The objectives of this study were to investigate the nature of the ward committee system in the Makana Municipality, and to evaluate the ways in which the system enhances participatory democracy, and whether it functions as a tool for fast-tracking service delivery. Having outlined the theoretical and legal frameworks that govern the functioning of the ward committees, the actual performance and the practicality of the ward committees was juxtaposed to such frameworks. However, from the themes as discussed in the data analysis chapter the opposite was found that the ward committee system does not promote participatory democracy or service delivery.

Crucial tools which are required to realise such objectives are lacking. In order to deliver services one needs the capacity and resources to implement such a mandate. To promote participatory democracy, one also needs to have an open and transparent system of governance. This means that the citizens must be able to influence the decisions which are taken on their behalf. Both ward committee members and young people interviewed argued that there is a lack of community participation in their ward. People are not involved in critical and essential decision-making bodies; instead the council is autocratic and centralized. In addition, ward committee members strongly argued that the council is violating their legal rights by not providing them with proper training and capacity-building programmes. This clearly undermines an essential principle stipulated in the Resource Book (2005: 69), that "ward committees supported by the municipality are expected to annually assess their capacity-building and training needs and to develop programmes for each member of the committee with an appropriate budget".

The findings of this study expose the issues surrounding the municipal council, ward committee members and the community members, and these issues are discussed in the next section.

## 8.2. Municipal council

The current system raises the question of whether it is democratic, considering the election process of the Ward Councillors. Community members and ward committee members do not appoint their Ward Councillors, but Ward Councillors are imposed on the people. Whether community members and ward committee members agree or disagree, they are expected to respect the Ward Councillors and work in harmony with them. The study concludes that such electoral system is undemocratic. Each ward does not elect its Ward Councillor based on considerations such as whether the nominee knows the ward, whether she/he resides in the area etc. Under the current electoral system, the Council allocates the wards based on the number of nominees available, and nominees' political affiliations. It was also found that Ward Councillors do not relate to the needs of the ward, and they are not aware of the people's needs. This system therefore does not create a harmonious and healthy relationship between the Ward Councillors, ward committee members and community members. Mhotsha (2005: 19) concludes that it becomes clear that the notion of democracy is not implemented, whereby citizens elect their leaders based on their political will as active citizens.

## 8.2.1. Selection of Ward Councillors

The system of appointing the Ward Councillors is as a result problematic. It is apparent that the Council does not consider whether the appointed councillors are suitable for the job or not. In most cases, Ward Councillors are people with full-time jobs who struggle to balance the two responsibilities. Candidates were simply elected by virtue of their political affiliation. Subsequently, it was found that there were a number of ineffective councillors who neither attended nor organised committee meetings due to their unavailability. This has created a breakdown between ward committee members and their Ward Councillors, and as a result service delivery is affected. Even the few Ward Councillors who do not have full-time jobs, do not carry out their duties effectively, but spend much time at the City Hall "doing nothing" as it was mentioned during the interviews.

**8.2.2. Selection of ward committee members**

According to the Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 7) "among the duties of the municipal council and Ward Councillors is to convene the constituency meeting to elect active and dynamic ward committee members". However, it was found that candidates who have been nominated to the ward committee system are not assessed as to whether they are suitable for the position. The selection process is not procedural. There are community members who are mainly elected because they are talkative and well-known, but who fail to influence the decision-making processes. During the research it became apparent that some committee members could neither read nor write, while some members were old, such as a frail pensioner who could not walk long distances. The Council does not appoint people who contribute positively to the ward committees system because the electoral system is flawed. Not only are nominees' potential of serving on the system not evaluated, but also some members are occupied otherwise and cannot participate adequately in the ward committee system. The Council seemed not to be aware of these essential election requirements.

**8.2.3. Training**

The Council as a structure responsible for appointing the service provider seemed not to verify whether the service provider was competent to provide training to the ward committee members. Prior training by such service provider elsewhere was not assessed. This means that people who were trained by that service provider were not consulted and asked to comment on the training. The Council was therefore unable to find successes and shortcomings of such service provider in terms of training and capacity-building that was required. As a result the service provider that was appointed was not effective in carrying out its mandates and duties, unfortunately the Council did not anticipate such failure.

Furthermore, the duration of the training was not adequate to cater for all the people. Findings revealed that the previous training lasted for only 4 hours. Both old and young people who attended the training strongly felt that this was not sufficient. As mentioned above, some committee members neither read nor write, and this is where the extra assistance was needed. A proper workshop was therefore not provided to the

committee members in order to capacitate them towards their duties and the responsibilities as ward committee members.

