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THE PARTICIPATION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT COMMUNITIES IN CITY-LEVEL POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES IN JOHANNESBURG

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, 2009

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.

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…..day of ….. ……2009

Abstract

This study aims at exploring the complexity of involving informal settlement communities in policy-making processes at city-level. The key objective is to extend our understanding of the practice of public participation by focusing on the involvement of one of the most disadvantaged sectors of society living on the peripheries of contemporary cities. Many studies have dealt with the participation of informal settlement communities in the planning, implementation and management of localized development projects. This study explores the involvement of these communities in making policies that not only address their local immediate needs, but also contribute in the future development of the cities where they live. Informal settlement communities generally experience social, economic and spatial exclusion. The informal and/or 'illegal' nature of informal settlements often hinders the involvement of their residents in local political processes thus adding to their vulnerability and marginalization. Advancing citizenship rights of these communities contributes to guaranteeing their inclusion and access to what cities have to offer.

The thesis consists of two parts in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. Part One looks at theoretical perspectives on the notion of public participation with a focus on the participation of poor sectors of society in policy-making processes. This part also explores various approaches to urban management and examines the extent to which these approaches enable participation of informal settlement communities in city-level policy making. Part One also looks at the possibilities and limitations of informal settlement communities in policy-making by drawing on experiences from the Municipality of São Paulo in Brazil. Part Two of the thesis then shifts discussion to the policy and practice of public participation in the City of Johannesburg and empirically examines the extent of involving the informal settlement communities of one of the city's administrative regions in policy making processes.

The study establishes that participation in city-level policy-making processes is very complex due to the nature of issues addressed and the multitude of actors involved. It also shows that participatory approaches to urban management, which seek to combat inequality and realize social justice in cities, provide an environment conducive to the involvement of informal settlement communities in policy-making at city level. However, to achieve successful involvement of these communities in policy-making processes, city governments need to have the appropriate mandate that enables them to deal with issues that matter for the dwellers of informal settlements such as access to urban land, housing, basic services, education and health. In addition, city governments need to be open to and supportive of informal settlements, and have appropriate mechanisms for their participation in policy-making. From their side, informal settlement communities can only benefit from participatory opportunities if they have strong, well connected community structures that seek to make their voices heard. The study also finds that in a democratically open system, the actual practice of participation is continuously evolving through the interplay between policy and legal provisions and elements of micro contexts. Facilitators of this evolution are local officials and community organisations.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, who inculcated in me a continuous love for knowledge and learning, and

To my loving wife, Faiza, for her unconditional love, support and encouragement throughout the course of this work.

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APPREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BESG	Built Environment Support Group
CBO	Community-based organisation
DA	Democratic Alliance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBGE	
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPM	New Public Management
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania
PSDB	*Partido da Social-Democracia Brasileira* (Brazilian Social Democratic Party)
PT	*Partido does Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party)
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
UAC	Utilities, Agencies, and Corporatised Units (of the City of Johannesburg
UDF	United Democratic Front
UMP	Urban Management Programme
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme