

5.

EXPANDING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Often the difficult issues faced by a community are too complex and involve too many divergent interests to be successfully resolved at the ballot box. Facilitating citizen participation in decision-making processes can augment electoral democracy by helping to build trust and confidence and by managing or resolving disputes that cannot be arbitrated by elections alone. Indeed, one of the most important functions of collaborative approaches is that they tend to reduce the cost of losing an electoral contest, thereby mitigating the conflict-inducing nature of winner-take-all politics.

This chapter describes the benefits of enhancing citizen participation in local governance, while acknowledging that in some cases there may be disadvantages to making a decision-making process too broad and potentially unwieldy. Much depends on the skills and training of the facilitators. Knowledge of process options, facilitative skills, and awareness of ways that similar deadlocks elsewhere have been broken are often the keys to success. Issues covered in this chapter include:

- **Innovative options to enhance citizen participation from around the world;**
- **How skills such as negotiation, mediation, and facilitation relate to effective management of citizen participation efforts;**
- **The pitfalls of empowering citizens to make decisions through these mechanisms;**
- **Ways to evaluate consensus-oriented decision-making approaches, and when such methods may be unnecessary or unachievable; and**
- **The importance of communication and education for participatory democracy, and new methods of participation using information technology.**

5.1 What is Collaborative Civic Engagement?

■ *Involving citizens in community policy-making improves information flow, accountability, and due process; it gives a voice to those most directly affected by public policy.*

Collaborative civic engagement refers to policies and methods for creating opportunities for citizens to get directly involved in community policy-making and implementation. Often, in collaborative decision-making the broad range of interests and identities in a community are represented and different perspectives and positions are valued and integrated into collective decisions. Although collective decision-making can be difficult, complicated, time-consuming, and sometimes unattainable, when consensus-based decisions are made, the results are often more legitimate and widely accepted than decisions made by elected officials acting independently.

In evaluating what type of collaborative decision-making approach may be appropriate, it is important to keep in mind two distinctions: *ad hoc*, issue-specific methods for management (e.g., an environmental dispute such as site selection for a new waste-treatment facility) and ongoing collaborative organizations that deal with continuing issues such as education or town planning; and processes that involve direct citizen participation as compared with those that involve only those with a special interest in an issue and who exercise inordinate power (“stakeholders”).

Figure 15	Traditional Participation	Enhanced Participation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Representative democracy ■ Standing for office ■ Voting for candidates ■ Active in political parties ■ Election monitoring ■ Communicating with elected officials ■ Involvement in the legislative or official policy-making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct democracy ■ Citizen initiatives ■ Information-gathering ■ Consultation ■ Community decision-making ■ Dispute resolution mechanisms and peace-building efforts ■ Involvement in civil society processes

Building effective participatory procedures at the local level offers a strategic opportunity to build democracy and manage social conflict at the national level. Local governance with strong citizen involvement and meaningful participation forms the ground-level tier of democracy.

5.1.1 The Importance of Participation

There are a variety of reasons for encouraging and facilitating citizen participation and collaboration. Perhaps fundamentally, *participation* is intrinsic to the core meaning of democracy. It is essential for good governance as it improves information flow, accountability, due process, and gives voice to those most directly affected by public policy. Democracy theorist Robert Dahl emphasizes the notion of “effective participation” – i.e., citizens having an adequate and equal opportunity to express their preferences, place questions on the agenda, and articulate reasons for endorsing one outcome over another.

Procedures that emphasize ongoing participation between elections and consensus-oriented decision-making provide more legitimate decisions because people have been involved in making them, emphasizes Jane Mansbridge in her book *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. The book stresses how collective decision-making in an alternative workplace and in a town hall meeting in New England (in the US) produced more durable policy solutions than either electoral or top-down approaches.

One practical outcome of participation is the creation of “social capital”. Social capital is the trust and confidence that is developed when government and civil society meet together in pursuit of a community’s common good, explains political scientist Robert Putnam. Social capital is the basis of legitimacy for official government institutions and is necessary for effective and efficient governance. Without social capital, when trust and confidence are lacking, then progress of government efforts can be hindered; in the long run, communities without trust are dysfunctional and in the worst scenarios violence among contending social forces can erupt. Collaborative civic engagement can be a critical tool in reinvigorating social capital that exists and building new social capital when it is absent.

As communities become increasingly diverse, collaborative decision-making processes are providing new methods for preventing, managing, and resolving community disputes. In the United States, for example, local government activists have taken the lead in directly linking diversity with new forms of participation. A 1997 National Civic League report states:

As the number and diversity of actors expecting to be part of any community decision increase, so must the process for making these decisions become more

accessible. Bringing diverse players together – finding common ground, defining shared interests – is a process of self-realization whereby all community members can discover that they have the talent and ideas necessary to improve life for themselves and their neighbors.

Finally, international influences on local governance are increasing around the world as the international economy affects critical issues for local decision-makers and international standards on democratic decision-making are strengthened. The need to improve participation in local governance thus seems to be a direct outgrowth of the changing pressures in a globalizing and urbanizing world. If sustainable local development is to be a reality, participatory governance is a necessity.

Figure 16

Key Terms in Collaborative Decision-Making

Collaboration is defined as a process in which the diverse interests that exist in a community are brought together in a structured process of joint decision-making. Often, third parties are involved in helping facilitate agreement. When common decisions are made, there are often mechanisms built in for implementing these decisions together. Collaborative approaches are often used for managing issues of development and economic well-being, goal setting, planning and policy-making, and implementation of policies and programmes. Collaborative decision-making is linked to efforts to prevent disputes by involving everyone in decisions before conflicts arise, to manage ongoing differences, and to settle disputes that threaten the health and cohesion of the community.

Conflict resolution is a catch-all term that often refers to prevention, management, and settlement of disputes. As scholar John Burton describes: "Decision-making at the community level is likely to focus on human needs as they surface in family, social and school environments. It is likely to be, therefore, more problem-solving than would be the case at a level at which there is little face-to-face contact between decision-makers and those affected." Managing these basic human needs issues in a collaborative way is a key to conflict resolution and violence prevention.

Consensus is defined as the decision rule that operates in a collaborative process. This involves a group decision to which all – or the most number of participants possible, including all of those with the capacity to "scuttle" or "spoil" a decision (sometimes called "sufficient consensus") – subscribe. The decision is arrived at through open and honest dialogue, give-and-take, and empathetic appreciation of opposing points of view. Ideally, the process includes equal power and responsibility of the participants, although this goal is sometimes elusive when especially powerful interests are involved.

5.2 Designing a Collaborative Process

■ *Deciding who will participate in collaborative decision-making is one of the most critical issues in designing such processes; setting the agenda, defining objectives, and evaluating results are also important.*

Collaborative policy-making processes seem especially well suited to difficult and complex social concerns. These include problems such as:

- The environment and sustainable development;
- Crime and an aspiration for safe communities;
- Discrimination and social justice; and
- Poverty and a more equitable society.

Collaborative, participatory policy-making is not a single approach or a single method. There is a wide variety of techniques that may serve different purposes or have varying forms, costs, structures, and effects. These approaches may be used singly or in combination. Which method might work best, and when it should be used, is highly contingent on context. For example, in a particular local context there may be a traditional culture of decision-making with long-standing patterns of policy formation, leadership, and class or ethnic relations that inform the feasibility of an approach or method. So, designing culturally specific methodologies involves taking into account on-the-ground structures, discretion, and sensitivities.

5.2.1 Setting the Agenda

Choosing among various types of collaborative approaches is often a matter of agenda setting. Agenda setting determines not just the issues to be discussed, but the overall purpose of the activity and its ultimate aims. In many instances, local authorities will decide the agenda and solicit participation. On the other hand, there are clear benefits to involving civil society at the very earliest stages of planning for collaborative approaches, as civic NGOs often can play a vital role in developing capacity, thinking through in-process issues, and facilitating post-dialogue steps such as follow-up, evaluation, and implementation.

Some of the questions to think about in deciding what type of collaborative process to use and how to set it up include the following:

- What are the objectives? For what purpose is the participatory initiative being launched?

- What should the process look like? Who should initiate it? Who should be involved? What types of responses are expected or desired?
- How can the problems be defined? Who has the expertise and on what aspects?
- What should the agenda be?
- Where should the talks be held and what type of room arrangement is most conducive to a successful meeting?
- How should participants be invited? How should the aims, structure, and goals of the process be announced?
- What methods can be used to facilitate the discussions?
- How can the discussion be moved from dialogue to consensus-building, especially in bringing the initiative to closure?
- How can decisions be implemented and how can the results be evaluated? How should the results of the process be used?
- How can the outcome and the next steps be communicated to others?
- Who will sponsor the process, and who will provide the resources for it? What types of training and other pre-initiative preparatory work will need to occur before the initiative can be launched?
- How can the main participants in the process be involved at the very earliest stages in the planning and project formulation process?

5.2.2 Selecting Participants

One of the enduring issues in collaborative decision-making processes is that of selecting participants. Who should be included, who (if anyone) should be excluded and who should decide the matter of participation? Should participants be chosen or should open invitations be issued? How structured should participation be (i.e., representatives of organizations, prominent individuals, or ordinary citizens)? How many participants should be involved? Selecting participants is not just a practical matter of policy or politics, it is a critical aspect of what is known as “democratic justice”, which is related to the notion of inclusivity. At least one purpose of making participation as broadly inclusive as possible is building and strengthening social ties among individuals, organizations, and institutions around common interest solutions.

A collaborative decision-making process can take more time to reach decisions, but it can make the implementation process more efficient by preventing blocking of decisions by interests opposed to it. If community groups are provided greater opportunities for moulding and shaping decisions that affect them, they will be less likely to ignore, resist, or withhold their support for new initiatives. This is the principle of “ownership” of the process, which has become a tenet of local development

projects around the world. Lawrence Susskind, in the book *Breaking the Impasse*, has referred to this kind of decision-making as “slow-fast”, meaning that the process can be slow and tedious as consensus is being forged, but then the process is fast when implemented because of the broad support for the decisions that have been made.

Figure 17**Designing Successful Collaborative Processes**

- *Bring all to the table.* Efforts should involve the entire range of community interests and bring a number of disparate people together in the same forum for interactive dialogue and consensus-based decision-making. Insofar as possible, traditional power brokers and those traditionally disadvantaged should relate to each other on equal terms. Leadership should come from all sectors of society. Access to decision-making for all affected groups, organizations, and agencies is critical.
- *Identify mutual interests.* Participatory processes should seek to bridge differences and find solutions based on the common interests of the community to live together in a mutually beneficial way. All participants should take responsibility for the process and its outcomes.
- *Trust and confidence.* Participation should be aimed at improving intergroup relations, promoting trust and confidence, and developing a broader identity for diverse communities.
- *Stick with it.* Participants should be fully committed to the process and should be willing to see it through moments of difficult bargaining, sensitive issues, impasse, and even breakdown. Link the responsibility of participation to civic duty.
- *Stay focused on the problem.* The process should focus on the issue at hand, in particular defining problems, sketching out the broadest possible array of options, developing strategies and finding solutions that can be jointly implemented.
- *Be creative.* When possible, a new option should be developed through discussion that is better for all. When this proves impossible, issues should be traded, not unified. It is often unreasonable to expect that all citizens or civic groups involved in a participatory process will be able to unify or merge their divergent interests. A more realistic principle is that the common interests should be identified and emphasized; divergent interests should not be ignored, but rather efforts should be made to encourage participants to trade off their interests in an overall mutually beneficial agreement.
- *Everybody is equal.* Processes should seek to achieve official government participation as an explicit form of partnership. That is, the official deci-

sion-makers are sometimes party to municipal disputes; they often cannot approach a participatory process as an arbitrator or final decision-maker.