The ward committee members interviewed stated that the Council did not appoint an energetic and enthusiastic trainer for the workshop. Ward 2 committee members, for example, argued that the previous service provider/trainer was not enthusiastic about what he was doing during the training, and as a result, the workshop was not stimulating and interesting.

Lastly, a follow-up assessment was not made by the service provider. A training and capacity building programme itself does not guarantee implementation. It is therefore pivotal to gauge after the training whether the committee members implemented what they learnt during the workshop. Instead, the Council assumed that the committee members would implement what they had learnt, without a proper evaluation and assessment. The municipal council was therefore not successful in fulfilling its objective of capacitating and training its ward committee members. Mhotsha (2005: 87) concludes that "the municipality should show willingness to invest in ward committee members through accredited training as a token of appreciation towards their spirit of volunteerism and to enhance their efficiency".

## 8.2.4. Participation

Weale (1999: 84) states that, in a democratic society, people such as the community leaders should be involved in the various institutions of decision-taking and law-making, and the choice of members of these bodies, to ensure that participation is possible. However, generally, the findings show that people are not fully involved in all decision-making bodies. Many ward committee members argued that they are not informed about ward meetings. Formal invitations or notices are not distributed to all ward committee members by the Ward Councillor. It was also found that many Ward Councillors do not organise the meetings, or some ward committee members are not invited to meetings. In such a situation it becomes apparent that participatory democracy is lacking, and the actions by those Ward Councillors is not democratic. This also raises another important aspect which this study researched, which is equality. The Ward Councillors were observed not to be treating their committee

members equally. Some members were not invited to or informed about the committee meetings, while other members were subjects of "favouritism". Uninvited members in most cases were defiant towards their Ward Councillors, and conflicts and crisis often occurred. These Ward Councillors were violating the constitutional clause which stipulates that all the citizens should participate equally in matters of governance, especially those who represent people at the grass roots level.

## 8.2.5. Accountability

As discussed in Chapter 6, Przeworski (1999: 131-133) argues that the principle of accountability in the municipality is at the forefront of the most governmental documents. Accountability at local government level aims at providing open and good governance to the citizens, eliminating a closed and bureaucratic government. The findings suggest that the Council is failing to strive to strengthen a good relationship between Ward Councillors and their ward committee members. There is a breakdown of cooperation in the Makana Municipality between the two groups; as a result, such breakdown affects accountability, democracy, development and service delivery. The ward committee members mentioned that they are not respected by the Ward Councillors. Decisions taken during the council meetings that affect the ward, were mostly not communicated to ward committee members. There was no time frame for reporting to ward committee members, but it entirely depended on the availability of the Ward Councillors. Accountability, which is an essential aspect of democracy, was found to be lacking.

Relating to a lack of accountability was a lack of transparency. Due to the fact that ward committee members many times were not fully aware of the decisions taken by the Council, this means therefore that the system of governance was not transparent. The study reveals that there were issues which were not disclosed to either ward committee members or community members. This situation illustrates a centralized government which is noticeable presently in the Makana Municipality, whereby the decisions are taken at the centre and not communicated to those at the periphery.

It was observed during the research study that committee members became aware of the value of their input only through recognition by the Ward Councillors. But such

desire for recognition in the Makana Municipality was frustrated due to a lack of accountability and transparency, and subsequently it led to struggles and conflicts. Recognition is possible only in the presence and confrontation of the other. Thus it was found that recognition of the ward committee members by the Council could not confirm their self-worth, identity, and even humanity.

## 8.2.6. Remuneration

Considering the amount of work that is expected to be carried out by ward committee members, and the expenses incurred, government should consider compensating ward committee members. It is unrealistic to expect people to work whole-heartedly without any form of compensation or remuneration. It is apparent that most of these ward committee members in the Makana Municipality are unemployed and mainly old people who head families, therefore an incentive would contribute greatly to the processes of service delivery. Most ward committee members confirmed that it is not sound that they are not getting anything from government, while they do most of the duties, whereas the Ward Councillors do little, but get monthly salaries. Such statement illustrates frustration and anger, which inevitably leads to poor performance.

A simple principle seems to be lacking here, that there should be a correlation between remuneration and the value of work. During the interviews it was revealed that in the Makana Municipality when the council's budget was approved in June 2007 the following allowances were announced: full-time councillors receive approximately R35 000 per month, whilst part-time councillors' total package is approximately R15 000 per month[62]. This does not do justice to the ward committee members who perform almost all the duties, including councillor's responsibilities at times, but receive no remuneration.

Moreover, each Ward Councillor receives a cellular phone from the municipality, with a monthly airtime voucher, travel allowance, pension and medical aid, whereas ward committee members do not receive such benefits. Ward committee members

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[62] *Grocott's Mail*, Friday January,25 2008, Page 2.

mentioned that there is always a lack of communication between them and their councillors, as a result, ward committee members use their own resources to contact each other. When government distributed cellular phones to Ward Councillors, it acknowledged the importance of communication. However, government is not distributing fairly the means of communication to strengthen communication and interaction between Ward Councillors, Council and ward committee members. It was observed that government seems to be treating Ward Councillors as 'Madams' and ward committee members as 'Eves'. The dignity of committee members is not respected by both government and the council members.

## 8.2.7. People first

The findings suggest that a redefinition of democracy by the Makana Municipality is necessary. Makana Municipality is missing the most important principle of democracy, which is 'rule of the people'. The Council is not taking into consideration that the ward committees are meeting with their constituencies, as required by the legislation. Community members are therefore not treated as the customers of the municipality, but as subjects. The concept of the citizen as a 'customer' is a useful term in the context of improving service delivery because it embraces certain principles which are fundamental to public service delivery. To treat citizens as 'customers' implies:

- listening to their views and taking account of them in making decisions about what services should be provided;
- treating them with consideration and respect;
- making sure that the promised level and quality of service is always of the highest standard; and
- responding swiftly and sympathetically when standards of service fall below the promised standard[63].

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[63] Principles of Batho Pele. Draft White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, May 9, 1997.

## 8.2.8. Recognizing the youth

The Makana Municipality is failing to attempt to restore the political will of the young people on the issues of service delivery. Young people are marginalized in the processes of governance. As a result, it was found that young people have detached themselves from politics. Therefore, the government is faced with the challenge of restoring young people on board. When student anger and grievances against "Bantu" education exploded in June 1976, the system in South Africa changed (McKinley, 1997: 16). Tens of thousands of high school students took to the streets to protest against compulsory use of Afrikaans at schools. This is an illustration of how active young people who are involved in political matters can play a pivotal role in challenging an undemocratic government.

However, presently young people are inheriting corruption and nepotism; this emerged during the youth focus group. The government is not utilizing young people in order to prevent this deviant behaviour. Youth summits, workshops and capacity-building programmes are not organized by the municipality: these programmes are essential ways of empowering young people toward a more positive democracy.

Furthermore, there is a lack of connection between what is happening with the council, ward committee members and representatives of the youth. The Council is not feeding young people with programmes, or monitoring these effectively. The youth involvement is not assessed. So when young people want to participate, they do not know whether their participation will be taken into consideration by the Council. This form of governance therefore seems not to be encouraging young people to be active and involved in the processes of democracy.

## 8.3. Ward committee members

Ward committee members must aim at promoting the values of democracy by contributing to development and service delivery through their loyalty to the system. They must not serve in the system for the wrong reasons, such as aiming for benefits and rewards. It was found that many committee members serve in the structures because they are loyal to their Ward Councillors and as a result receive incentives and

rewards. Local government can do its utmost best to deliver services, but without the commitment and dedication of ward committee members, development and service delivery become an illusion. Ward committee members are closely linked with the communities and people they represent. They are also the first body of governance to hear the challenges and grievances of their communities.

A lack of communication and accountability between ward committee members and the citizens they represent was observed. Ward committee members do not always consult with the people on a regular basis, listening to their needs, and reporting back to the community as to whether the Ward Councillor has informed them about the Council's decisions. The findings suggest that when the Ward Councillor does not meet with the ward committee members, ward committee members do not go back to the community fearing that they will be perceived as failures or liars. Community members therefore are not alert as to whether meetings are held between the Ward Councillors and ward committee members.

It was observed that most ward committee members are not aware that they have a legitimate power to question the decisions made by the Council. Ward committee members are not empowered in order to understand such legitimate powers. During the interviews, it seemed that ward committee members perceive themselves as mere "subjects" of the Council. It also looked as though they have given up their legitimate powers, and simply submit to what the Council is asserting. Most ward committee members do not understand their roles and duties in the system, or what the legal and constitutional processes that need to be followed in case something happens, such as lack of meeting attendance by the Ward Councillor. The ward committee members themselves seemed not to demand to be empowered in order to understand their roles and responsibilities.

