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The impact of a changing policy framework on isolated communities: a South African experience

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Abstract

Power relations between state and locality have a significant influence on the structure of participatory development at the local level (Abbott, 1996). In South Africa, changes in the balance of power between national government, local government and the locality, have had a fundamental impact on the extent and quality of participation, mediated through projects' changing institutional structures (Lyons, Smuts and Stephens, 1999). Elsewhere, we identified some generic problems in the management of participatory development (Lyons and Smuts, 1999). In this paper, we take that analysis further, examining the impact of *national-policy changes on management issues within participatory development*. Our focus is on *their contribution to the strengthening of a participatory and inclusive culture in isolated communities*. Four South African participatory development projects, all sited in Kwa Zulu-Natal are examined. Findings are that the national policy changes have largely failed in isolated communities, while for communities which have structured themselves in particular ways, the benefits have been mixed. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

The academic analysis of community participation has gradually shifted its focus. From a debate about the merits of participatory development in contrast with imposed development, the discussion moved on to an analysis of the extent, or quality, of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Choguill, 1996). In parallel, it developed into an analysis of the fundamental purpose of adopting a participatory approach, focusing on the concept of an 'ends versus means' trade-off (Rakodi,

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1991). The argument here was that projects could be differentiated according to the goal of the participatory process. Some projects (or programmes) were results oriented, with community participation seen as a means to achieving, for example, a more appropriate brief or management structure, in effect securing higher productivity or reliability for the investment made. Others, were focused primarily on social and political development within the participating community, with the project or programme results seen as secondary (see for example, Samuel, 1986, in Choguill, 1996; Craig, 1998). Clearly, this is an important distinction, with implications for evaluation, as well as policy. In this paper, we acknowledge the importance of both outcomes, and focus on South Africa, where the generation of social and economic mobility through participatory development, has been enshrined in national development policy since 1994.

Interest in community participation is apparent in both north and south. In the United Kingdom (UK), calls for increased local participation made in the wake of the first wave of Urban Development Corporations (Oc & Tiesdell, 1991) are still being made today (Lawless, 1996). This forms part of a broader debate about citizen participation in service delivery and the nature of democratic process in Britain's cities. The approach has attracted some interest in the UK's social housing sector, as local authorities withdrew from direct provision (Lyons, 1996), and took on an enabling role, particularly since the management restructuring resulted from compulsory competitive tendering. As they adopted a more decentralised structure (Lowndes & Stoker, 1992), housing authorities have involved residents in increasingly strategic local decisions, incurring good participation rates.

At the same time, community participation and agency have been increasingly seen as central processes in the upgrading of urban shelter in the south. Recognition of their importance has increased since Habitat II (Vaa, 1997) and is now applied to a broad range of differing institutional, political and cultural settings (e.g. Fernandez & Fernandez, 1997; Bose, 1997). The value of community initiatives has particularly been recognised as the credibility of community participation in state-driven initiatives has declined (e.g. Macaloo, 1994; Rakodi, 1991).

Despite its increasingly widespread implementation, the efficacy of participatory policy in meeting a range of objectives is being questioned (Miller, 1999). In the UK, recent studies of participatory development in urban regeneration, suggest that local people have difficulty in engaging with a process which is largely administered by local authorities and corporate interests lacking, as they do, pre-existing community structures, or pre-existing participatory processes. This is a criticism which focuses on the managerial problems of dialogue among actors with competing objectives, as well as incompatible structures and cultures. It is our assumption in this paper, as discussed elsewhere (Lyons, Smuts, & Stephens, 1999), that the nature of participation deeply affects its possible outcomes in the immediate and longer term. It is the engagement of the locality, with a programme run and funded by external agents, which is the focus of this paper.

We aim to assess the impact of changes in the policy arena on different aspects of participatory development. We argue that localities, which are culturally, politically or physically isolated from the mainstream urban political process, are unlikely to be able to benefit fully from such a development framework.

A second line of enquiry in both academic and trade literature, which has emerged from urban regeneration studies in the north and from development studies in the south, mainly focuses on lessons learnt from the practical arena, for the practical and policy arena. This literature has been largely dominated by case study analyses, which attempt to show the validity of participatory

methods over non-participatory methods. No less interesting, is a range of studies focusing on those issues that may undermine the participatory process. As even a brief scrutiny will show, certain problems appear repeatedly, across sectors, regimes and countries. For the purposes of discussion, we group them loosely into four categories, based on the source of the problem. These are cultural, political, institutional and technical problem. The four sets of issues are often inter-related, although one may have primacy over others in a given context.

‘Cultural issues’ is the term adopted to cover issues relating to local knowledge and beliefs, for example, education, beliefs, traditional social structures and attitudes to external agents (Manikutty, 1998), attitudes to authority (Keogh, 1998), attitudes to public interest (Ahmed Khan, 1999), to minorities or dependent groups (Maharaj & Ramballi, 1998), or to political rivals. We are particularly concerned here with the impact of cultural issues on power relations within the community.

‘Political problems’ is a term used to cover power relations in the community, particularly rival interests (Bortei-Doku Aryeety, 1998; Craig, 1998), competition for influence, jobs or money, suspicion, the abuse of collective power (Ngowi & Mselle, 1998), the double-edged impact of personal power. Our particular concern here is with the establishment and exercise of power within the participatory process.

‘Institutional problems’ are to do with the legal structure of a project or a programme, and the extent to which it is representative. Inter-alia, this covers mechanisms for selecting representatives and mechanisms for accountability (Ngowi & Mselle, 1998), for example, reporting structures within the community and to external agents, accounting systems, access to accounts and reports, checks and balances, means of communication, extent of information spread, sustainability of representativeness and reporting over time. In this paper, we are particularly concerned with the impact of a changing policy framework on these problems, and its ability to improve matters at the local level.

Finally, ‘technical problems’ are those associated with the particularities of managing building development, including points of vulnerability in the development cycle (Lyons & Smuts, forthcoming), know-how problems and regulatory problems.

In the sections which follow, we discuss the impact of these problems on the participatory development process, and on the ability of communities to benefit from participatory development, given a changing policy framework.

2. South Africa’s changing institutional and policy framework

The issues discussed above are examined using South Africa, which may well stand alone, in having established community participation as a basic tenet of its national development policy and local (authority) delivery and implementation. Following the election of a democratic and fully representative government in 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was adopted as the official national development policy.

The RDP’s main objective was to redress the socio-economic imbalances and extreme poverty that beleaguered many communities after apartheid, ultimately achieving social, political and economic justice through a people-driven process, characterised by ‘empowerment through participation’ (Blumenfeld, 1996; Carolus, 1994; De Beer, 1996). Emerging from grassroots

development strategies during the apartheid era and attracting widespread support, the RDP quickly became a powerful symbol for reconciliation and reconstruction. Major parastatal organisations also amended their policies to follow these principles, which had been for some time enshrined in grassroots practice and in the *modus operandi* of NGOs.

The RDP was initially established as a separate ministry with its own budget. However, to avoid duplication of services, and to deliver development and services in an integrated manner to communities, the RDP was later incorporated into existing ministries, utilising existing line-functions. Partnerships were established between local and provincial government and communities, to ensure delivery, and resulting in an increase in the profile of provincial and local government in service delivery. Bound to the principles of the RDP, delivery was to be carried out in accordance with local guidelines and policies, which prioritised empowerment and participation.

In 1996, a new macroeconomic development policy, Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), was designed in conjunction with the business sector and labour, and was introduced to reroute the South African economy. GEAR's aims were to ensure a competitive and growing economy with sufficient levels of job creation; the redistribution of incomes and opportunities in favour of the poor; equitable access to social services for all; and an environment in which houses are secure and places of work are safe (ANC, 1997). According to the ANC (1997), the fundamental goals that underpinned the RDP also underpin GEAR. Where GEAR differs is that it clearly sets out the economic strategies for achieving these goals, namely, to promote growth through exports and investments, and to promote redistribution through the creation of jobs and the reallocation of resources through the budget (ANC, 1997).

Where the RDP aimed to achieve its goals through a 'people-driven process' (ANC, 1994), GEAR is not explicit about the role or extent of public involvement in its policies which centre on economic restructuring, trade and labour reform (see diagram in Table 1). The promotion of partnerships and development of skills appear 'tacked on' to a policy that was introduced in a distinctly top-down manner. GEAR advocates decentralisation and partnerships between the state and private organisations. The promotion and institution of a culture of public participation and community development, while central to the RDP, are not identified as an explicit focus of GEAR.

There is a live debate about the relationship between the RDP and GEAR, and the impact of GEAR on the RDP, argued differently from the perspectives of social scientists, development practitioners and economists. This debate is closely linked to the debate over the success of the RDP, which emerged soon after its introduction (Blumenfeld, 1996). The differences in interpretation are found at every level of South Africa's political and social structures. One view is that, with the government's failure to meet the high expectations of many South Africans, the RDP policies were officially abandoned in 1996, and replaced a few months later with those of GEAR (Blumenfeld, 1996; Padayachee, 1994). An opposing view, more frequently voiced in development circles, is that the introduction of GEAR has had little influence at the local level, because of the strong commitment of partnerships and local government to RDP principles.

At the national and regional level, this changing development policy framework has been associated with a sharp decline in the role of major private and semi-private institutions in the

Table 1
Case-study Histories

| | Technical data | Phase 1: initiation (1984–1994) | Phase 2: RDP (1994–1996) | Phase 3: GEAR (1997 onward) |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Community hall, Amatikwe | Objective: to provide a meeting place and church for established community centre Funds: R1.5 million from IDT, reduced to R750,000 Time ^b : 15 months | 1983: increasing squatter problem in Durban; traditional leader (TL) approached by DLA ^a offering infrastructure in exchange for land; public meetings called, committee elected, participatory process commenced 1985: community agreed to parcellisation of Quadi tribal land; DLA agreed to allocate upgrading subsidy 1989: community formed a trust, chaired by Nkosi and including a minority of local delegates; Trust appoints consultant architects, new village plan developed, including plot layout and community hall 1991: Bridging loans approved on IDT subsidy approval 1992: infrastructure work and maintenance team trained; growing involvement of politicised youth 1992: plot allocation stalled; loan interest reduces capital | 1994: monthly committee meetings continue for community hall and plot allocation 1995: TL involved in mediating disagreements; process slowed further Community hall built, to reduced specification, because of interest costs | 1996: youth attempted to take over committee; TL mediated and formed youth sub-committee; political agenda becoming clearer 1998: community hall is used, run by committee and maintained by trained locals; Rev. Sibisi chairs the committee and refers difficult decisions to TL; Infrastructure development and housing top-up subsidy must wait on completion of plot allocation |

Table 1 (continued)

| | Technical data | Phase 1: initiation (1984–1994) | Phase 2: RDP (1994–1996) | Phase 3: GEAR (1997 onward) |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Amenity Centre, Bester's Camp, Inanda | Objective: to provide amenities (library, school, workshops) in a recently resettled informal township of Inanda Funds: R5.5 million National Public Works Prog | 1990: UF ^c 's Informal Settlement Unit appointed by Prov. Govt 1992: UF formed a development trust to bid for funds for a centre at Bester's Camp, local residents minority voice 1993: minimal consultation with local residents; resent grew towards top-down planning and links with NP ^d govt grew; township under control of SANCO ^e grassroots bodies; project halted 1994: UF withdrew due to boycotts and threats; locals formed trust; implemented procedures for accountability; trust became site landlord and appointed management executive | 1995: transferred Inanda from provincial to local administration; new councillors elected; trust now influenced by grassroots structure; independent funding; amenities designed in consultation with public and services | 1996: through participation and led by ICDT the school, library, community hall, training centre and utility payment centre completed 1997: sub-committees formed to deal with each facility 1998/1999: community hall taken over by municipality, residents little control over use and high costs restrict use; school and library managed by community; negotiation by trust for new development funds |
| Mansel Rd Market Greyville | Objective: to provide housing and shelter for trading for 40 female migrants with families Funds: R1.4 million Time: 15 months | 1986: 33 women who had been living and trading outside Durban Station moved to New Market St. to be near the buses bringing shoppers from rural areas; Beauty led 1988: now 55 women, all living with their wares; frequently harassed by police 1990: women formed a committee of 10 and petitioned the municipality, seeking support from groups Jhb. and CT; Beauty led and spoke for all 1991: police harassment now regular, particularly at night, | 1994: assessment showed that project would be feasible 1995: formalisation plans changed; pressure for landowners; Mansell Rd. to become cul-de-sac; pressure from traders from another market to share facilities | 1996: women moved in with goods and children; adapted housing and shops; very little trading takes place in the market itself because it is too isolated; negotiations led by Beauty to improve trading conditions have failed; rent boycott |

women forced to sleep by day; intense negotiations over resettlement; mayor agreed to house them, but died
 1993: municipality commissioned feasibility study for resettlement

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Community hall, Itshelemnyamaa | Objective: provision of meeting space in a recently, resettled informal township Funds: R5.5–1.5 m National Public Works Prog Time: 12 months | 1984: monastery lands settled illegally 1988: settlement regularised; negotiations between committee and diocese regarding land tenure 1992: diocese sells land to the province for pepper-corn rent; plots laid out and tenure confirmed | 1994: youth, particularly ANC affiliates, rebel against older people, new area structure instituted; new committee voted 1996: local elections, councillor sympathetic to new committee; general agreement about importance of hall | 1996: consultants and project managers appointed 1997: funding agreed after protests; role-players trained 1998: construction completed, but frequent disruptions due to local violence; infrastructure works at stand-off for 3 months; participation minimal; atmosphere of terror |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|

^a Department of Land Affairs.

^b Time = construction time.

^c UF (Urban Foundation).

^d NP (National Party).

^e National movement of civic organisations.

development process, as well as a reduction in their size and budgets (Lyons, Smuts, & Stephens, 1999). At a local level, this has resulted in a dramatic shift in project structure, which can be crudely described as a move from a 'community agency' paradigm to a 'limited participation' paradigm (ibid). This paradigm shift has involved the development of a formal project structure, managed locally, but overseen by the local authority, which explicitly encourages broad participation, and places a premium on the involvement of traditionally 'voiceless' minorities, such as women and youth.

In line with national policy changes, municipalities, which are in effect where policy is translated into action and implementation and delivery takes place, have experienced substantial restructuring. Since 1994, there have been several cycles of restructuring in municipal boundary (re)demarcation and of power realignments among national, provincial and municipal authority structures. These have each resulted in an increasing rationalisation, and ultimately bureaucratisation, with the delivery of services and the channelling of funds through a smaller number of state authorities. The current trend in local governance is towards a few large municipalities replacing the numerous smaller councils, and taking on a greater range of streamlined responsibilities and functions.

The introduction of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) for municipal authorities and the rationalisation of sectoral jurisdictions in the course of the current wave of local government reform are likely to take this rationalisation/bureaucratisation process further.

A 'Ten Point Plan' for construction procurement, originally developed by the Department for Public Works in line with the RDP, sets out a plan of action for this, and has been widely adopted by local authorities and other state institutions.

However, despite advocating broad participation, the range of community influence over strategic issues in local development has instead been reduced as programmes become more narrowly defined, and community control over, and experience of, financial management has been curtailed as the government's drive for increasing financial accountability takes hold. Moreover, the external checks on levels of participation within the community, set by programme funders and administered by the local authority, are largely formal. Representation of weak groups, for example, is assessed by such measures as the numerical composition of elected committees.

The primary objectives of these changes have been to increase accountability of participatory development on the one hand; and to enable participation to be engaged in on a comparable basis, in a wide range of communities. We argue here, that the successful implementation of this policy relies on a strong, participatory grassroots culture. Where that does not exist, this policy has not been able to foster one.

Where the legacy of apartheid was a grassroots democracy, this participatory policy has worked well. However, in some communities its result was a society, accustomed to top-down planning, labour exploitation and white minority domination, which lacks a tradition of democracy and public participation, particularly at the grassroots level (Khan, 1998; Maharaj & Ramballi, 1998, p. 133).

The focus of this paper are communities which are physically isolated, or culturally located outside the 'mainstream' of South African urban life. Various types of isolation are exemplified in certain communities in Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN), province on the east coast of South Africa.

3. KZN and Durban

The largest urban area in KZN, the Durban metropolitan area (DMA), is distinct from other regions, in terms of topography, politics and urbanisation (Pillay, 1996, p. 33). These characteristics make it ideal for the study of isolated communities—those located outside both physical and social urban structures.

One of the fastest growing cities in the world, and the economic centre of KZN (see Fig. 1), the DMA is one of South Africa’s largest urban areas, second in urban hierarchy to the Johannesburg–Pretoria conurbation (Maharaj & Ramballi, 1998, p. 133; Smith, 1992). Centred around an important harbour, Durban has the second largest urban population in South Africa, and is the second most important industrial area in southern Africa (DMC, 1998, p. 1).

Relative to national levels, unemployment in KZN is high and monthly incomes are low (Orkin, 1998). Despite Durban’s diverse economic base which includes manufacturing, trade, finance,

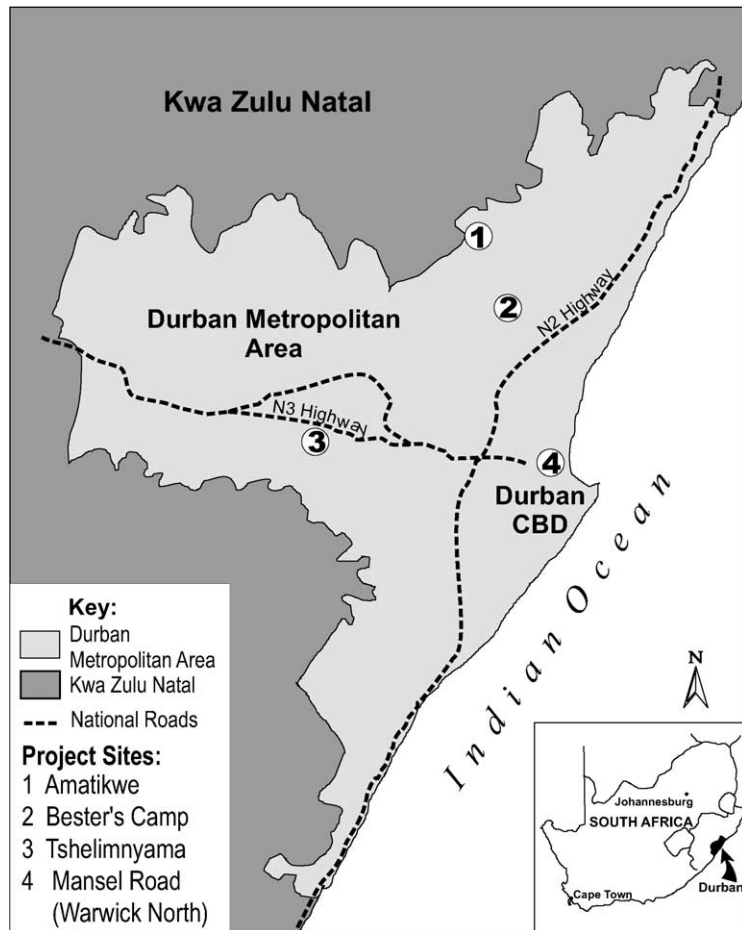


Fig. 1. Durban Metropolitan Area and Location of Case Studies.

transport and a declining input from agriculture (DMC, 1998), the informal sector, which has grown rapidly in recent years, is the largest employer in the city, accounting for 28% of the labour force (Pillay, 1996).

Regional population densities are high. KZN has the highest percentage (20.7%) of the national population, and yet comprises only 7.6% of the land area of the country (Orkin, 1998). During the 1980s, Durban witnessed a large influx of migrants from the surrounding regions, and with the elimination of apartheid legislation in the 1990s, urbanisation has surged to an annual rate of 5.7%. Today, 45% of KZN's population is accommodated in the DMA (Maharaj & Ramballi, 1998, p. 133). Local densities are still higher, as the dense population is distributed across difficult and hilly topography, to form peri-urban areas.

The DMA has grown around significant topographic barriers, including the sea, river gorges and a mountainous inland area (Pillay, 1996). Together with apartheid segregation and over years of racial and political strife, this topography has isolated many communities from the greater metropolitan area, instilling a culture of isolation and enhancing development problems. Inaccessible settlements are difficult to provide with municipal services (compared to national levels, KZN's social and physical infrastructure levels are poor), and environmental degradation is intensified as vegetation is cleared for dwellings. Often inaccessible topography, together with large numbers of informal settlements in the area, casts a degree of uncertainty over demographic data, and hinders the ability of local authorities and agencies to respond to development issues.

KZN encompasses a distinct political culture within South Africa. The region represents the kingdom of the Zulu nation, whose quest for political independence under the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has been the source of endemic political and ethnic rivalry with the ANC, the largest and dominant political group in South Africa. With the Zulu people constituting the largest population group (nationally, 72.4% of the population are *isiZulu* speakers), other cultural groups include Asian/Indian and Afrikaans communities, and a large white/European population. Politically, KZN is affiliated to the IFP, while other major metropolitan areas, Cape Town (Western Cape) and Johannesburg (Gauteng), are represented by the National Party and the African National Congress (ANC), respectively. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, an ANC government has governed South Africa.

Urban growth in this context has taken place through four main processes. These include: consolidation of settlements, after forced migration of ethnic or political rivals; the (sometimes consequent) invasion of fallow land; the extension of Durban's metropolitan boundaries to encompass traditional rural settlements; and the more traditional migration of rural people to the city centre in search of work.

Corresponding to these varied processes of growth, a range of leadership systems has come into direct contact with a metropolitan government. In addition to civic leaders, these include tribal leaders and church leaders. Prior to 1994, such leaderships were generally in the jurisdiction of "black" local authorities, and traditionally "white" municipalities have little capacity to deal with them.

We argue, that it is at this conjunction between new and established urban areas, and between "mainstream" and "minority" political cultures, that South Africa's changing policy framework is most severely tested, and the case studies presented below have been selected to illustrate the problems which arise.

4. Case studies

4.1. The settlements

Each of the case study communities represents a different process of formation, by which Durban has grown. These processes are prevalent throughout South Africa, and are clearly exemplified here.

Inanda was mainly settled during the mid-1980s, when a large number of rural–urban migrants established informal settlements in the area, as close to Durban as apartheid restrictions allow. Following ethnic and political strife, forced migration of Indians occurred from Inanda in 1992. The *Bester's Camp* community remained on this contested land and consolidated its settlement from 1992 onwards.

Accompanied by contestation of the Group Areas Act,¹ this process of displacement also resulted in the invasion of previously unsettled land, as in *Tshelimnyama*, which was regularised in 1992, after a land invasion of fallow land belonging to a convent, whose land fell within the DMA.

Much of the land around Durban that has been settled, was previously rural, and has been incorporated in the DMA only since 1995. *Amatikwe* exemplifies this process of urban growth through boundary expansion, to encompass previously rural areas, where a traditional village, built on tribal land, has been adopted into the DMA.