- *Drive from below; co-ordinate from above.* Those community representatives whose interests are directly affected by the issue at hand should drive the process. Yet, local government authorities often must be responsible for co-ordinating the process and managing practical aspects of it, such as financing of decisions and co-ordinating with other policies or programmes.

- *Practise external accounting and internal flexibility.* Participatory processes must be externally accountable and transparent, yet within them there should be flexibility in the dialogue – participants should be able to speak freely – and in the process and methods of decision-making.

- *Don't forget the very practical issues of launching and sustaining a collaborative decision-making process.* Resources, staffing, capacity of agencies and organizations, and ability of parties to negotiate in good faith and reach consensus must be carefully assessed prior to any initiative.

- *Committed personnel.* Collaborative policy-making and implementation processes often run aground when there are a shortage of qualified personnel with negotiation, mediation and consensus-building skills; when there are limited resources to support the effort; when the culture of decision-making is hierarchical (top-down); and when there is a lack of public awareness of the issues or the process.

- *Be aware of links to the electoral arena.* Remember that ultimately many decisions will be decided at the polls in the next election. Electoral and participatory democracy can be complementary, but they can also work at cross-purposes.

5.2.3 Role of Public Officials

What role, if any, should the local authority be given in such a process? Should the official be an advocate for defining a problem and promoting a solution, a mediator among various civil society groups, a listener and ultimately an arbitrator, or a facilitator of the process? Indeed, local authorities may end up playing various roles at different stages or even simultaneously. In any event, each of these tasks will require more of local authorities in terms of their own skills as *social mediators*. Local authorities must be able:

- To build coalitions;
- To listen carefully to different points of view;
- To be open to persuasion;

- To be able to negotiate and mediate among contending social forces;
- To forge a consensus; and
- To decide when complete consensus is impossible or undesirable.

NGO staff and citizens, too, should possess these skills so that consensus policy-making does not prevent them from being manipulated by more powerful state officials or by other interest groups.

Some of the roles that local authorities can play in collaborative decision-making processes:

- *Convener.* The public official convenes and ultimately decides on the structure, participants, nature of participation, agenda, outcomes, and implementation. The “convening power” of the municipal authority suggests that it in some way has the legitimacy and capacity to gather all the parties around the table and to facilitate their participation.
- *Mediator.* A mediator acts as a third-party facilitator in bringing together disparate individuals or groups in a dispute. Mediation implies that the official may seek to manipulate the situation to bring the parties to agreement, for example through financial incentives or sanctions, but that ultimately the parties themselves must reach agreement on how to solve the problem.
- *Catalyst.* Authorities may serve to catalyze a consultative process, and work with civic groups to facilitate and launch a participatory initiative that will ultimately be run by others, such as a neighbourhood association.
- *Funder.* In some instances, local governments may prefer to allow other groups to conceptualize and implement a participatory process, but do not want to be directly involved. They may alternatively provide financial resources to an NGO or civic organization, such as a church, to design and manage the initiative.
- *Technical assistance provider.* Similarly, when technical issues such as zoning or sanitation are involved, local officials may serve in participatory forums primarily as the providers of technical assistance.
- *Capacity-builder.* Local authorities may help empower certain groups to participate in a process by helping them “build capacity”. This may involve training, education, financial support, or informal advice.
- *Partner.* Local authorities may also seek to partner with civil society groups, such as NGOs, to launch and manage a process. Partnership involves division of labour, combining resources, mutual support, and shared obligations.

Checklist**Steps Involved in Planning Collaborative Projects**

- Form a planning committee;
- Plan a series of conversations;
- Choose a leader for the discussions;
- Divide tasks among members of the planning committee;
- Choose a focus for the discussion;
- Select materials for the discussion;
- Determine the discussion format;
- Draw up a set of ground rules for the discussion;
- Locate and invite potential participants; and
- Create a syllabus and set out the ground rules for the discussion series.

Leading a Discussion

- Be prepared;
- Lead introductions;
- Facilitate each session;
- Handle procedural and behavioural issues;
- Create opportunities for all participants to speak;
- Keep the discussion moving;
- Close each session; and
- Bring closure to the discussion series.

Follow-up

- Conduct evaluations;
- Generate ideas about methods to continue the discussion; and
- Implement follow-up activities in the community.

5.3 Overview of Participatory Approaches

■ *There are a wide range of participatory approaches including information gathering, consultations, decision-making processes, and public dispute resolution.*

There are a wide variety of participatory methods and approaches, which are organized below in four broad categories. The following list is not comprehensive; sometimes processes go by other names, and there is a multiplicity of variations on any given type of method. Readers should consult the *Further Reading* list at the end of this chapter for further information on each of these options.

- *Information gathering and sharing.* These types of processes involve research and analysis, or the sharing of information with citizens and civic groups. Specific examples include sampling of the population, soliciting views that will not be heard through traditional means, posing questions for which answers are sought, phraseology (or framing) of the problem, and attaining the views of key people involved in a particular issue. Information-sharing processes often have a specific civic education function.

Strengths: Can deal with the problem of lack of knowledge or appreciation for other points of view; can yield valuable information to decision-makers prior to taking action.

Weaknesses: Information can underscore the irreconcilable nature of some points of view; when promises are made by local officials through information sharing, they are not always easy to keep.

- *Consultation.* These types of approaches feature structures and events that systematically consult with affected constituencies – together or separately – on matters that affect them. After such systematic consultation, the authoritative decision-makers (such as elected officials) make decisions that seek to reconcile insofar as possible the various positions. Consultation, like information gathering and sharing, involves learning, but the element of decision-making by those in positions of authority distinguishes this approach from the others.

Strengths: All points of view can be heard; alienated or marginalized groups can feel that they have had an input into the process.

Weaknesses: Some processes, especially those that become drawn out, can evolve into talk shops that produce no results; consultation sometimes reveals that points of view within the community simply cannot be reconciled.

- *Decision-Making.* In decision-making processes, authority over the final resolution of the issue at hand is with the participants around the table. The final decision on a matter is taken by the participants themselves, and cannot be overturned by elected officials or (ideally) by regional or national-level governments. Some of the issues that arise in decision-making processes include who is at the table and the legitimacy of their involvement in decision-making, how decisions are made (e.g., by consensus or majority), and how issues can be resolved when consensus is unattainable.

Strengths: People feel a real ownership of a decision when they have made it themselves, and binding decision-making processes can be useful when a tough choice has to be made, particularly during a difficult implementation process.

Weaknesses: Sometimes getting to reaching agreement is a much more difficult process than could ever have been imagined; moreover, sometimes powerful interests can hijack a decision-making process and push through their position.

- *Public dispute resolution.* This includes methods for preventing, managing, and settling public disputes through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration. These methods do not necessarily feature policy-making or implementation, but instead involve facilitation, problem-solving, task forces, community mediation services, and conciliation commissions.

Strengths: The right kinds of public dispute resolution programmes – in the right place, with the right kind of people involved, and with public support for peace – can help prevent, manage and resolve inter-group and other violent conflicts; when they are composed of legitimate and valued actors from across the political spectrum, they can help improve the legitimacy of efforts to promote local public safety.

Weaknesses: Sometimes even the best-designed public dispute systems cannot stand up to the intense pressure of conflict among groups in an urban setting; when there is no will for peace, institutions designed to foster it are bound to fail.

5.3.1 A Menu of Collaborative Policy-Making Methods

Information Gathering and Sharing

- *Sample surveys, preference polling.* Sample surveys are rigorously-designed public opinion polls that seek to determine the range of community views on a set of issues or opinions. Sampling involves selecting a representative subset of the population, devising a questionnaire, implementing the survey through interviews, and analysing the results. Preference polling is a similar method, which relies on identifying various views and assessing, among other things, the intensity of the preferences.
- *Innovative public meetings and community forums.* Public meetings are a traditional form of information gathering and sharing. Sometimes they are required by law when contentious decisions are to be made or have been made, or when there are challenges to the community. Some municipalities have right-to-know laws, which require authorities to routinely inform the public of key issues – such as environmental threats or budgeting matters – and this is often done through public meetings such as hearings or community forums. Recently, emphasis has

been placed on ways to design public meetings – including practicalities such as the way chairs and speakers are arranged – to more effectively promote interactive dialogue.

- *Participative research.* A representative group of officials, citizens, or civic groups collectively engage in research into a problem facing the community. The research process may involve identifying the problem, determining the range of opinions on its causes and ways in which it can be ameliorated, and making recommendations for policy options.

Figure 18**Addressing Apathy in Jihlava, Czech Republic**

In 1997, officials in the Czech Republic realized that they had a problem of citizen apathy and mistrust of local authority. Jihlava, a city of about 56,000 inhabitants was chosen for a pilot programme to assess whether working with and enhancing the media could improve citizen participation in areas such as community budgeting, exchange of information between citizens and governments, and service delivery. The Jihlava municipal officials formed a Project Advisory Committee drawn from journalists, citizens, interest groups, and the government. The committee began by conducting a survey probing the officials' and citizens' views of each other. Based on the committee's deliberation and the results of the survey, the group outlined an action plan:

- Town meetings with journalists and citizens especially encouraged to attend;
- Creation of a new press office for day-to-day liaison with reporters;
- Publication of a new citizen information brochure;
- Broadcasting a weekly phone-in radio show for discussion and raising issues;
- Establishment of a task force to review city procedures on working with NGOs; and
- Designating "Jihlava Day" to increase community identity and pride.

The programme lasted eight to 12 months with a cost of about US\$ 30,000 for staff, materials, broadcasting, and other costs; no changes in regulations were needed, however.

As a result of the process, a new town park was developed and the city is holding more press conferences on day-to-day town business. Neighbouring cities also have emulated the programme. (For more information on the programme, contact the Jihlava Mayor's office at +42 66-23651).

Consultation

- *Issue-specific ad hoc consultations and issue forums.* These methods involve structured dialogues on specific problems before the community on an *ad hoc* basis in which key participants are systematically consulted on policy options. Issue-based forums can be held singly or in a series, and may involve the same set of participants or participation may vary. The purpose of the consultation is to learn more about the sources of problems, to engage interested parties on potential policies, and to make recommendations. They are consultative in that the forum is not empowered to make authoritative decision; often, the recommendations are forwarded to elected officials who ultimately choose the policies that will be taken.
- *Programmes for citizen monitoring.* Citizen monitoring programmes allow individuals to be directly consulted on the efficacy of a particular policy or programme and involve them in making recommendations for improvement. For example, a common option under this rubric is a standing citizen panel that evaluates the impact of a programme on the community and regularly reports to authorities regarding its view on whether the programme is meeting its aims.
- *Participatory appraisals and beneficiary assessments.* These consultative mechanisms seek to systematically consult a target population (such as the unemployed, youth groups, or women) in the development and implementation of a project designed to address their specific concerns. These methods allow the objects of local policy-making to be directly involved in the programmes and projects that are aimed at their benefit.
- *Public hearings.* A traditional form of civic engagement in some established democracies, public hearings are a way to formally consult affected groups – either by selection or open invitation – on potentially contentious issues. Usually participants may give testimony or question public officials on the matter at hand in an open, transparent process.
- *Community visioning processes.* These methods involve collaborative approaches for strategic planning for a community and the policies, programmes, and resources that will be required for a community to reach its goals. A common tool in this method is the development of a vision statement to frame goals and set priorities. Participants are often asked to evaluate questions such as “What kind of quality of life do we want in our community in 10, 20, or 30 years, what are the values that lie behind this vision, and what are the steps that will be necessary to achieve this vision?”
- *Task forces.* This method is often used when it is expected that a subset of community groups, leaders, and citizens can help “brainstorm” to develop policy responses to specific issues. With a specified time frame, task forces are broadly

representative panels that systematically consult with affected populations, analyse the problems, devise options, and make recommendations. Task forces may also be formed at the implementation phase, where collaborative efforts are needed to ensure a policy or programme's success.

- *Community budgeting.* Budgets set priorities and help clarify, define, and even quantify a community's priorities. Community budgeting methods involve consultations on both the fiduciary details of a municipality's life, but also the priorities that budget allocations reflect. Although budgets are often seen as technical documents that are best handled by officials and administrators, public involvement in the budgeting process is increasingly seen as a critical way to help communities understand more fully the possibilities and constraints of local governance. By highlighting how scarce or finite resources are allocated, citizens and civic groups can understand better how competing values of the community may be more effectively balanced.
- *Standing citizen advisory councils.* This method involves the creation of a representative panel of citizens with specialized knowledge or interest in an issue to provide advice and recommendations to local authorities. The benefit of standing panels (over the *ad hoc* mechanisms, for example) is that over time citizens can acquire a great deal of collective memory, expertise, and awareness of an issue. Although these are usually more permanent bodies, participation in them usually changes over time; that is, they can be designed to be fairly dynamic and fluid over time as individual participation changes.

Figure 19

Market Women, Bankers, and Mayors: Kampala, Uganda

The World Bank's technical, managerial approach to urban management ran up against powerful informal networks of local authority in the street markets of Kampala, Uganda's vibrant capital city. Kampala's sustained rate of population growth is one of the highest in the world: 48 per cent annual growth.

Services lagged behind the new demand. Some 75 per cent of the residents lived in desperate, crowded conditions where the service necessities of urban life were simply not available. Employment opportunities could not keep up with the new growth in the pool of workers.

Market vendors managed to organize themselves effectively in pressuring local officials to upgrade the infrastructure of their market and to help with regulating transportation around the market. The World Bank emphasized a policy of fiscal restraint, privatization, and cost-effectiveness for local authorities. But the complexity of Kampala demanded

greater city involvement and regulation of the market stalls. In the Owino market some 400 vendors and 30,000 employees (as of 1992) were at work. Owino is the country's largest retail and wholesale marketplace, located near Kampala's bus station and central taxi park in the middle of the city. Market vendors informally but effectively organized themselves. They were worried about the lack of services, the dirt floors, the problem of acquiring and shipping goods, and the accumulating garbage and other waste. Out of their frustration they organized an effective lobby to address the economic, social, and political obstacles to market improvements. The most important actor was the Market Vendors Association (MVA), which promoted and encouraged business practices and established a set of rules for governing the market. The MVA also sponsored a local soccer programme for youth, the "Hot Stars". The MVA became an important player in negotiating with the Kampala City Council and with the World Bank.

- The MVA was open to anyone over 18 who could afford a nominal price for subscription and membership;
- Almost everyone in the market was an MVA member, including porters and workers;
- The MVA organized and managed the market, setting general rules for participation, trading, and membership;
- The MVA created some 57 departments with committees of interested vendors to manage commodities such as rice, palm leaves, flour, spices, and so on, and to set up a plan for the stalls that sold such items;
- MVA departmental committees regularly elected executives and other positions within the organization.

In 1990 the World Bank stepped in with a US\$ 28.7 million project to improve the chances for economic growth and development in Kampala. It focused on key infrastructure services, improved financial management, and land-use programmes. World Bank officials engaged in many meetings with the MVA; but the MVA wanted more improvements than the World Bank would approve and the negotiations became bogged down in a complex land dispute. The market upgrades took years to materialize, and many poor *ad hoc* management decisions were made about the growing, crowded, and inchoate market.

The true innovation of the MVA is its meetings, in which members of departments work collectively in the management of their own sector of the market. The large number of democratic and participatory meetings held over time by the MVA produced a better-organized market and a more aware and capable city council. Furthermore, it freed up World Bank funding for significant improvements in the infrastructure that have led to more effective urban development in Kampala.

Decision-Making Forums

- *Citizen juries.* This is the best-known option for dialogue by a select group of citizens (usually, broadly representative) for a specified time period, such as four to five days, in which they receive evidence, query experts and other witnesses, and discuss among themselves possible policy responses. Often, a report is prepared for the jury that sets out the basic policy options, and the jury is asked to make a choice among them. After investigation and decision-making, a report is prepared that outlines the decision, describes areas of consensus and disagreement, and provides the overall findings of the jury investigation.
- *Problem-solving workshops.* In problem-solving workshops, participants engage in a creative and consensus-oriented search for resolution to a problem. The aim is to provide an initial period of open dialogue to help define the problem, frame the set of solutions, and identify obstacles to resolution. After some period of open discussion, the moderator or facilitator prepares a summary document outlining the consensus-oriented findings and recommendations. This summary document becomes the basis for discussion for the next two or three days, and it is frequently revised until all parties are in agreement or until irresolvable differences are identified. The summary document that emerges at the end of the workshop becomes the decision reached by participants on how a community problem can be effectively addressed.

Figure 20

Innovation in Public Participation: Citizen Juries

John Stewart

Citizen juries bring together a representative group of citizens to consider a policy issue. They receive evidence about the issue, question witnesses, and discuss the issue among themselves over a three to five day period. Normally the authority commissioning the jury undertakes to consider seriously and respond to the views of the jury, while not necessarily accepting them. In the United Kingdom, for example, citizen juries have been used for issues on which an authority is uncertain how to proceed, such as the drug problem in one local authority or rationing issues in a health authority.

Citizen juries have three characteristics:

- The approach draws on a sample representative of the population;
- Information is given about the issues involved; and
- Time is taken for consideration and discussion of the issue – in other words, for deliberation.

Experience of citizen juries has shown a readiness by the public to be involved in such approaches. They do not demand a continuing involve-

ment, but an intensive – if short – involvement. Personal invitations ensure a much better response than general invitations to attend, as might happen for a public meeting. Authorities commissioning juries have been impressed with both the quality of reports produced and by the way members of the juries have probed the issues.

Another important lesson is that involvement breeds involvement or, at least, the desire to be further involved. Most members of the juries find it a satisfying experience, arousing their interest in public affairs, but also an appreciation of their complexity. They express an interest in being further involved. Nevertheless, citizen juries, too, have their problems. Bias, for example, has to be avoided, and while these juries can provide insights they are not wholly representative.

Public Dispute Resolution

- *Grievance handling systems.* This method refers to efforts to design a municipality-wide system of dispute management, including procedures such as ombudspersons, report hotlines, whistle-blower programmes, mediation centres, or counselling services. Grievance handling usually refers to concerns that civic groups or individuals have about the policies or activities of a local authority. It is important that a dispute resolution system be designed to work as an integrated whole, in which the methods for reporting, monitoring, managing, and settling community disputes are clear, consistent, and self-reinforcing.
- *Conciliation commissions.* In situations where severe inter-group differences exist in a municipal setting, a conciliation commission is an approach to acknowledge and directly address differences. These commissions serve as institutions designed to bridge group divisions with a community by offering a sustained venue and mechanism for ongoing dialogue on inter-group relations. Commissions can also investigate incidents, offer mediation services, or advise policy-makers on ways to devise projects and programmes to ensure that they help promote accommodative and fair policies in situations of diversity. Important issues in the design of conciliation commissions are balance, participation, ties to the communities concerned, and the national, regional, and even international contexts in which inter-group tensions occur.
- *Community mediation and arbitration centres.* In many societies, traditional forms of dispute resolution require adversarial interaction in courts of law. Increasingly, alternative forms of dispute resolution are being offered by local authorities and civic groups that channel community disputes into facilitated negotiation or mediation. When mediation is successful, disputes are resolved through the discovery of mutually beneficial solutions that all parties agree represent a fair trade

of interests and concerns. When mediation fails, mediation centres can also offer forms of definitive dispute settlement, or arbitration. Such centres can be strategically placed and made accessible to resolve disputes that might ordinarily threaten the safety and security of a community, for example centres that are geared toward the management of disputes among youth groups from different identity groups or neighbourhoods.

- *Crisis-related response committees for violence prevention and mitigation.* As pointed out in Chapter Three, methods such as peace commissions have at times proven successful in the amelioration of political violence in situations of high conflict. There are a wide variety of approaches within this set of methods, among them broadly representative efforts to monitor investigate, mediate, police, and prevent political violence. An important promise of options such as peace committees is the ability to flexibly respond to incidents of political violence in efforts to prevent disputes from escalating.

Figure 21

A Design Model for Collaborative Civic Engagement

In deciding what kind of collaborative policy-making approach to use, it is important to understand the broader policy context, the issues at hand, the range and disposition of the participants, and many other variables. The design model seeks to respond to the question:

We want to enhance participation, but what are the issues and what will the process look like?

or

How can we get the community involved and for what purposes? What is the best technique or set of techniques to use in this particular instance?

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each option may help determine whether any given approach is appropriate to the problem or issues to be tackled. Many practitioners of collaborative decision-making processes agree with the dictum: “Don’t get into something that you don’t have the capacity or competence to do.” Participatory approaches will founder if people believe that they are being used to legitimize decisions that have already been taken or that the results of their efforts will not matter in the long run. Citizens and civic groups will quickly recognize when a process is a mask for top-down decision-implementation and when the views of the participants are genuinely sought.

Analysing the situation is thus critical to determining what method might be appropriate. There are three guiding rules for choosing and implementing any given method:

- Always make clear the basis on which a participatory process is being launched;
- Always respond to concerns and suggestions; and
- Always make clear the constraints.

Questions that aid in the analysis of a situation potentially ripe for collaborative decision-making processes include:

- Who will be most affected?
- Whose opposition could spoil the policy or project?
- Who has expertise?
- Who is best placed to mediate and balance conflicting interests?
- Who should not participate?

Using the Design Model

The design model offers practitioners – in official positions and in civil society alike – the opportunity to assess what types of participatory practices might be useful in various phases of the policy process. It is in essence a questionnaire that allows the reader to make his or her own assessment of the challenges they face and evaluate for themselves the technique that appears to be most suited to building civic engagement in responding to the challenges. This may involve a very careful assessment of the “proximity” issue and the question of what types of problems can be addressed closest to home and what types involve the participation of municipal, district, regional, or national participants. Location and implementation of a transportation improvement project may require a participatory process in a specific neighbourhood, but financing the neighbourhood’s decisions may require the participation of officials in the central government transportation ministry.

Similarly, public input or direct involvement in decision-making may be very important in policy planning for a given project, but once that is done then elected officials and administrators can handle the more specific and possible technical aspects of financing and implementation. If a clean water tap is to be installed to improve water quality in an informal settlement, it may be especially desirable to have community involvement at the planning stage – for example, where should the tap be placed? However, public participation may be less important in financing the water supply than in actually implementing the decision by installing the tap.

Participatory Practices	Phases of Policy Process		
	Planning	Finance and Budgeting	Implementation
Information Gathering and Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What types of information are needed to effectively begin a planning process? ■ What do the communities need to know about the planning process? ■ How can communities make systematic input into the planning process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can complicated aspects of the financing and budgeting process be best explained to the various communities? ■ What ideas can emanate from community sources on revenue generation and expenditure? ■ How can a process of community priority-setting be launched? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What does the public need to know about implementation? ■ How can we gather information on what implementation options are feasible and those that are not? ■ How can the public help with information that will make implementation more effective?
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are the main actors that must be involved early in the process if they are to be critical to subsequent phases? ■ Should consultation occur in a joint setting, or with individual participants and stakeholders separately? ■ Who is likely to be difficult to involve? How will this be done? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Should a community budgeting process be considered? ■ How can the process engage those whose priorities are reflected or not reflected in the budgeting phase? ■ What is the role of regional and national-level officials in the formation of a budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Which elements in the communities have the capacity to enable implementation of policy decisions, and which elements can block implementation? ■ How can these elements be systematically involved in implementation efforts?

Participatory Practices	Phases of Policy Process		
	Planning	Finance and Budgeting	Implementation
Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What forum will work best to make definitive decisions on strategic planning? ■ Will it help the community buy in to the revenue and implementation phases of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can a community budgeting process be structured so that decisions on priority-setting are made by the community? ■ How can these decisions be reconciled with the budgetary realities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can communities be empowered to spend their own allocations of the budget themselves?
Community Dispute Resolution Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How all of the affected parties be engaged early on in a conflict resolution/disputes management process? ■ How can those who refuse to participate be engaged? ■ What are the potential benefits, and risks, of any given approach? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can ad hoc and ongoing dispute resolution processes be financed? ■ Can training of facilitators and mediators be afforded? ■ What are the costs of not launching a dispute resolution process? ■ Can this procedure help resolve conflicts over the budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is it possible to envisage a process whereby agreements among disparate communities are implemented themselves? ■ What backup mechanisms exist if such implementation efforts fail?

Figure 22**Guidelines for Public Participation**

John Stewart has outlined the following guidelines to keep in mind when assessing or designing collaborative approaches.

- *Innovation by itself is not enough.* An approach can be developed which ensures public involvement, but the effectiveness of public involvement also depends on the response of the authority, which can regard public involvement as a formality or can see it as an essential process of government.
- *No single approach is likely to prove effective.* An armoury of instruments is required, meeting different purposes and appropriate for different situations; often approaches will need to be combined.
- *Do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.* Criticisms can be made of each and every approach. Even voting has its critics. Citizen juries can be criticized for their small numbers for not being statistically representative. Opinion polls, which are statistically representative, have been criticized as giving immediate responses to pre-set questions that may be little understood by those responding. The issue is not whether an approach has weaknesses, but whether it is better than no approach.
- *Fitness for purpose.* The guiding principle in selecting an approach should be its suitability for the intended purpose. Different purposes include: learning public attitudes, citizen deliberation, stakeholder deliberation, conflict resolution, public scrutiny, and direct democracy. Depending on the purpose, different approaches or combinations of approaches are appropriate.
- *Make clear the basis of public participation.* If the public is to be involved, then it is important to make clear the purpose of that involvement and the constraints on it. The public should know whether they are being informed, being consulted, or deciding on an issue. They should know what has already been decided and what remains to be decided. They should know what the financial, legal, or policy constraints are. Unless this is done, ideas will be put forward that are doomed to frustration. This does not mean that the public cannot challenge the constraints, but first they have to know what these are.
- *Always respond, even when the response is negative.* When views disappear into the bureaucracy and no response is made, interest turns into disinterest, concern turns into apathy, and the commitment generated by effective involvement trails away. There must always be a response. The involved public is entitled to know the outcome of its involvement.
- *The initiative should not always be with the authority.* Not all public involvement depends on authorities. Forms of public involvement can be

designed by the public as well as by authorities, and government processes should be open to such involvement.

— *Always appreciate whose voice is being heard and whose voice is not being heard, and act upon it.* This is the test of democratic justice. In many forms of public involvement, certain voices will be heard from more often than others. Certain groups in society may be little heard from but their views are both important and relevant. If the public knows who is not being heard from, then approaches can be developed to hear those voices.

— *Criteria are needed to evaluate public involvement.* Fairness and competence have been suggested as the basis for evaluation. Fairness gives expression to the criteria of democratic justice. Competence refers to the knowledge and procedures used and whether they meet the requirements of effective involvement.

— *Innovation in democratic practice is not enough.* The need for innovation has been argued, but left at this, it could lead to innovation for its own sake. New approaches are justified by their impact on the quality of democracy.

5.4 Potential Problems in Collaborative Decision-Making

■ *Participatory policy-making can be a utopian notion.*

The more sensitive the issue, such as determining official language policy, the less likelihood that complete consensus will be possible.

While collaborative approaches offer considerable promise in solving social problems and building community capital, they are not without their own drawbacks and risks. For one, they are sometimes difficult to organize and implement. One World Bank study, *Participation in Practice: The Experience of the World Bank and Other Stakeholders*, identified the following barriers to enhanced participation in planning for development projects:

- Lack of government commitment to adopting a participatory approach;
- Unwillingness of project officials to give up control over project activities and directions;
- Lack of incentives and skills among project staff to encourage them to adopt a participatory approach;

- Limited capacity of local-level organizations and insufficient investment in community capacity-building;
- Participation started too late; and
- Mistrust between government and local-level stakeholders.

The reality in many societies, it must be stressed, is that the average citizen may be cynical about politics or apathetic or unwilling to participate. It is for this reason that the World Bank has stressed the difference between “citizen” participation as popular participation and the need to include main “stakeholders” in policy decisions. *Stakeholders* have specifically affected interests and these special interests should be represented and satisfied in public decision-making.

The emphasis on stakeholders, as opposed to popular participation is not a normative decision made by the World Bank; it is one of practical reality. As *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook* notes:

Attempts to bypass powerful stakeholders often resulted in opposition from them; this opposition usually compounded the problem of getting anything useful accomplished. . . . We recognize that different stakeholders have different levels of power, different interests, and different resources. For these reasons, we also recognize that arrangements are needed to level the playing field and enable different stakeholders to interact on a more equitable and genuinely collaborative basis.

Achieving consensus and reconciling key stakeholder differences is not always easy; it may entail risks, such as generating or aggravating conflicts among groups with competing interests and priorities. Dealing with conflict often requires an understanding of the underlying societal interests inhibiting consensus and putting into place mechanisms for dispute resolution and negotiation.

Among the tools the World Bank has adopted to achieve these ends in terms of development project planning are:

- workshops to encourage stakeholder collaboration,
- community-based work such as participatory rural appraisals,
- beneficiary assessments and systematic client consultation, and
- objective-oriented project planning.

The World Bank has given particular attention to ways to enhance women’s participation and to work against systematic gender bias that may exist in the laws and customs of a community, indigenous peoples, and “intermediary” NGOs. Civic organizations offer a less threatening avenue for citizens to engage in the political process. If the legitimacy of political parties improves over time, it may be possible for citizens to feel better about their involvement in them. A particularly interest-

ing finding has emanated out of the Latin American experience, namely that, as George Peterson writes, “citizens expect concrete results from participation, especially a greater say in neighbourhood capital projects. They have limited tolerance for longer-term planning or ‘policy’ discussions.”

In addition to implementation difficulties, sometimes too much participation can be dysfunctional and can inhibit efficient policy-making. Local government scholar Pierre Hamel, for example, has expressed the following concern about participatory policy-making approaches:

In many municipalities, public consultations are being integrated into planning processes.... However, their institutional influence and their effect in terms of the democratization of public management remain somewhat ambiguous. Consequently, although these new mechanisms are bearers of innovation on an institutional level and contributors to the renewal of different modes of management, their appropriation by experts or “network operators” contain a menace for local democracy and participatory forms of citizen input.... Such mechanisms do not prevent community actors and social movements from being submitted to political power relations.

Many policy practitioners also eschew participatory policy-making because the choices are limited and citizen input often has, in the long run, little impact on policy outcomes. Those involved in participatory practices tire when the processes drag out too long, when powerful interests prevail, when macro-level constraints (i.e., national or international influences) drive policy, or when the policy-makers listen to, but don’t act upon, citizen input. Much of the concern with direct participation, however, indicates that practitioners need better skills and knowledge about when, how, and why to launch participatory practices.

Figure 23

Troubleshooting Participatory Policy-Making

Mechanisms for engaging citizens and building broad consensus on community affairs involve the balancing of many interests and the search for consensus. Sometimes, even often, complete consensus is elusive. No amount of process innovation or skilful mediation can find common interest among communities when there is none to be found. Some of the issues to consider include the following:

Is equal participation a chimera? Equal participation is a tenet of liberal democracy, yet the reality is that some participants will be more vocal, powerful, or both, or may have access to information that others do not.

Realities of networks. A collaborative process may become overtaken by “network operators” or overwhelming stakeholders. Citizens groups may

be unable to cope or counter the pervasive influence of some individuals, factions, or organizations (such as a locally powerful business firm, or the representative of a national-level ministry).

- **Election mandates.** Office holders may have been elected during a campaign that sharpened differences and clearly delineated an official's position on issues. Once elected, however, they need to represent the entire community. When do local office holders have an interest in promoting consensus-based solutions to local problems? When do consensus outcomes override alternative policies that are popular in elections?
- **Perils for civil society.** If a participatory process puts the onus of obligation for implementation of a decision or programme on an NGO, but then the resources for that activity are not forthcoming, the NGO may be held responsible even though the resources are beyond the NGO's control.
- **Fragmentation in the political community.** In some instances, the social structure of a community is so fragmented that finding legitimate and valid spokespersons for a group or interest is very difficult. For example, a public official seeking to initiate a problem-solving workshop might have difficulty deciding on which particular individual or set of individuals validly represents a specific interest. The choices can be frustratingly difficult, and the risk of choosing a person who is not closely tied to the interest they purportedly represent can undermine the legitimacy of the entire consensus-building exercise.
- **Inability to develop complete or even near-complete consensus.** One risk of a collaborative process is that it may highlight to a community that there are indeed irreconcilable views on some problems; this realization may sharpen differences and encourage those not inclined to seek a solution through dialogue to harden their positions even further.
- **Design flaws.** Participatory processes can run aground because they are improperly designed or carried out. The absence of a clear strategy of how and why to engage citizens and civil society on a policy problem, or the inability to mediate among social groups because of poor skills, training, or information, can lead to ineffective "talking shops" that are inadequate in their attempts to help devise new options and solutions.
- **Limits of context.** Sometimes communities can convene, share information, consult, and make decisions on a local policy problem, only to learn that the power to resolve the problem does not lie within the sphere of local governance. The reality of many national and regional contexts is that some local problems are often addressed at other tiers of governance, and local communities are relatively powerless in addressing them (such as financing for major transportation improvements).

5.5 Evaluating Civic Engagement

■ *Evaluation must depend on a long-term assessment of whether the community is reaching its goals; this requires a thorough process of monitoring, measuring, tracking, and re-evaluating.*

Evaluating collaborative decision-making can be very difficult. One of the most common problems is determining whether the exhaustive efforts to engage citizens and forge collaborative approaches really make much difference in terms of policy development, implementation, and most importantly, attainment of goals. Practical aspects of a collaborative approach can be measured: participants came, they discussed, they recommended, and they departed. But whether recommendations are carried out and situations in the community significantly change, cannot be so easily determined. Although a number of rigorous methods for evaluation can be introduced into the collaborative policy-making process, measuring performance of local governance over the long-term is a more difficult, demanding, and ultimately subjective task.

One of the main purposes of evaluation is ensuring accountability. Accountability is central to good governance. Approaches to accountability reflect differing conceptualization of local governance. Accountability is exercised through the ballot box as citizens have the opportunity to vote out elected officials who are not performing well and to elect new authorities that can serve the community more effectively. Accountability is also about preventing and punishing corruption, or the use of community resources or political power for individual, private gain. One of the most important tests of a collaborative process is whether the process itself has been open, fair, and transparent. When this overarching criterion of evaluation is met, the likelihood that the deliberative effort was worthwhile is quite high.

5.5.1 Common Methods of Evaluation

Among the popular methods of evaluation is the use of questionnaires. Usually administered after the process is complete, a survey is designed to determine whether participants felt that they had an impact on the policy process, whether their views were taken into account, whether the time they spent engaged was worthwhile, and whether the performance of facilitators and resource materials was good.

Important evaluation questions, usually posed by those who have sponsored, organized, or convened the dialogue, include:

- Was the issue under consideration a suitable subject for collaborative policy-making?
- Was the process of the dialogue carefully and professionally managed?
- How was the nature and quality of participation?
- What will be the effect of the deliberative process on those who are expected to most benefit from the policy, programme, or project?
- How effective will the collaborative process be on the authoritative policy decisions that are made?

Assessment can also be fruitfully conducted by external evaluators. For example, a neutral specialist on the community, on collaborative decision-making, or on the policy options under consideration can be invited to observe and prepare an independent report that is provided to sponsors or circulated to all parties. Similarly, a subgroup of participants might be asked to perform this task. Officials from national ministries, or some national civic organizations, might be asked to observe and report.

Ultimately, evaluation of collaborative decision-making must in some ways be done according to a long-term assessment of whether the community is reaching its goals. This requires a more thorough process of monitoring, measuring, tracking, re-evaluating, and the ability to take into account unforeseen events. The outcomes of policy – performance of those involved in governance in delivering the services they provide – are some of the most difficult aspects to measure.

5.5.2 Performance Evaluation

One of the most important new concepts in local governance is the systematic evaluation of performance, not only local officials evaluating themselves but also citizen evaluation of government performance. And evaluation of the work of NGOs and other civil society actors as well. From advances in the study of management, new methods have developed for evaluating how local government and NGO providers perform in providing responsive public services and carrying out the wishes of the community.

Performance measurement refers to concerted and systematic efforts to assess or evaluate how the services provided to a community serve their needs and the local officials or NGOs capabilities to provide these services. Various techniques seek to provide some grounded indicator of the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of services. According to Paul Epstein in his book *Using Performance Measurement in Local Government*, “effectiveness measures service responsiveness to public needs and desires; service quality is an important effectiveness consideration. Efficiency compares the quantity of service provided (e.g., tons of refuse collected) to the resources (e.g., labour hours) used to produce it; efficiency provides a measure of how reasonable service costs are”.

Performance measurement is used to improve decision-making processes, to improve service delivery and increase capacity, and to improve public accountability. Measures of effectiveness might include monitoring community conditions, service accomplishments, citizen or client satisfaction and perceptions of community conditions, and unintended or adverse impacts of an action.

Checklist	Performance Evaluation Measures and Methods
—	<p><i>Goal setting.</i> Performance measurement in local governance is directly related to goal setting, regular monitoring of progress toward these goals, and the impact of programmes and projects in pursuit of these objectives. Goal setting is a critical first step. What are the top five or ten priorities for the community that should be accomplished in the coming year? What is the strategy for reaching the goal? What targets have been set?</p>
—	<p><i>Community conditions.</i> Performance evaluation means monitoring community conditions. For example, many municipalities have installed regular monitoring stations that can determine the level of air, water, or noise pollution and assessment of the measures that have been taken to alleviate problems. Systematic surveys that provide a picture of the overall level of health in the community and the provision of medical care are an important measure of the overall condition of the city.</p>
—	<p><i>Income assessment.</i> Assessments of family income and the relative distribution of low, moderate, middle class, and wealthy classifications, along with measures to determine local unemployment is another criteria. Performance measures might also include the availability of affordable and quality housing available in these lower- and middle-income classes.</p>
—	<p><i>Measuring government accomplishments.</i> Accomplishments of local governance can be measured, such as how a particular programme designed to help a certain group (such as children living in poverty) has addressed a social problem and how satisfied the “clients” or citizens are with the services they have received. Many project-related measurements exist for determining whether an initiative has efficiently met its objectives and goals.</p>
—	<p><i>Citizen satisfaction.</i> This can be measured through regular opinion surveys, focus groups (small groups focused on a specific issue or topic), or post-service follow-up.</p>
—	<p><i>Efficient delivery of services.</i> For example, what is the process time for considering an application for a new sign at a business? Is there a backlog?</p>
—	<p><i>Trained observers.</i> Trained and knowledgeable individuals, often citizens with special skills, can observe the work of local government officials and</p>

NGOs and then prepare public reports on what they have seen and learned. Sometimes trained observers can be given questionnaires or other methods of rating to determine the quality and efficiency of the service provided. For example, a citizen or group of citizens might be asked to systematically monitor the conditions of city streets and describe what they have seen to authorities and to the public.

- *Assess the process of decision-making* by community leaders. In many instances, for example, elected officials such as a city council or commission can use strategic planning, resource allocation, or communication-based methods to assess the quality and effectiveness of decision-making. Likewise, city managers and other administrators can assess the process of decision-making that leads to the allocation of budgets, incurring costs, or identifying service-delivery problems. Systematically reviewing decision-making steps can help identify whether and how community needs are being met.

- *Clear communication.* Transparency and effective clear communication between public authorities or NGOs and the citizenry is the link between performance and accountability. Communication is a two-way street. Elected office holders, public administrators, or NGO service delivery providers need to communicate with the public about problems and performance and the outcomes of their measures and evaluations. Performance information needs to be routinely and clearly presented to the public. At the same time, citizen involvement and communication is the principal way in which individuals can provide their own evaluations, ask questions, and pose policy recommendations. Good communication relates back to one of the core concepts of local democracy, education of the public on the challenges and choices they face.

5.6 The Importance of Communication

■ *Communication is a two-way street: citizens express their preferences to officials; officials describe and justify their actions.*

Effective communication is an essential element of democracy and the cornerstone of civil society-government co-operation. How local authorities communicate the choices before the community, and the ways in which community-level concerns are provided to policy-makers, is at the heart of enhanced participation. At the same time, it is important for local authorities and NGOs to communicate across communities to identify joint problems and effective solutions. Moreover, the educative

function of local governance is rooted in the communication relationships between citizen and policy-maker and forums for communication among leaders of civil society. Local authorities educate the public on community issues such as the challenges and options, resources needed, possibilities and constraints, and alternatives for policy choices or implementation. The public educates officials on community problems, needs, and the feasibility of solutions.

Communication is also inherent in citizens' right-to-know and the transparency of local governance institutions and processes. Communication is educative. Effective communication of risk, for example, is a function of leadership skills and a proactive approach to listening and sharing of information and knowledge. The local media plays a critical role in this sphere as well, serving as the eyes and ears, watchdog, and player in agenda setting in local governance. An informed and competent press that practices "precision journalism" – competence, accuracy, and fairness – is essential to democratic local governance. The local media helps set the public agenda, investigate the issues, and provides accountability and transparency in the policy process.

Among the roles that communications strategies play in facilitating collaborative policy-making are:

- Educating for democracy, highlighting the issues, procedures, and explaining the choices and constraints before the public;
- Highlighting the ways in which officials, administrators, and civil society leaders can relate more effectively to the local media, especially in explaining the purposes, processes, and outcomes of collaborative policy-making; and
- Developing new communications strategies made possible by advances in information technologies, and in particular, considering how the Internet can be used to enhance participation in democracy and transparency in governance.

5.7 "Virtual" Local Governance

■ *"Virtual" democracy at the local level has the potential to inform citizens about community issues, provide services more efficiently, and facilitate citizen involvement in decision-making.*

Technology is rapidly changing the ways that communication and even decision-making occurs in today's metropolitan arenas. Digital democracy has become a watchword of the day, and the local arena is arguably the best place to begin in mak-

ing a more direct democracy possible among a larger group of people through communication, information sharing, and the interactive nature of the Internet.

One of the most important recent developments is that local governments are increasingly turning to the Internet to enhance participation and provide services and information to their citizens. As *The Economist* notes in a special report on government and the Internet, “Within the next five years, [the Internet] will transform not only the way in which most public services are delivered, but also the fundamental relationship between government and citizen. After e-commerce and e-business, the next Internet revolution will be e-government”.

As the proportion of people wired to the Internet expand, so too do the possibilities for moving more and more functions of government to an online format when the technology is conducive to solving these kinds of problems. Cities around the world have used the Internet for sharing information on city programmes, policies, regulations, services, and contact information. Promoting tourism and touting the city as an investment or job creation prospect have also featured prominently. The more innovative cities have set up ways in which citizens can contribute to debate and dialogue on policies or projects.

Most major cities today have well-developed sites on the Internet that are aimed at global audiences as well as internally at their citizens. Public space is being radically transformed and the opportunities for direct public access on current issues pending before the community is increasing. Modern computer technologies offer the ability for local authorities and civic activists to create a “virtual town square” as a forum for managing local governance. Among the leaders in the development of these initiatives are the MAXI site, run by the state of Victoria in Australia (www.vic.gov.au) and Singapore’s eCitizen service on its website (www.ecitizen.gov.sg). In Europe, a project that started in Valencia, Spain, known as InfoVille, has now expanded to five European countries. InfoVille, offered by a consortium of local and regional authorities, provides a common platform to provide information and communication opportunities for citizens on municipal and regional services, education and training, transport, and electronic commerce. The InfoVille service can be accessed (www.infoville.net) through personal computers; public kiosks have been installed and some users can access the service from their televisions.

Many of the innovative efforts to create new mechanisms for participatory governance via the use of the Internet for communication, posting of information, and for making decisions – such as through electronic voting – are still incipient. Both the technology and the practice of virtual governance are at an early stage of development and still evolving. Indeed, most government websites are fairly nascent in their development. Few local governments allow for online voting, which is poten-

tially the most extensive use of the technology for e-democracy. Yet all observers of the new trends agree that technological changes made possible by widespread use of personal computers could radically transform notions of participation. We are witnessing the emergence of the virtual town square in many cities of the world; the limits on access to appropriate technology are quickly fading except for in the most economically deprived communities.

Citizens can be especially relieved when using the city website to navigate through a complex set of offices, officials, and bureaucracy. A well-developed site can help orient citizens in city government, and it can help officials work together in a more co-ordinated fashion by providing easy access to information on what each department is doing. It is important, in this context, that cities create a single “portal”, or entry point, so that citizens can navigate their way through the maze of agencies and programmes to find the right information easily and quickly. A single mechanism for taking care of simple citizen-to-government issues – such as marriage licences, taxes, or motor vehicle registration – is critical to success.

One of the most promising aspects of virtual democracy at the local level is its potential for learning. Providing information about basic issues of agriculture, health, housing, transportation, environment, water, utilities and energy, market places, and civic associations opens new avenues for citizen education. Possibilities exist for using the Internet to enhance citizen knowledge on these and other issues through online training, courses, and through practical application. For example, Singapore’s Ministry of Education has teamed up with IBM to launch a programme called “Learning Village”, which aims at making schools and educational resources available to the general public.

Nonetheless, complex information technology systems can be an expensive business and problems in the technical development of a complicated website can be a significant headache for local officials. Working with technology consultants may be confusing and difficult. As a result, many cities around the world have chosen to keep their sites on the web simple, but up-to-date and containing all the necessary helpful information they would normally be providing through other means (such as through newspapers).

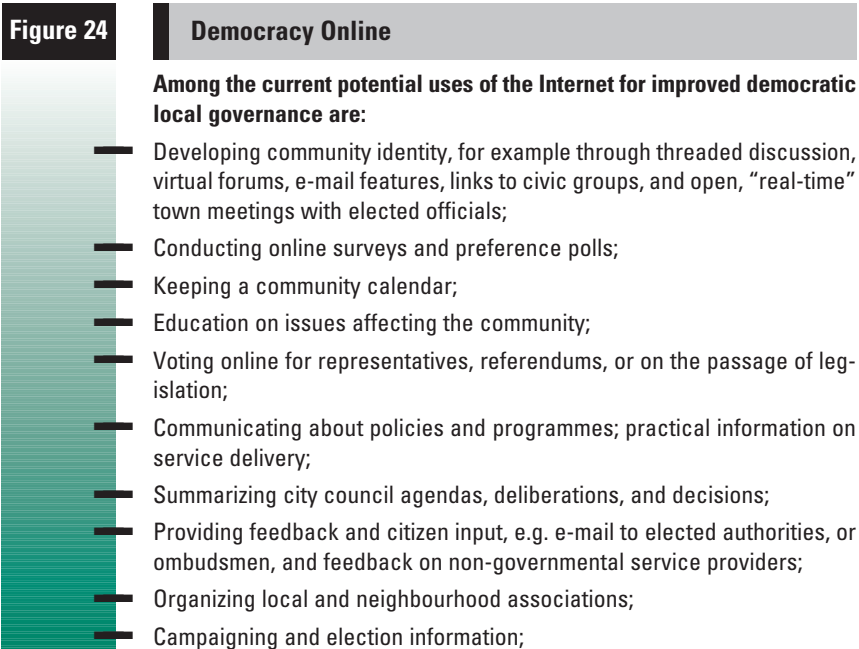
Some other possible concerns about local democracy and electronic governance include concerns for privacy of potentially sensitive personal or city information, the lack of personal contact with a city official on important items, the potential cost to residents and governments, and its possible limitation to only getting basic information.

It is possible to envisage that citizens could exercise direct democracy in a way never dreamed possible before. If the size of the political unit has always been an

argument in favour of representative democracy, is it possible that new innovation like Internet voting could allow citizens to pass legislation and govern themselves through the click of a mouse?

At present, much of the innovation in the use of online technology is in the process of social organization. Both in advanced and developing countries alike, social movements and civil society groups have used the communication features of e-mail and electronic mailing lists to organize for political aims, and to mobilize appeals, public awareness campaigns, generate new supporters, and organize protests and demonstrations. It can also be used within organizations, such as political parties, to hold online elections or to survey members.

So far, practical applications of new information technology to reinvigorate direct democracy must still be considered experimental. But the opportunities for citizen participation and for collaborative decision-making are extensive. For example, some computer applications easily handle complex “threaded discussions” – a method of carrying on a conversation online in which people involved in a dialogue on a topic can directly respond to prior comments that have been posted in a communication forum.



- Linking beyond the community to other similar municipalities (such as sister-cities);
- Providing community radio and television broadcasting;
- Organizing campaigns and citizen initiatives; and
- Promoting the municipality's image to the world, for example in efforts to boost tourism or trade.

Not all assessments of e-government are rosy, however. Some point to the potential for a growing “digital divide”, or the creation of a schism between those with the financial resources, access to technology, and skills to make use of Internet-based services, and the vast majority of citizens in the world to which the new tools may be inaccessible due to cost, complexity, disabilities, or skills. Efforts to address the digital divide are growing rapidly; in Costa Rica, for example, a public-private partnership is installing technology “pods” throughout the country to give poor peasants and other rural people access to Internet-based information on critical development issues such as health, education, and agriculture.

Efforts to create “smart communities” using Internet-based technology are just beginning to emerge, and important problems like the “digital divide” will present serious impediments to large-scale use of the opportunities technology provides for enhancing participatory democracy. Technology may also pose problems for citizen privacy and security as more and more information is collected and stored on computers. At the same time, the rapid development of information technologies such as the Internet may open new doors to direct, participatory democracy that just a few short years ago were not even known to exist.

Figure 25**www.andhrapradesh.com: An Innovation in E-Governance**

N. Chandrababu Naidu, the energetic Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, has steadfastly pursued an imaginative vision to turn the city of Hyderabad into *Cyberabad*, a high-tech centre with sophisticated economic and political advancement based on the integration of computers into the everyday lives of the people. One of the most innovative advancements has been the creation of a public affairs website designed at economic development, www.cyberabad.com, and one for public involvement in governance, www.andhrapradesh.com, both of which have been instrumental in the revolutionary social, political, and economic changes that are happening in this dynamic city.

The city's website offers opportunities for participating in online surveys, joining discussion forums, or finding information on any number of

government services. Particularly interesting is the effort to promote incentives for the use of online communication, information sharing, and networking capacities to plan, co-ordinate, and directly involve people in local democracy and in economic development.

Naidu has helped develop systems that use computers to check the water level in the major reservoirs and monitor power generation. Water and power are the lifeline of the farming sector, the backbone of the state’s economy. Naidu has been successful in using technology to lure global computer giants to invest in the state, build information technology training facilities, and computerize the government’s daily operations and policy decisions.

E-governance and information technology advancements in Andhra Pradesh involve making government more transparent, efficient, communicative, and effective. The objectives of the initiative directly relate to re-making modern democracy in the modern, globalized, computer age. Some of the advantages include:

— *Economic development of the state*

- Growth of IT industry and exports
- Open new windows of economic opportunity
- Create employment potential
- Promote knowledge as an economic resource
- Development with equity

— *Improvement in quality of life*

- Human resource development
- Education and health care

— *Good governance*

- Convenient, anytime, anywhere citizen services
- Constantly open lines of communication between citizens and the government

E S S A Y

COMMUNITY PLANNING

From Conflict to Consensus

John Thompson

Community planning is a non-political technique that can achieve co-operation and change by means of an effective, local, democratic process. Simplicity is the key. The principle is that as many people as possible should participate – residents, decision-makers and all other interested parties, so as to be able to share ideas and experiences and to participate collectively in the inception and delivery of a process for change.

The real experts are invariably the people who have direct everyday experience of their own area. As a neutral multi-disciplinary team of outsiders, the facilitators arrive with a “blank piece of paper”, prepared to listen, analyse, and evaluate. There is never a pre-ordained solution to be imposed. The aim is to tap common intelligence in order to achieve a balance that has the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people.

Despite apparent friction involving cultural, religious, financial, class and gender differences, a consensus almost always emerges which proves that people do in fact usually want more or less the same thing. Community planning is becoming a multi-disciplinary “tool” which can focus public attention on solving problems rather than reverting to acrimonious adversarial exchange. In many instances the process is seen as a form of therapy; it is a disarming but powerful means of achieving a common perspective, whereby a mixed group of individuals, with often dramatically different aims and viewpoints at the outset, wake up to the realization that they are indeed capable, with some external help, of working out a shared agenda.

Community Planning Weekends

As a participatory approach which can initiate or give impetus to the collaborative process, Community Planning Weekends are designed to suit the client’s brief, ranging from large-scale public events involving all interested parties, including the local and wider community, to small, private gatherings involving key people in constructive dialogue; the attendance may be a few hundred or more than a thousand people. The methodology is as applicable to rural Welsh market towns as to disintegrating inner cities or to Belfast’s deeply divided Crumlin Road.

The point of this process is that everyone who lives or works in a particular area can be involved in shaping its future. Individual citizens are able to contribute their experience and suggestions and take “ownership” of what in a sense becomes *their* project. A “critical mass” of expectations and suggestions is generated and the journey of decision-making, from problem to solution, becomes much more transparent. Eventually a consensus is reached, a balanced view that respects the fundamental tenets of social well-being, an aspiration that in our experience is shared by most people.

A Typical Event

A well-planned and properly designed planning weekend has the ability to create a unique chemistry between professional and local expertise, decision-makers and campaigners, by enabling them to work together constructively for a short and intensive period of time. The intention is for all relevant parties to become actively involved. They may be young or old, in work or without. They may have an existing or potential interest in the project. They may include local and statutory authorities, the voluntary sector, professionals, politicians, landowners, developers, financiers, employers and employees, tenants, residents, and the wider community. By focusing on common goals, there is the potential to overcome the limitations of traditional design and development methods. Lateral thinking is encouraged and the coalescence of many strands of thought often leads to new and unexpected results.

The neutral team of facilitators and relevant advisers treats everyone present as having an equal right to the process, and physical, social, commercial, and environmental issues are addressed holistically through a combination of topic-based workshops, “hands-on planning” sessions and, where appropriate, “lessons from elsewhere”. The views of young people are taken seriously and children are given a chance to exercise their creativity.

The event usually lasts six days, commencing on a Thursday, when the Planning Weekend Team assembles, familiarizes itself with the site and location, and receives background briefings from key people. The team brings together whatever collective skills and experience are needed to match the particular characteristics of the project under review. Workshop facilitators and monitors are provided, as well as advisers and analysts, architects, urban designers and planners, and an editorial team to produce the final report. The event may have a public launch on a Thursday, if appropriate, setting the scene for the public sessions that will run through Friday and Saturday. These are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Workshops

The workshop facilitators initiate a procedure that first identifies the issues, then looks at possible solutions and how best these can be implemented. Participants contribute their suggestions by jotting them down on post-it notes that are then gathered by the facilitators and grouped to identify key themes. Ideas are discussed as they arise enabling a full dialogue between all members of the workshop in a fully inclusive process. The combination of written ideas and professional facilitation allows the ideas of the less confident to be placed on an equal footing with those of the more experienced. The process also diffuses the potential for aggressive and single-issue dissent.

Throughout the day there are regular plenary sessions to give all participants an opportunity to know what has gone on across the range of workshops.

Hands-on-Planning

The “hands-on planning” sessions are an extension of the workshops whereby participants gather in groups around tables on which are pinned large scale plans of the area. Issues that have already emerged are then developed in a physical form, using pens to mark up the plans. Although architects and urban designers are present to assist and facilitate these practical sessions, participants are encouraged to explore their own ideas and to work out potential solutions, along with other local individuals who may, or may not be in agreement. Responsibility is passed to the participants to try and reach consensus amongst themselves

The result of these “hands-on-planning” sessions is a number of visually stimulating plans, which have been designed on a collaborative basis and reflect the wishes and aspirations of the local community. They are then described in turn by a member of the group, so that everyone attending the event can be aware of the myriad of ideas and options that have emerged throughout the comparatively short period of time.

Vision for the Future

The essence of a Community Planning Weekend is to utilize the burst of energy and activity created by this intensive participatory event to produce results that might, using more traditional methods, take many months to deliver. Despite municipal-level conflicts and individual versus community claims, a practical way forward can usually be found, held together by a sense of collective ownership of a vision that many have helped create.

Over Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday the planning weekend team then works in private analysing and evaluating the output from the previous two days. The vision that is created, along with summaries of the workshops, diagrammatic versions of the “hands-on planning” sessions, and recommendations for the way forward, is presented back to the public on Tuesday evening in the form of a slide show, exhibition, and broadsheet.

All relevant parties can then sign up to the “action plan” that has been created. Thus all stakeholders, whether representing the state, the community, or the private sector will have been collectively involved in creating the future they will all share.

Sustaining Local Involvement

The planning weekend therefore becomes a springboard to aid and implement future development. Outputs can be used in a variety of ways according to the aims and objectives of the project. The results of this vision-building process may form the basis of a master plan for the area, help solve critical decisions on town planning, assist funding applications, or initiate the setting up of collaborative mechanisms by which the development process can be delivered.

The creation (or strengthening) of a sustainable civil society on a local level requires the involvement and commitment of people who recognize and respond to a shared vision. Although everyone will invariably see this vision from an individual

standpoint, the key lies in generating effective use of valuable community resources, allowing linkages between various needs to create a pool of multi-purpose benefits.

Focus groups and working groups are usually formed as a direct result of a community planning event to continue the dialogue and help bind the community together in a realistic market-driven, politically-open, and democratic way by creating local community ownership of activities. Once the vision has been created, partnering arrangements can then be set up with the relevant stakeholders to oversee delivery. Out of this process a new strand of community leadership almost always emerges, holding greater respect and influence than those chosen through traditional political systems.

The aim is therefore to create an action plan for each section of the community: local government, the commercial sector, and the citizens themselves. Market, state, and community interests can be entwined through transferring land and assets to a Community Development Trust. This will then create an active, stabilizing force that is able to operate effectively, regardless of political change. The state provides the legal framework, the market provides the finance to set up appropriate partnerships, the community becomes the long-term stakeholder.

Local ownership of decision-making processes is an essential ingredient for the strengthening and stabilization of places, neighbourhoods, and communities. It is a principle that must be at the heart of democratic practice, and a new and effective tool now exists to help make it happen. The following examples illustrate different forms of community planning.

Wenceslas Square, Prague

The history of Prague's most famous square has been punctuated by a number of memorable moments when the Czech people have seized the initiative and regained their own voice. It was therefore an appropriate venue for the Community Planning Weekend that took place in April 1996. Since the start of the twentieth century Wenceslas Square has been the embodiment of progress, but progress can bring stress and problems as well as affluence. It seemed that five years after the euphoria of the Velvet Revolution the heart of the nation was being lost to pimps and prostitutes, becoming a symbol for the downside of capitalism. The dilemma facing the planning weekend was one familiar to many people trying to find ways of securing the benefits of economic growth while also maintaining what is best in their own culture.

Many different ideas were expressed and explored, but certain themes emerged in which participants referred to the necessity for everyone to take responsibility, to become involved, to be prepared to take action, and to recognize the need for effective management.

The Community Planning Weekend provided an opportunity for the local people of Prague, those who actually lived and experienced everyday life on Wenceslas Square, to express their own feelings and to participate directly in planning a future

for the square. The event initiated dialogue and generated co-operation between citizens, decision-making bodies, and the business community. The planning team, in conjunction with their Czech counterparts, created a vision for Wenceslas Square and the buildings that surround it, which stemmed directly from publicly discussed ideas.

As a first step towards managing and improving the open space, it was agreed that the formation of a new association for the revitalization of Wenceslas Square should be considered. This group could be composed of local businesses, owners of property, local residents, and others with an interest in the area. It would work with the municipal authorities and others to ensure that an effective management brief is prepared. This could then lead the way for real local ownership of decision-making processes, involving all strata of the community in a partnering arrangement. The process of community planning was therefore instrumental in articulating practical options for enhancing the Square, which would in turn have a positive effect on civic society.

Crumlin Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland

After a five month process of planning and preparation The Crumlin Road Ideas Weekend took place in February 1997. A 30-year cycle of decline and neglect had been caused by a number of factors: the "Troubles", the economic decline of Belfast and the blight of an unrealized road widening scheme, and a misguided attempt to create a "physical peaceline". More positively, questions had arisen about the future of a significant group of public buildings that stand close to the city centre: the Mater Hospital, the Crumlin Road Jail, and Belfast's County Courthouse.

During the period of initial consultation and planning an agreed list of "Is" and "Isn't"s was prepared which provided the common ground on which both Catholic and Protestant communities felt comfortable to proceed. As a result, two days of public sessions took place in which invited participants explored the physical, social, and economic problems of Belfast's Crumlin Road.

The event created a shift in imagination and enhanced participants' perceptions of what is possible. Surprising ideas emerged, such as turning the Gaol and Courthouse into a cross-community cultural, leisure and arts project, rather than seeing them turned into a Public Records Office as planned currently by the government. As one of the participants commented, "We've always shared these buildings – let's keep them that way!" What the Ideas Weekend did not do, as many feared it would, was to destroy the hard work and carefully developed relationships that had been established over the preceding months.

The tried-and-tested techniques of community planning were appropriate to the task in hand: there was a neutral multi-disciplinary team of outsiders, which treated everyone as having an equal right to the process; workshops and "hands-on plan-

ning” sessions were able to stimulate non-threatening dialogue and establish valuable areas of consensus; and by putting the communities at the centre of the regeneration process and developing public and private sector partnerships, a vision was created that could lead to the Crumlin Road emerging as a peaceline of economic regeneration, the symbolic gateway to Protestant and Catholic reconciliation.

Schlossplatz Berlin, Germany

Schlossplatz has been the subject of heated discussions since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Situated in the centre of Berlin, it has become symbolic of the reunification debate. Firmly entrenched positions are held between the “Ossies” who wish to keep the *Platz der Republik* (built by the former East German government) and the “Wessies” who wish to rebuild the baroque *Stadtschloss* (former residence of the Prussian king). A planning weekend was held in early autumn 1997 to help identify and build on the common ground that invariably exists, even when the views that are initially expressed so often seem irreconcilable. It was hoped that neutral facilitation would free up the discussion, create a special atmosphere of co-operation, and help focus on issues rather than symbolism.

The fact that Schlossplatz is of national and international importance tends to obscure the fact that for a significant number of people it is their local neighbourhood where they want to be able to live, work, and play. A primary aim was to seek solutions that would enable the area to function effectively at all these different levels. As a result of the public sessions the process moved from polarized debate towards a proper analysis of the uses and activities which would be most appropriate for this important location, together with respect for the context and nature of the local area.

Distilled from the results of the “hands-on planning” sessions were a set of urban design principles which could generate an Urban Design Code, which could then be used to guide the future development of the site.

A new consensus group was formed shortly after the public event, drawn from a wide range of residents, business people, politicians, professionals, and campaign groups, most of whom held diametrically opposed views at the outset. The initiative *Perspektive Schlossplatz* will act as a monitoring and advisory body on the future development of the Schlossplatz area and actively campaign for the implementation of the results and methodology of the planning weekend. In spite of their very different positions and opinions, all participants were able to agree on 10 principles that should guide the process.

As a result of the planning weekend there now exists a new focus for the debate, working to ensure a sense of common ownership of the final results and fulfilling the desire to find an appropriate way forward that can be endorsed by everyone.

Caterham Barracks, Surrey, England

Linden Homes acquired Caterham Barracks from the Ministry of Defence at the beginning of 1998 and commissioned developers to prepare a masterplan in consultation

with local people. While respecting the historical character of the Barracks, the challenge was to integrate the site with the existing community of Caterham-on-the-Hill (which was initially hostile to the idea of any significant development taking place) and bring lasting social, economic and environmental benefits to the local area. By agreeing to host a Community Planning Weekend the developers took the unusual step of inviting public participation prior to the preparation of plans or the submission of a planning application.

More than 1,000 people attended the event, and the workshops and “hands-on planning” sessions revealed a unanimous desire for the creation of a balanced community on the site, with mixed residential accommodation and a range of uses that should include retail, employment, leisure and commercial opportunities.

The planning weekend resulted in a vision for Caterham Barracks, which was subsequently refined into a more detailed masterplan. Focus groups were formed to maintain community involvement after the event. The spirit of the weekend continued as local people continued to work with the developers, architects and local authority representatives in order to balance competing interests and forge a consensus-oriented practical solution for the site.

Plans have now been approved to transform the barracks into an urban village, regenerating a “brownfield” site and offering a mixture of private, sheltered and social housing as well as business accommodation, live/work units, shops, and a 60-bed nursing home. Leisure and community facilities will be included in the development, which will be linked to Caterham railway station by a new bus service.

The Caterham Barracks proposals can be seen as a positive example of local democratic practice whereby citizen and stakeholder participation has resulted in a masterplan that will develop the site as a balanced community with a mixture of uses, creating 350 more homes than in the local authority’s original brief and a locally owned Development Trust with initial assets in excess of £3 million.

CASE STUDY

PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Julie Ballington

In 1997, countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) ratified the "Declaration on Gender and Development" committing member states to eradicate gender discrimination and inequality. The Declaration commits SADC countries to ensure the equal representation of women and men in decision-making at all levels, and to achieve a 30 per cent target of women in all political decision-making structures, including local government, by the year 2005. This declaration, together with other international treaties and conventions, has heightened awareness around the issue of women's participation in both national and local spheres of governance in southern Africa.

Women's participation continues to lag behind the participation rates of men, especially at the local level, although regional variances exist. It is also apparent that once elected, women often face pervasive obstacles to effective participation in decision-making structures. Where men usually dominate local structures, patriarchal attitudes and norms often inhibit or marginalize women's participation, both as elected officials and as citizens, thereby sidelining the concerns of women.

Therefore, if women are to succeed in influencing the agenda at the local level, they need to overcome at least two hurdles. Firstly, they need to be given the opportunity to participate in community affairs by being elected into local government structures. Secondly, they need to ensure their effective participation in decision-making once elected. This case study highlights some of the ways in which women have tackled these obstacles, and increased and enhanced their effective participation in local governance in southern Africa.

Context

The idea that inclusive participatory local governance can contribute to the consolidation of democracy in southern Africa has gained prominence in the recent past. For the past decade, national elections have dominated the political agenda and have often received more attention than elections and governance at the local level, partly due to the importance attached to national politics and the need to establish effective democratic institutions to consolidate fledgling democracies. Democratic and inclusive local elections in southern Africa generally have taken place years after founding elections.

For example, Malawi held its first local government election in November 2000, six years after its first national democratic elections in 1994 (although opposition figures have questioned the fairness and competency of the poll, pointing to very low turnout rates of only 14 per cent). Even where national and local elections are conducted at

the same time, as in Tanzania, national issues usually dominate the political agenda. However, increases in urban population, the deepening of urban and rural poverty, restructuring, and inadequate service provisions are now posing major developmental challenges to many southern African countries. While there is enormous diversity in local government structures, from large metropolitan cities to sparsely-populated rural areas, it is now apparent that, without strong and participatory local government, effective delivery is nearly impossible.