Lastly, most ward committee members are not able to separate personal politics from the processes of service delivery and development. These committee members at times do not cooperate with their Ward Councillors, depending on their political affiliation. It was found that those members who are strong affiliates of a certain political party or cluster will not support a non-affiliate of such group. Ward

committee members together with the council members did not bear in mind the simple legal provision that the ward committee system is non-party political turf.

## 8.4. Community members

Though the Handbook for Ward Committees (2005: 11) states that the community members need to be familiar with the electoral process and about the roles and the duties of the ward committee members, it became apparent during the research study that the community members are not educated or empowered and informed about the duties of the ward committee members prior to elections. There was a sense that they simply elected people who were not suitable for addressing the needs and challenges in their wards. On many occasions, it was found that community members elected talkative people to be their representatives, failing to consider other essential elements such as dedication, loyalty, commitment, leadership skills etc. Some ward committee members were talkative, but were lacking strategic skills, and as a result they ended up being violent and deviant in the meetings, especially when they were unable to influence decisions. Committee members are expected to be at least people who are able to strategize and become influential in decision-making processes.

In many instances the nominees for the ward committees did not present themselves before community members to motivate themselves. As a result, in such situations community members were simply told that certain people had been appointed as committee members. This system once again illustrates how the community members can be excluded and denied their political rights to participate fully in democracy.

## 8.5. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the ward committee system is a positive idea, but the findings suggest that the government is not supporting these structures. The government is failing to equip the ward committees with necessary capacities and skills. Ward committee members are not respected by the government; as a result, community members perceive them as failures and liars. The ward committee members are therefore caught up in the middle of the disastrous system of governance. Bad governance by the municipality reflects badly on committee members, as they are

expected by community members to address and realise development and service delivery. The study concludes that these structures are designed to fail. Therefore, if municipalities are serious about bridging the gap between them and communities, and are keen to enhance participatory democracy, they must capacitate and make use of ward committees during the decision-making processes.

Drawn from the findings and the discussion, it is hoped that the study does not produce the empirical evidence alone, but contributes to the body of knowledge, and to contribute to the improvement of democracy in South Africa.

## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (YOUTH)[64]

The IDP Forum of Makana Municipality is comprised of all the members of the IDP Steering Committee including representatives from local sectors, and among them are Youth Formations. Programmes focused on the development of the youth should have a positive influence on the growth and development of the area[65].

## A. Aims

Intrigued by the above statement, the aim of the focus group discussion was to investigate the perceptions of young people of Ward 2 on service delivery. The researcher wanted to assess whether their perceptions on service delivery have an impact on the way they perceive the municipal officials, and to investigate how they perceive service delivery and development in the long run. In addition, it was worth assessing whether young people in Ward 2 are aware of their representative on the ward committee. The purpose of the research was to understand their level of participation on the issues of service delivery. Consequently, this section examines the notion of democracy and its effect or impact on the future leaders.

A statement was written on the flip chart: YOUNG PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE TO SERVICE DELIVERY, and the young people were asked to either agree or disagree with the statement or to say that they were not sure.

## B. Disagree

Those who did not agree with the statement mentioned that the focus of young people is not on the issues of service delivery or development, but on other things such as sport, or other social matters. They mentioned that service delivery is the issue that is mainly considered by old people. They also said that service delivery is an exhausting and frustrating process; as a result young people don not want to associate themselves

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[64] Date: May 22, 2008 at 2pm at Benjamin Mahlasela School, Ext 7, Grahamstown. Teacher: Mrs. Nojoko: 078 571 3023, (046) 603 7124. Participants: Charles Dingana, Thembinkosi Madlavu, Ntombifuthi Lewu, Vuyokazi Ntaka, Vuyokazi Gotyana, Ntombekhaya Bhebhe. Extra Students: Xolisa Magada, Bathini Masinda, Banele Mafilika.

[65] Makana Municipality: Draft IDP 2007/2012.

with such long term processes. Therefore, for them service delivery is the business of old people.

## C. Agree

Only two participants believed that young people contribute to service delivery. One student said that young people are involved in their community not only on issues such as electricity, water, housing etc., but on other aspects of service delivery such as teaching other young people on how to write CVs, or help in sewing lessons, soup kitchens etc. Therefore they argued that young people to a certain extent do contribute to service delivery.

## D. Observations

The next section discusses issues that were observed during the youth focus group discussion. These are: lack of interest and participation in service delivery and development, service delivery and development as old people's business, lack of trust in politicians, did not know the youth rep on the ward committee or the Ward Councillor, how a lack of service delivery can cause unrest and violent acts, lack of awareness, and negative democracy.