Finally, the centre of Durban has drawn many economic migrants from rural areas. A large proportion of these migrants are women who, although their homes are in rural areas, trade on the streets of Durban, and sleep on the sidewalk, next to their goods. The *Mansel Road Market* represents an attempt to house a group of street traders, and formalise their trade and living conditions/arrangements.

Although the processes of formation are very different, all four settlements are characterised by varying degrees of physical isolation from the rest of the metropolitan area. Mansel Road Market is located adjacent to Durban's central bus station and although not remote from the town's facilities, it is affected by local physical constraints due to poor planning. Limited access to passing trade and proximity to other markets means that its traders are physically isolated from passing trade, and from casual contact with other street traders. New markets, which have been set up flanking the entrance to their cul-de-sac, are heavily dominated by Asian males, so that the physical isolation is further compounded by racial/cultural and gender differences. These constraints are illustrated in Fig. 1, which shows the location of major street trading areas in down-town Durban, as well as of Mansell Road Market.

The three communities on the periphery of the metropolitan area (*Bester's Camp*, *Tshelimnyama* and *Amatikwe*) are hindered from frequent contact with the city centre, or with other communities, by long distances, poor roads, dependence on poor public transport, and low car ownership. Fig. 1 identifies the location of study sites in relation to the metropolitan area, and of the roads which serve them.

¹ Apartheid-era legislation which formally entrenched separate residential areas for different racial groups. Although the legislation has been abolished, land is often contested in land claims, by communities who were forcibly removed from land zoned for a different racial group under the Groups Areas Act.

The effects of this physical isolation are compounded by unemployment, which is significantly higher in the four study areas than in the Durban region as a whole (CSS, 1999).

4.2. The projects

Within each of these settlements, we have focused on a particular, and locally important, public-building development project. All projects selected have in common a partnership involving the community, local government (if only as a ground landlord), funders (from both public and private sources), consultants, who acted in a range of capacities, and to a lesser extent, the central state.

The case studies are based on interviews with focus groups, community activists, key participants in the development projects, users of the project and community members who remained detached from the process. Consultants who acted on the communities' behalf in drawing up briefs, designing and planning developments, raising funds, establishing or seeking out capacity-building and training programmes, and followed the projects through to successful maturation—or to eventual failure—were also interviewed, as were local government officials and NGO officers.

The notion of a 'successfully matured' project is open to interpretation. In this paper, we take it to mean: successful completion of the physical facilities; successful management of the planned operation of the service they house; and the creation through its development of the social and institutional infrastructure needed to enable the community to engage in further projects.

Thus, although we are studying projects which culminate in construction, it is the enabling process by which this comes about that is the focus of our attention. The importance of such projects is that by their nature they have a long gestation period, enabling us to identify interest groupings, conflicts of interest, forced changes of direction, and so on.

In terms of South Africa's national policy framework, these projects had roots, which went back more than 10 years prior to the RDP, and they continued to develop and change after the official introduction of GEAR.

4.3. A brief description

(1) Amatikwe community hall, 1983–1999

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Objective: | to provide a meeting place and church for established community centre |
| Funds: | R1.5 million, although only R750,000 spent on building |
| Funders: | Independent Development Trust (IDT) |
| Construction time: | 15 months |
| 1983–1992: | discussions between Durban municipality, District Land Authority and local leaders; agreement to parcellation and formation of Community Development Trust; village plan developed; finance and bridging loan approved for community hall; wrangling over plot allocation stalled process |

- 1994–1995: continued stalemate caused interest on bridging finance to halve capital; community hall built to reduced specification
- 1996–1998: local political unrest culminated in changes to hall users and managers; increased influence of traditional leader
- (2) *Primary school, Amenities Centre, Bester's Camp, Inanda, 1990–1999*
- Objective: to offer local education and enhance local amenities (which also include a community hall, library, training centre, utility payment centre and a management office), in a recently resettled informal township of Inanda
- Funds: R5.5 million
- Funders: National Public Works Programme (other amenities funded variously by Independent Development Trust, Provincial Government, Durban Metropolitan Council)
- Construction time: 12 months
- 1990–1994: a parastatal, the Urban Foundation, appointed by the provincial government, established a Community Development Trust, with minimal local consultation and board membership, and produced a master plan for the amenity centre; increase in local resentment, focused through local civics, led to boycotts and threats and culminated in withdrawal of Urban Foundation and reconstitution of trust renamed Inanda Community Development Trust (ICDT) and its board, to include largely locally elected members
- 1995: master plan, development priorities and individual building plans developed through extensive tiered consultation process, managed by Trust board
- 1996–1999: sub-committees elected to deal with building and management of each facility; school developed at same time as other facilities, although management of hall later ceded to municipality, due to high costs; Trust started development process for a central market
- (3) *Community hall, Tshalemnyama, 1984–1998*
- Objective: to offer local meeting place and first development project for newly established informal community
- Funds: R1.1 million
- Funders: Durban Metropolitan Council
- Construction time: 9 months
- 1984–1992: monastic lands settled illegally, as people displaced from nearby settlements; settlement regularised; land eventually sold to municipality for token sum after negotiations between settlers' committee and monastery
- 1994–1995: committee appointments democratised through pressure of local youth; new area-based structure instituted; new committee voted in; new local councillor elected; development priorities agreed
- 1996–1999: consultants and project managers appointed; funding agreed after protests; role-players trained; construction of hall completed despite disruptions; infrastructure works continue to be disrupted; management committee paralysed

(4) *Mansell Road Market, Greyville, 1986–1999*

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Objective: | to provide housing and shelter for 40 women street traders, their families and goods |
| Funds: | R1.2 m |
| Funders: | Durban Metropolitan Council |
| Construction time: | 9 months |
| 1986–1993: | a number of women traders, sleeping rough, form a group under a charismatic leader; the growing group suffers repeated police harassment, and their leader begins negotiations with the municipality over eviction and formal housing; mayor commissions feasibility study |
| 1994–1995: | plans put forward in feasibility study developed in consultation with traders, but modified through pressure from competing market traders and land owners; market built |
| 1996–1999: | Trading stations allocated by committee, and women move into market; very little trading done locally, due to changed plans; rent boycott |

An outline of the development process in each is presented in Table 1.