## E. Lack of interest and participation in service delivery and development

During the focus group discussion, it was observed that the young people did not have an interest in service delivery and development. Throughout the discussion, they mentioned that they are not taking part in all the programmes of government that are aimed at service delivery in their ward. They argued that due to the time constraints they find it difficult to balance their academic life and "politics". Furthermore, they also mentioned that they prefer to spend time on issues that will benefit them directly than wasting time on useless issues.

They argued that if politics were beneficial and interesting, they would involve themselves in the process. They argued that many people have sacrificed their time and fought for freedom and democracy; as a result those freedom-fighters were

uneducated. However, the same freedom fighters do not benefit from the end products of democracy. One student said:

> "My uncle was a local freedom fighter, and he was also a local hero. He was fighting for the rights of the poor people. But now that we have acquired freedom and democracy, he does not benefit from anything, and no body cares about him, even the people that he used to fight with, who are now in the municipality, do not even care about him too. So I would rather focus on my education, and secure the place in the next generation".

Another student said that:

> "Young people are not listened to, the politics is mainly an old people's business, and young people are focusing on other aspects of life which will bring joy in their lives. Unlike politics which is frustrating and psychologically disturbing, youth prefer less harmful activities. It would be much better if we were to benefit from the system, surely such frustration would be worth for".

These young people felt strongly that service delivery is a strenuous experience, which is directly linked to politics. Therefore, politics is a business which only concerns old people, but not the youth. Some of the reasons for the decline in interest in politics will be discussed in the next sections.

**F. Service delivery and development as old people's business**

The students argued that service delivery and development is equal to politics, and politics is an old people's business. They argued that in most projects in their ward, it is always old people who benefit from and participate in these projects. They also argued that young people are not considered when it comes to service delivery and development. They said that most ward meetings that are organized are only attended by old people, and young people do not see the point in attending these meetings because the things that are discussed in the meetings are not issues that affect young people, but only old matters.

They also said that because old people have been in politics for a long time, they know better what is going on, and they can discuss better than young people. One interesting observation was when one young student said:

> "Old people have messed up, so it is up to them to fix the matter, and there is no need for young people to intervene. Starting from the President, that is the national government, provincial and local government, things are not going alright. So it is up to them to realize that what they are doing is wrong. We cannot be involved because things are already bad in the country, and if we intervene, the same old people will not listen to our views and opinions".

Another student said in this regard that:

> "All our spheres of government are full of old people who are making laws and implement them according to their own needs. Even though they know better what is going on in the country, but they must also acknowledge that young people have opinions and views on other things. But, these people are not willing to listen to what young people have to say. So, they are governing, and they must also contribute to service delivery. The wealth of the nation is on their hands".

## G. Lack of trust in politicians

It was clear during the discussion that young people have lost faith and trust in politicians. They mentioned that not only at local government level politicians have been bad, but also at national and provincial levels. They perceived politician as liars who do not care about the people, but only care for themselves. It was also mentioned that politicians always make big promises to the poor people, but they never deliver services, hence their reputation has been ruined, and their trust is no longer valued.

In addition, the young people also felt that politicians are not reliable. Politicians are elected into power, but when they get there, they forget about the people, instead they make sure that their relatives benefit before their terms end. Two students argued that:

"Almost all the politicians are rich people, and they drive big cars living in huge houses. These people were not better off at first, but immediately when they got into their offices, they became rich. It should also be borne in mind that before they were elected, all these politicians have made promises to the people, about jobs, housings, infrastructure etc. But immediately when they win elections, they automatically forget about those promises, and focus only on their progress and promotions. And if one of their objectives fails, they become corrupt, and the conflicts and crisis develop. How nice it would be, if politicians were fighting for the needs of the people, instead of fighting over useless issues, like power".

Another participant said that:

"Generally politicians are untrustworthy. I mean in my entire life I have never come across any politician who sticks to their guns, but they always go with the flow. For example, you can get into power as people-oriented person. However, in no time all your personalities will be tested, and subsequently people adapt to the system, and join the dirty game. Politics I mean generally is a dirty game, so whoever is a politician surely is a part of such game".

A lack of trust in politicians has made many young people detach themselves from politics and service delivery. It was observed during the focus group discussion that none of the students knew who their representative was on the ward committees. Furthermore, surprisingly many of them did not know also the Ward Councillor. The next section discusses these findings.

## H. Did not know the youth rep on the ward committee or the Ward Councillor

It was observed that even though young people did not know who their representative on the ward committee was, they also did not care about that. Also, they did not know their Ward Councillor, and they did not know the dangers of not knowing who represents them in the Council. They were asked what if their representative is misrepresenting them in the Council, and that the real needs of the wards are not considered, but he is pursuing his own needs. Many students confirmed the fact that they do not know their representative, and that they do not care. Most of them argued that:

> "We don't know who the youth representative is, and we don't care what he is doing because he is not representing us, surely he is also part of the politics. Most of them argued that he was supposed to have been shown in public after he was appointed in the office, so that they could know and contact him directly, without them hearing from some one else."

However, two young members refuted that and said it is wrong even to bring someone before the people, before people even decide whether they like the person or not. They argued that there was supposed to be a public meeting for all the young people of Ward 2, and in the meeting there were supposed to be different candidates who would give speeches, and explain why they wanted to be youth representatives. Then, young people should have decided in the meeting who was the best candidate. They argued that that would have been a democratic way of electing a representative. For example, they argued that they cannot even confront the person now because they did not elect him, and they did not know what his strengths and weaknesses were. Furthermore, they argued that it becomes difficult to demand accountability from such a person who was elected undemocratically. The person, they argued, might tell them that what they are demanding was not in his mission statement or that that is not what he was elected for.

Even when the researcher told them about their representative and their Ward Councillor, they did not take any initiative to find out more about these people, until it was asked they they did not think that it was a good idea to meet with the youth

representative. The fact that they did not know these people was not an issue for them, due to the factors addressed above, such as lack of interest in politics, the perception of service delivery as old people's business, etc.

## I. How a lack of service delivery can cause unrest and violent acts

It was also observed how students can behave as a result of lack of service delivery, and how their frustration can be projected towards others. The tone of the discussion was high when the issue of service delivery was discussed. The students were directly affected by the lack of service delivery and lack of development. As a result, they became aggressive and referred to the politicians as "bad liars".

However, because not all the students felt the same, others still hoped that situation would change. The researcher also observed how at this stage the students were attacking each other. For example, those who did not see the hope for the country were accusing others of being stupid and dumb, and that they could not see what was going on in the country. On the other hand, the optimistic group perceived others as being corrupted by the process, and argued that they were stupid for not realizing that there is hope for the country. At this stage the students were observed to be arguing with each other, and not agreeing on anything. There were divisions among them, and there were also students who have been the victims of poor service delivery. Therefore, the issue was very sensitive to them, and made them act very aggressively, as opposed to those who were talking from a "theoretical perspective". One participant said:

> "I personally experienced that form of corruption and the unavailability of the food parcels. For example, my Aunt registered before the food parcels arrived in the ward. She was not employed, and at home we were very poor. However, my Aunt left before the food parcels arrived. When they arrived she was gone already. My granny went to collect the food parcels on her behalf, but she was told that my Aunt should come in person. My granny tried to explain to the municipal people, and was also willing to give them my Aunt's contact details, however, they refused. When my Aunt came the following day, she was told that the food parcels are finished. These food

parcels were mainly for the unemployed and the pensioners, but there were several people with jobs, who also benefited from the project. Surprising enough, pile of food parcels were found in the house of another municipal employee, and her relatives and friends all received double food parcels".

Another participant stated:

"Look for example at my home; we are living in a very small house as a big family. The government has been promising to build house for the people, but nothing has happened in that regard. So people are only looking after their loved one, so when we get into power, surely the first people to think about will be our family, I mean I am being realistic now. If we were all happy, I would consider doing good things for others, but how do you expect me to cater for others, whereas my situation is not better, don't you think people will think there is something wrong with you. So up until all the people are happy and people have the basic services, then we can talk about human values and human morality. But at the moment there is no point of human morality while you are hungry, and the government is not looking after you. There should be government morality first, and then human morality will follow".

However, one student at this point disagreed with his fellow mates and argued that:

"I understand people that we are all frustrated, but that does not mean we should not be optimistic about the future. If we keep on thinking the way we do, there will not be peace and harmony in our country, but conflict, corruption and other destructive things will prevail. We need to look at a good side, and hope that system will change so that the next generation could not experience what we are going through right now".

This student could not finish what he was suggesting, but the whole group simply refuted what he was saying, and accused him of talking like a "true politician". At the beginning of the discussion, most of the students were very quiet, and to a great extent they were concerned about the way they were expressing themselves. Furthermore,

they also treated the researcher with respect, and made sure that they made appropriate comments during the discussion. However, by this time they were very open and were expressing themselves freely and using animated body language. Due to the tone and the extent of discussion at this time, names were mentioned of local bad politicians, especially those who were perceived as corrupt. At first the students were very cautious and wanted to be politically correct, and were generalizing when discussing issues. However, when the discussion reached the climax, they did not care about what others were thinking, but were putting the message across that they were angry and not happy with the way the politicians are governing.