4.4. *Analysis of case studies and main findings*

These four case studies can now be reviewed in the light of the questions posed in our introduction. First, does isolation from mainstream political culture in South Africa affect the extent and nature of community participation in the development process? Second, have the changes in South Africa's evolving development policy succeeded in influencing the extent and nature of community participation in a range of communities?

The questions are reviewed through an analysis over time, of the changing culture, politics and institutions of participation, which identifies the policy phases reviewed above.

4.4.1. *Cultural factors*

The first question we address is whether a participatory culture exists in a settlement, the value which is attached by people to finding self-expression, for themselves and for others. Of the four case studies, only Bester's Camp can be considered to have belonged to a mainstream ANC political culture. This cultural identity was forged during the apartheid era (KN), following ethnic and political strife against largely Indian PAC supporters (DC), and in opposition to the development policies of the white Nationalist government, as embodied in the Urban Foundation (DC, DVH). It required long-term mentoring and facilitation (FZ, EW2), but culminated in the establishment of a strong local culture of participation and accountability. This culture received a boost from the establishment of RDP as a national policy, and has remained strong in the settlement, throughout the period, with regular meetings (MN), insistence on clear accounts by councillors and officers (NN), and insistence on clarification and co-operation from consultants and officials (JM, DC, JN). Their sentiments were widely echoed by local people (EW2).

However, in three of the four case studies, this participatory culture has not evolved.

Tshelemnyama was newly settled by people from diverse backgrounds suspicious of each other and of authority. During apartheid, they 'coped' with the need to negotiate collectively in an ad

hoc and relatively unstructured manner (TK). Factions developed, largely along generational lines (MM). Suspicion between factions was deep (JN, TK). Antagonism frequently led to physical violence (PM, JN). The fall of the Nationalist government brought about a change in power relations (MM), with the youth gaining influence (TK) but, despite the institution of the RDP, there was little increase in participation in Tshelemnyama (MM). While the youth had established a formal structure of area-based electoral democracy, the turn-out for both elections, consultation meetings and report-backs were largely limited to their own supporters, as they acknowledged themselves (TK). The introduction of formal management criteria following GEAR has had little effect on this state of apathy and suspicion (TK, JN, MM): although the youth, including young women, now have representation, virtually no middle-aged or older people participate in the settlement's life (EW3).

In complete contrast, a broad participatory culture also failed to develop in Amatikwe, paradoxically, *because* of its long-established structures. Here, a strong religious leader acted as interpreter and fundraiser for both traditional leader and the community as a whole throughout apartheid (AS, KM). As lynchpin to a succession of consultants and development agencies, he has maintained his power in the settlement (JN, PM). A brief 'uprising' by local youth (AS) has been the only, and passing, challenge to established methods of operating. Households interviewed were reticent about local politics and reluctant to participate in decision making.

4.4.2. *Power and politics*

This leads directly into a second issue, that of power relations in a settlement. The central question here is: how do such relations affect access to decision making by ordinary people, and do ordinary people find a place within participatory development? Finally, has the changing policy framework altered this local balance of power?

Somewhat surprisingly, the size of communities played a relatively small role here. The smallest community was the 44 women traders who remained in the Mansel Road Market. These women live and trade within sight of each other. Their lives are closely inter-mingled. Nevertheless, only a small number of committee members are involved in decision-making (BB, RH), and they are closely allied with the strong leader (BB, AM). When housing plots or other benefits are allocated, a 'pecking order' is closely observed (RT, BB). Oddly, this inequity in access to power and the goods associated with it has grown, not shrunk, over the years (EW1). Tactics for negotiations with the municipality, or for dealing with a hostile police force, were decided collectively in the apartheid era. The formation of committee structures has enabled an entrenchment of existing leadership powers and a curtailment of accountability (EW1).

In Amatikwe too, the establishment of increasingly formal committee structures and compositions has had little impact on the entrenched power of the local religious leader, over ordinary local people (AS, JN).

In fact, although its much larger population size makes Bester's Camp impossible to manage as a direct democracy (MN, NN), it is there that accountability, consultation and feedback appear to have been most equitably implemented (EW2). It is noteworthy, however, that the formalisation of democratic power structures in Inanda took place during the RDP, and were well established by the time they were explicitly enshrined in institutional policy following the introduction of GEAR. They may therefore be said to have developed *alongside, rather than as a consequence* of policy changes.

4.4.3. Institutional change

Institutional structures are the legal basis of a project or a programme. The extent to which these are representative and accountable, are the issues which arise from the preceding discussion of local-political influences on development. Inter-alia, this extends to cover mechanisms for selecting representatives and mechanisms for accountability, for example, reporting structures within the community and to external agents, accounting systems, access to accounts and reports, checks and balances, means of communication, extent of information spread, sustainability of representativeness and reporting over time (Bortei-Doku Aryeety, 1998).

Without being specific about means, the RDP requires that the development process “democratise the country through active participation of the citizenry in decision making” (ANC, 1994, p. 1). In practice, a range of organisational types has evolved over the period.

The projects in this study exemplified Section 21 non-profit companies (Amatikwe and Tshelimnyama), development trusts (Bester’s Camp), and voluntary associations (Mansel Road). All rely on a process by which the community as a whole takes strategic decisions, while day to day decisions are made by an executive committee (or board of trustees), which are accountable to the broader community. Over the study period, the formal reporting mechanisms in all the study projects remained unchanged. At Bester’s Camp and Tshelimnyama, role players and members of the executive reported to their respective committees on a fortnightly basis. Meetings open to the broader community were held once a month. Similar frequencies of reporting prevailed in Amatikwe and Thselemnyama, where the executive committee met every two weeks and the community was invited for a ‘report-back’ once a month. In the Mansel Road community, reporting was ad hoc, as a meeting could easily be called at any time.

4.4.4. Technical problems

The successful maturation of a project was defined as the completion of a building and the fulfillment of its planned functions in serving the community. Each of the building projects undertaken here culminated in the production of a building.

The school in Bester’s Camp was fully utilised. There were plans to expand its computing equipment (KK), and plans to develop joint activity programmes with the library (CW), although a number of serious strategic and operational concerns were voiced (NK, KK).

However, not all case study projects were as successful.

In Mansel Road Market, the traders had been defeated in their battle to open the cul-de-sac and so benefit from passing trade, and had been defeated in their battle to remove another market which had established itself at the entrance to their street (BB). Consequently, they were forced back into trading on the streets, with the houses and shops used for accommodation and storage only (EW1).

More relevant to us, are the cases where partial success is the product of problems within the community. Here Amatikwe poses a particularly good example, as it is internal disputes over the allocation and size of privatised land (JN), which delayed planning and construction of the hall (PM) and resulted in half the development capital being lost through interest payments (AS). However, It is very difficult to identify the extent to which changing policy frameworks have affected this process. Nevertheless, it is significant that to this day, despite the changing policy framework, a number of plots remain unallocated and a number of disputes remain unresolved.

It is in terms of financial management that a very significant change appears to have been made by the new structure. Whereas previously funds were held and disbursed by the committee on behalf of the community, this has now changed. Where funding comes from the local authority, monies are drawn down against completion certificates or consultants' fee claims only. The change has substantially reduced opportunity for financial irregularities, or for simple mismanagement. In fact, this had little impact on the community centre in Amatikwe, as its funding in the recent past has been from private benefactors (interview, AS) and is thus not subject to this clause. On the other hand, infra-structure works at Tshelimnyama, as well as projected market developments in both Bester's Camp (interview, Ngwale) and Amatikwe (interview, Nkosi), will go ahead on this basis.

A second point where projects are vulnerable is when moving into a big building. The change in the nature of management needed, the adjustment in spending patterns, the adjustment in lines of accountability, all appeared to be too much to handle in some cases. This was particularly evident in the case of Tshelimnyama community hall, where the management of the hall and the prospect of taking responsibility for its maintenance were perceived as a baffling challenge by the young people in charge. This problem was reduced at Bester's Camp where the strong management structure which evolved, has successfully tackled this step with successive projects. In Amatikwe, the strong authority of the church leader means that the hall is largely in his management, and there is little spread of management skills required. Interestingly, the Mansel Road Market is an exception. Although they have had little involvement in its production, the leader and the other traders have made a range of improvised changes to the courtyard shops and flats, roofing over the courtyards and the use of rooms, displaying a real ability to cope with the buildings provided for them. By and large, this wide range of coping mechanisms appears to be independent of policy framework, and it seems likely that, at least as they have been interpreted in the DMA, the policy changes have been irrelevant to issues of facilities management.

However, Financial problems arising from the commissioning of the buildings have dogged Mansel Road Market (interview, RH), as the cost implications of trading are realised. This due not only to poor representation of traders' views during the planning stages, but also to a third problem in development, which we now address.

The third point where a project is vulnerable is once planning is complete, because then it is vulnerable to changes in the surrounding environment. This is of particular interest in dense urban areas, and the case of Mansel Road Market illustrates this clearly. Initially designed as a through-route, the street became a cul-de-sac and its amenities shared, through no fault of either the community or its external agents, but due to compromises made at the local authority level with competing interests, severely reducing its accessibility to passing trade.

5. Summary and discussion

Since 1994, development policy in South Africa has had the dual aim of providing badly needed amenities and services in traditionally disadvantaged areas, and of empowering traditionally disadvantaged people, both economically and politically. These were stated intentions of the

RDP, and while never abandoned with the introduction of GEAR, its macroeconomic and macromanagement focus led to a change in management structures at the national and local level. In turn, although municipal and provincial governments have adopted the principles of the RDP, they have formalised them, and the measures they have adopted have been largely endorsed by the parastatals involved. The impacts of this change are gradually emerging.

In the preceding sections, we presented an analysis of the progress of four development projects, sited within four very different communities. All the settlements were isolated, physically and culturally, from mainstream bureaucratic culture. As a result, they had been formed differently and the power distribution within them varied widely. The management structures within projects were standard and similar. Nevertheless, the power distribution within the projects, as well as their participatory practices, varied widely, and more closely reflected the prevailing political culture in the settlement, than the standardised project structures used.

In terms of the extent and quality of participatory practice adopted within each of the communities identified here, the change of policy appears to have been influential only at the margins. The commitment appears to have had some impact at Bester's Camp, where a strong representative culture with a clear and widely supported spatial structure was in operation well before such practices became national policy. The adoption of external policy has had the effect of bringing in groups which were still somewhat marginalised by that process, giving women and youth more voice. The stronger role of councillors, accountable to the electorate and to local government, which is not an ANC stronghold, has also allowed non-ANC supporters a stronger voice. In the other projects, there has been little impact from development policy changes—a climate of fear and resignation are too strong.

In terms of creating opportunity for local people to engage with outside agencies and processes, thus gaining experience and skills, the increasingly formal policy appears to have had little impact in culturally isolated communities. In Amatikwe and Tshelimnyama, the new policy in effect institutionalised the very limited level at which most members of the community had been able to effectively engage in debate with external agents. In Bester's Camp, effective channels of communication had already been established prior to the policy change and were simply switched from a focus on private sector donors, parastatals and NGOs, to focus on local and provincial government. Although the leadership was affected, the impact on the input of members of the community was minimal.

In terms of the development of marketable skills, there has been a significant change. The withdrawal of direct management of state subsidy monies from the community domain has been particularly important in reducing the opportunity for financial mismanagement and irregularities. At the same time, the change in policy will dramatically alter the opportunities inherent in the management process for the transfer of skills, accumulation of management experience at the local level, and empowerment, which come from the direct experience of financial management. The situation is no better in Amatikwe, where funding for amenities has been primarily private, because financial management remains tightly controlled by the church leader.

In terms of the longer-term viability of developments, the formalised system appears to have made some improvements. With the introduction of new policies and the growing involvement of local authorities in managing the funding and production of public amenity buildings, there is now a point at which hand-over must take place. There are varying interpretations of local

authority responsibility in this regard, and it remains to be seen what stance Durban's Metropolitan Council and its sub-structures will adopt. In Cape Town, the gradual process of hand-over, which takes anything up to 3 years of training and support has been instituted, and appears to be working well (CR).

Beyond the successful development of a single project, the development of local institutional structures, which can initiate and sustain further development, is of great importance to a locality's future. It is particularly in this sphere that the four case studies presented here have broad and important implications.

In all the case studies, leadership in the community and leadership in a particular project overlapped significantly. In Amatikwe, the head of the local church heads both the community and development of its amenities, in conjunction with the tribal leader. In Tshelennyama, the educated elite is represented by the 'young hawks' of the ANC Youth League. The settlement is new and not subject to a tribal leadership. In Mansel Road Market, the community is led by one of the women, a powerful personality, with marginally more education than her peers and the confidence to negotiate with anyone. Like Amatikwe's church leader, she led the community long before being elected chair of its development committee. Democratic structures in these three communities are almost secondary arenas to the real power plays, which centre on powerful individuals. Bester's Camp is an exception, where developments are led by a board of trustees, largely comprised of elected councillors, and based on a structure established with the end of apartheid.

This is exemplified in Amatikwe, where the leader acted as a conduit of information both to the tribal leadership in the area and to the residents of the village. His power was further reinforced, because the high prevailing levels of illiteracy and illness in the village, meant that the amenities developed through his efforts, acted as a major source of employment to local residents. Consequently, people were reluctant to question his authority. Similarly, the leader in Mansel Road acts as distributor of incoming goods for sale, helps to resolve territorial disputes with traders from other nearby markets, and carries out the negotiations over rent levels with the local authority. Other women were resentful of her authority, yet reluctant to challenge it openly on any issue.

There are underlying factors which determine not only project success but, more generally, the ability of developments to flourish in a community, and more importantly still, the ability of communities to move on and engage in further development, increasingly independently, and increasing their own independence.

These factors lie squarely in the relationship between ordinary people and their local leaders. Where people are heavily dependent on local leaders for survival or communication, significant institutional change may be discouraged, primacy may go unchallenged, and democracy is unlikely to flourish. The keys to further progress appear to lie less in the increasing regulation of the development process, and more in combating illiteracy and unemployment.

To summarise, the findings presented above suggest a strong link between opportunities for socio-economic mobility and personal development on the one hand, and a successful development process on the other. These findings also suggest that 'gate keeping' is 'alive and well', even in a society pledged to transformation.

These findings have important implications for the structuring of development work. They present a clear challenge to the idea that development funding should be channelled through existing power structures. Given the complexity of local power brokering, it may be that power

structures need to be negotiated at the project level, if mobility is to be enabled and development implemented successfully.

The fact that the projects all conformed to similar structures and guidelines, and yet were so different in the ways in which these structures were able to serve their needs, suggests that an understanding of political and economic structures in the locality is crucial to project success. Further research is clearly needed regarding the interface between structured bureaucracies, on the one hand, and the very varied communities which they are attempting to serve, on the other.

Interviews

Tshelimnyama

- TK Thembakusi Keswa, chairman of development committee, 3.99
- MM Mr. Madlala, councillor at Inner West sub-structure, 3.99
- KM Kevin McGary, architect, Paul Mikula Associates, 3.99
- PM Paul Mikula, architect, Paul Mikula Associates, 3.99
- JN Jeff Nightingale, Project Manager, Technical Services Department, Inner West sub-structure, Durban Metro, 3.99
- EW3 Evaluation Workshop: 2:00–5:00 p.m., 14.3.99, 22 participants

Amatikwe

- AS Rev. Arthur Sibisi, community and church leader
 - KM Kevin McGary, architect, Paul Mikula Associates, 3.99
 - PM Paul Mikula, architect, Paul Mikula Associates, 3.99
 - JN Jeff Nightingale, Project Manager, Technical Services Department, Inner West Substructure, Durban Metro, 3.99
- Workshop: none held

Bester's Camp school

- DC Dave Crompton, Crompton Associates, project manager, 3.99
- JM Juanina Masojada, MMM Design Workshop, architect and planner, 3.99
- MN Mr. Ngwale, local councillor, 3.99
- KN K.K. Nkosi, head-master, 3.99
- NN Notte Nkoba, manager, Bester's Camp amenities centre, 3.99
- JM Jeff Nightingale, Project Manager, Technical Services Department, I.W. sub-structure, 3.99
- DVH Derek van Heerden, architect, 3.99
- FZ Fasani Zimella, facilitator, 3.99
- EW2 Evaluation Workshop: 14.3.99, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 40 participants

Mansel Road Market

- BB Beauty, community leader, 3.99
- SC Sarah Charleton, Housing Department, City of Durban

- RH Rodney Harber, Harber Associates, architect and planner, 3.99
 RT Prof. Rob Taylor, University of Natal Durban, 3.99
 NW Nick Winton, Director of Architectural Service, Durban Metro, 3.99
 EW1 Evaluation Workshop: 5.3.99, 2:00–6:00 p.m., 30 participants

General

- SK Stellos Kominos, Director, Khuphuka
 DM Dominic Mitchell, Interface Africa, 3.99
 VS Vish Suprasad, private consultant and member of KZN Housing Board, 3.99
 CR Comfort Ralarala, director, Arts and Culture, Cape Town City Council, 3.99

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