## J. Lack of awareness

It was observed that the students had a narrow understanding of service delivery and development. The school that the discussion took place in was poorly maintained, and the classroom that was used during the discussion was also badly maintained. For them service delivery and development meant things that only concern the politicians and old people, not taking into consideration that part of their daily lives, that is, at school and home, also involve the issues of service delivery and development.

In addition, these students were also not aware that there were structures which were designed and established to address their needs in their communities. They did not utilize such opportunities to advance their needs and challenges, however, they only focused on their education, which as a result is badly influenced by the lack of service delivery and development. Furthermore, they did not know that by not questioning issues at present that will influence their level of education, and how the system will be corrupted by the time they are mature. For them development meant acquiring education and a better position, in order to maintain corruption. They did not mention, for example, how through the education one can eliminate corruption and crisis in the country.

Other aspects of development, such as collective action, sharing, discipline etc, were highly lacking from most students. Their understanding of service delivery and development was very narrow. They understand that in order to develop, one needs to get education and focus on uplifting their relatives. Being vindictive for them is a

better way of realizing development and service delivery. Moreover, it was also observed how young people are angry towards their government. They do not wish to redress the issues of corruption, but they are waiting for their opportunities to arrive, so that they can continue with what the previous beneficiaries of corruption have been doing. This study suggests that these observations are the form of a negative democracy.

## K. Negative democracy

It was clear during the focus group discussion that most young people have given up on service delivery, and did not care what was going on in their communities. This issue raises a critical and important point about the next generation. The young people are the leaders of the future, therefore it is important to assess whether the current form of democracy does produce good leaders of tomorrow. However, from the discussion, it became clear that the form of democracy that exists in the Makana Municipality is not producing good and reliable leaders of tomorrow, but it is a continuation and reproduction of the corrupt and bad leaders.

Nepotism was also another aspect of corrupt and bad governance that was observed during the discussion. The present form of democracy made the young people believe that nepotism and corruption are the best ways of delivering services and addressing development. None of the students was able to come up with an alternative to the existing form of governance, but they argued that it is the way governance is supposed to be. This means that the form of corruption and nepotism that is growing in the Makana Municipality will continue to suppress those who are poor, and this will become a norm or culture in that society.

The researcher also observed how the present form of democracy produces what can be termed "uneducated educated". One would expect that the grade 12 pupils should have at least a positive attitude toward service delivery and development. Some of these students will enter tertiary education soon. When they enter tertiary level with such mindsets and attitudes, surely the system of education will not grow and improve, but will produce unproductive learners and leaders. These are students who one would expect to strive for better life for all, and to advance their opinions when

they reach tertiary education. However, it looks as though the new generation is aiming at acquiring higher education for the wrong purposes, instead of aiming for changing the existing form of governance.

Another observation was how some students have entirely lost hope, and do other things than focusing on service delivery and development. During the discussion three boys were missing and went to the stadium to play rugby for fun, while another girl just disappeared without saying where she was going. Young people are no longer enthusiastic about what is going on in their community, and they do not see themselves as agents of development. It was also noticed that young people do not value their contributions and ideas in the community. They always mentioned that old people should be responsible for taking care of their community. Their self esteem and ego vanished; as a result they do not challenge anything that they think is not going alright, instead they simply watch and expect old people to act on their behalf.

Another observation was the way in which the students compared the apartheid government with the present democratic government. Many participants kept on referring to the previous regime in South Africa, whereby at least "things were better than today". It is quite disappointing to notice that there are people, especially black people, who look back and would prefer the previous government. There is now a light in South Africa, as opposed to in the past. It looks like there is more darkness now that there is light, than the time when there was no light at all. Young people as a result doubt their lights that they are holding, and see no need to continue carrying those lights, as they are pessimistic about the future. Observations suggest that the present situation is almost similar to the biblical story of the Israelites. Moses was sent to release the Israelites under the autocratic and oppressive governance of Pharaoh in Egypt. However, along the way when the Israelites realized that they had run out of food and water, they complained and said "if only we had died by the Lord's hands in Egypt. There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death"[66].

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[66] Exodus 16: 3-4.

A negative form of democracy also concluded the focus group discussion, whereby the issues of ethics and the human morality were discussed. At the end, most participants concurred that:

> "The human values are gone, and the human morality is simply an ideal. People in high position and those who are in power do not care about those who are poor, but they make sure that their families and friends benefits from the projects of the municipality. We have been oppressed for a long time, and people are concerned about their immediate families, that is their children, brothers, sisters, parents etc. Therefore, there is no way we can solve corruption because it has escalated so much, and even the president of the country is unable to combat it, therefore we will inherit the same legacy. For instance, look at our families now, they are very poor, and we are worse off in our community. So if we can get into power, surely our focus will be on our families. No one is taking care of us now, and our families are expecting us when we finish school, at least to reverse the wheel. Therefore, to be honest, human values are gone, and the next generation is going to be the same, unless God will come down personally to mend the broken world. Even these guys who are pretending to disagree with us, do they ever share anything here at school, starting from the stationery, and instead we are stealing from each other. So all in all, the system of governance in South Africa is terribly bad, and that is affecting our communities. Corruption is all over the place, but we are waiting for our time to come as well".

The present ward committee members are not influential and active in the decision-making process. But there is no hope that the future committee members will be different to the current system. Participatory democracy will continue to be an illusion.

Such attitude by the present young people in Ward 2 clearly contradicts the original perception of the youth of 1944, when the ANCYL was formed[67].

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[67] The ANCYL set out a new vision for the African nationalism in its 1944 manifesto. Its statement of policy reads:

"The African, on his side, regards the Universe as a one composite whole, an organic entity, progressively driving towards greater harmony and unity whose individual parts exist merely as interdependent aspects of one whole realizing their fullest life in the corporate life where communal contentment is the absolute measure of values. His philosophy of life strives towards unity and aggregation; towards greater social responsibility."

Under the sub-heading "Our Creed" the youth leagues document states:
"We combat moral disintegration among Africans by maintaining and upholding high ethical standards themselves."

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

## MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

Mr. Matebese. Makana Municipality Spokesperson. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

Mr. Nkohla. Makana Municipality IDP Manager. Interviewed on July 21, 2008 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

Mr. Pasiya. Makana Municipality PMS & TQM Manager. Interviewed on November 13, 2007 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

Mr. Mthinkhulu. Makana Municipality Constituency Officer (Wards). Interviewed on October 17, 2007 in his office at the Makana Municipality.

## WARD COUNCILLORS

Councillor Mantla. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

Councillor Nase. Interviewed on November 2, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

Councillor Stemper. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

PR Councillor Wells. Interviewed on September 20, 2007, in her office in the History Department at Rhodes University.

Councillor Phongolo. Interviewed on November 19, 2007 telephonically.

Councillor Fuku. Interviewed on November 8, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

Councillor Madinda. The Speaker of the Council, Makana Municipality. Interviewed on December 7, 2007 telephonically.

Councillor Nase. Interviewed on November 2, 2007 in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

Councillor Ntshiba. Interviewed on December 5, 2007 telephonically.

## WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr Heather Davies-Coleman. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on November 7, 2007, in the Office of the Dean of Research at Rhodes University.

Mrs. F H. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed telephonically on December 7, 2007.

Mr. M F. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 3, 2008 at 3pm at Anglo-African Street.

Mr. S M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 14, 2008 at 3pm in the Makana Municipality Council Room.

Mrs. J N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on April 23, 2008 at 3pm at the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) Seminar Room.

Mrs. N I. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 5pm at Ext 7.

Mr. M P. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 4, 2008 at 7pm at Ext 7, Joza.

Mrs. N M. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 13, 2008 at 2pm at Ext 7, Joza.

Mr. K B. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 28, 2008 at 6pm at Anglo-African Street.

Mrs. N Q. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 18, 2008 at 6:30pm at Ext 7, Joza.

Mr. M K. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 10, 2008 at 2pm at Ext 7, Joza.

Mr. A N. Ward Committee Member. Interviewed on March 6, 2008 at 3pm at Joza.


## YOUNG PEOPLE

**Focus Group Discussion, held on May 22, 2008 at Benjamin Mahlasela Secondary School, Joza.**

**Mrs. Nojoko. School Teacher (Organized the focus group discussion).**

Mr. Charles Dingana

Mr. Thembinkosi Madlavu

Miss. Ntombifuthi Lewu

Miss. Vuyokazi Ntaka

Miss. Vuyokazi Gotyana

Miss. Ntombekhaya Bhebhe

**<u>Extra Students</u>**

Mr. Xolisa Magada

Mr. Bathini Masinda

Mr. Banele Mafilika

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