The notion that gender equality is critical to the consolidation of democracy at the local level is gaining more prominence through the activities of NGOs, grassroots organizations, committed political parties, and gender activists. The participation of women at all levels of decision-making is critical to the common goal of equality, development, and democratization. This is particularly so at the local level, where in southern Africa, women are the major recipients of resources, constituting more than half of the population. Politics is essentially about representation and decision-making, and if women do not participate they cannot ensure that their needs and interests are adequately addressed in the distribution and allocation of resources at the local level. Yet many factors influence and inhibit the participation of women in local governance. These include cultural, patriarchal and gendered views of politics, political party bias to male candidates, and an insufficient number of experienced or trained women at the community level.

Electing Women to Local Government

The number of women represented in local government structures varies markedly from country to country. While official statistics are scarce, it is estimated that Namibia and the Seychelles have the highest representation of women at over 40 per cent. These countries are followed by Tanzania, South Africa, and Botswana with representation between 15 and 30 per cent. At the other extreme are countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Zambia, with under 10 per cent representation of women in local structures. Many factors account for the varying levels of participation, including the difficulties women face in progressing through party structures, the nature of the electoral system and whether affirmative action is provided for in electoral legislation, discriminatory attitudes and practices, childcare responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office. Despite the challenge these obstacles pose, some of the following strategies have been employed aiming to increase women's political participation at the local level.

The high representation of women locally in Namibia is largely attributable to the *legislated affirmative action* provision applying to local authority elections in 1992 and 1998, together with the use of the proportional representation electoral system. The affirmative action provision required parties to include at least 30 per cent women on their party candidate lists. Today, despite some protests for greater gender balance at the national and regional levels, 44 per cent of Namibia's local councillors are women, including some mayors or deputy mayors. Unfortunately with the proposal to change to a constituency-based system (which has often proved difficult for the elec-

tion of women) for subsequent elections at the local level, a decrease in the number of women councillors is to be expected. As a result, a number of NGOs are lobbying for the retention of a quota system. Tanzania also has a legislated quota for women, where 20 per cent of seats at the national level (this is an increase from 15 per cent) and at least 25 per cent of seats at the local level are reserved for women. While the representation of women remains below 30 per cent, the reserved seats have ensured that at least some women are elected and participate in local governance.

However, the special seats in Tanzania have been criticized by some gender activists for taking pressure off political parties to forward woman candidates in constituency seats. Generally with the constituency-based system often used to elect councillors at the local level, affirmative action strategies have proved effective in guaranteeing the representation and participation of women in local governance in southern Africa.

In the campaign to increase the participation of women at the local level, many civil society groups and NGOs have played a critical role in *training and lobbying* in southern Africa. In particular, the activities of the *Emang Basadi* (Stand Up Women), an NGO based in Botswana that lobbies mainly for the rights of women, has been exemplary. In 1999, the organization was noted for its programmes that aimed at increasing the participation of women in national and local elections in Botswana. *Emang Basadi* operates through a Political Education Project that trains women to run for political office. Training programmes in 1999 were directed at all aspiring candidates regardless of political affiliation, and included developing public speaking skills, campaign management, and fund-raising expertise.

Similar strategies have been implemented in other southern African countries. In Malawi, the Civil Liberties Committee recognized the importance of developing training programmes in the run-up to the first local elections in 2000, based on the poor representation of women at the national level. The programmes train aspiring councillors on women's rights, gender equality, and democratic governance. They also encourage women to run as independent candidates in the local elections. As a result, women fared fairly well in the contested elections, with women gaining as many as 45 per cent of the seats in some municipalities. The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) has also assumed a critical role in raising awareness about the importance of women's participation in national and local governance. The training activities of TGNP stem from the realization that the patriarchal structure of elections and difficult process of preliminary elections within political parties, severely impact on women's chances of winning elections. By creating an enabling environment through support networks and training, TGNP hopes to facilitate increased representation of women in local structures. According to the TGNP Director an important success of their campaign has been raising the debate on women's participation and the constraints they face in Tanzania. However, she notes that obstacles confront aspiring candidates, including funding of campaigns and lack of logistical support for women within parties and as independent candidates.

Although strategies have been adopted in a number of countries, their success varies. Deliberate efforts such as quotas, gender lobbying and support for women candidates undertaken by NGOs and other stakeholders can contribute to enhancing women's participation at the local level, yet these strategies often have a limited impact. Of critical concern is the difficulty encountered by women in getting selected as candidates within the party structure. Despite the general commitment to gender equality, women continue to be under-represented as candidates at the local level.

Women and SALGA

While representation is critical, the struggle by elected councillors, NGOs, and women themselves extends beyond representation to the issue of effective participation in local governance. Once elected to local politics, the participation of women in male-dominated structures is often inhibited by patriarchal norms, unfamiliar language and rules, and a lack of training and support. One way in which women may be empowered to participate effectively is through the establishment of gender machinery to promote the effective participation of women in local councils. This is particularly important in countries where local governance is currently undergoing transformation. This is the case in South Africa where the institutions at the local level are being reformed as a final phase in its transition to democracy.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa gives prominence to local government by establishing it as a sphere of co-operative governance. While local government is a separate and distinct sphere of government, it is inter-related with other spheres, namely national and provincial governments. The Constitution also makes provision for the establishment of municipal associations as a means of ensuring consultation between the different spheres of government. As a result, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) was created through the Organised Local Government Act of 1996, and launched in November 1996, consisting of a national and nine provincial associations. SALGA is unique in that it acts as a unifying voice for all local governments, urban and rural, and contributes to the development of policy and improved service delivery at the local level. Its main task, as stated in its mission statement, is "to promote developmental and co-operative local governance throughout South Africa, in order to deepen democracy and to provide services to meet basic human needs".

The SALGA Constitution contains a commitment to gender equality and the participation of women in local governance. This has resulted in the organization recognizing that transformation at the local level will never be complete without redressing the imbalances created by patriarchal relations. In order to achieve its strategic objectives SALGA instituted a number of working groups, including a Gender Working Group (GWG). Its mission is to promote the achievement of gender equality and protect the rights of women, both as councillors and as part of the municipalities they serve. Where women constitute 19 per cent of councillors at the local level, this is an important initiative as it builds supporting structures to encourage the effective par-

ticipation of women, and ensure that policy discussion and implementation reflects the concerns of women. SALGA has also ratified the IULA declaration on women in local government, which challenges SALGA to promote compliance with the declaration within individual councils. Without a critical mass of women at the local level, a cadre of gender activists is needed to ensure that the needs of women are reflected in local transformation and policy development.

SALGA explains that women councillors often experience gender specific constraints at the local level. Included is the fact that the low number of women councillors often means that gender issues are not addressed in certain councils and that women often have limited access to decision-making as patriarchy remains rife among many gender insensitive councillors. The SALGA GWG is ultimately responsible for co-ordinating the policy formation around gender issues, lobbying other levels of government and civil society, as well as supporting gender initiatives in local councils. To aid this process, the GWG provides training in a number of areas, including leadership training, advocacy and lobbying skills, and budgetary skills so councils are able to "engender" their budgets. In this process, the activities of local NGOs are extremely valuable. The Gender Advocacy Programme and the Women's Development Fund have been critical in providing empowerment programmes to women councillors in South Africa.

The SALGA Gender programme consists of a GWG at the national level, comprising councillors representing each province, together with provincial working groups constituted of local councillors in the province. Some, but not all, municipalities have established working groups at the municipal level. The resolution to form GWGs in local councils has been met with varied levels of success. This is often because municipalities lack councillors committed to gender programmes, or achieving gender equality is not seen as a priority in the face of severely under-resourced councils.

The implementation of a national programme committed to gender sensitizing local councils has therefore been a difficult task. It has been plagued by several challenges, including insufficient resources, as well as a lack of political will within individual councils to support the network. Despite these obstacles, the SALGA GWG remains a critical structure to aid women in their effective participation at the local level. If all local councils implement GWGs and conform to a national gender policy, real changes can be expected with regard to the representation and participation of women councillors at the local level in South Africa. The initiative by SALGA Gender may prove to be an effective strategy that will benefit the effective participation of women in other southern African countries.

Conclusion

Inclusive and effective participation is necessary to reverse the subordination and marginalization of women, and contribute to democratic local governance in southern Africa. Although women are able to participate in a number of ways, this case study emphasizes the election of women councillors as the most visible and direct way in

EXPANDING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

which women are able to participate in local governance. Through such participation, women are enabled to influence decision-making ensuring gender sensitivity, and through training are empowered to make necessary interventions to communicate the concerns of women in their communities. The examples provided above demonstrate that the enhancement of women's political participation at the local level requires a co-ordinated effort from a number of players, including governments, political parties, NGOs, activists, and men and women working in partnership.

CASE STUDY

ENHANCED PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Lessons from South Africa**

David Storey and Dominique Wooldridge

South Africa's government structures have fundamentally and inclusively transformed in the post-apartheid era. At the local level, the participation of civil society has been a key feature in the move from apartheid to democratic local government. The way in which civil society has participated in, contributed to, and benefited from the establishment of democratic structures and processes has varied throughout the transition process. This case study breaks down the transition process into four chronological phases to examine the changing nature of civil society participation during each phase.

Phase One (1985–1993): Mobilization

Effective mobilization in opposition to apartheid local government and the building of local-level civil society organization and capacity characterized this phase. The mobilization was linked to the broader struggle against apartheid and issues discussed were therefore both constitutional (i.e., "who decides/represents") and distributive (i.e., "who benefits") in nature. The result of the mobilization, coupled with the absence of negotiations with those in control of resources (whose legitimacy was in question), was a stalemate in the ability of local governments to provide basic services and the acceptance by the state of the need for, and legitimacy of, including civil society in decision-making.

Images of apartheid-era towns and cities are now notorious across the world: on the one hand, leafy "white" suburbs with service standards comparable with those of highly industrialized countries; on the other, the collection of "matchbox houses" and unserviced shack settlements that constituted black townships. This uneven pattern of development was underpinned by a local government system designed to produce and perpetuate inequality on the basis of race. South African local government derives the bulk of its income from property rates and a levy charged on business and industry. Apartheid legislation and residential segregation, combined with a policy of "own management for own areas" entailing separate local government structures for each racially defined area, limited the extent to which black citizens would benefit from the local tax base. The high rateable (commercial and industrial) tax base was contained in "white areas" and although township residents worked and shopped in these areas, income derived from the local tax base was collected by white municipalities and spent on servicing white areas.

During the mid-1980s, township residents mobilized against this unfair system under the popular slogan of "one city, one tax base". This slogan simultaneously assert-

ed the right of township residents to access the tax base they contributed to, and asserted their (historically denied) rights as urban citizens. Mobilization was organized and led by civic associations and most often took the form of rent and consumer boycotts – both of which directly threatened the financial viability of white municipalities, and hence the financial basis of white suburban lifestyles.

As a result of effective mobilization, local-level negotiating forums were established in many parts of South Africa in the late 1980s. Black communities were represented in negotiations largely through civic associations. Most of these early local negotiating forums were simply crisis-management structures concentrating on brokering deals around “improved services for improved payment levels”, and thus real benefits for township residents were limited. Nonetheless, these early negotiations played a critical role in building the capacity of civil society to engage the state.

In 1992 the ruling National Party attempted to pass legislation, the “Interim Measures Act”, which would enable local negotiating forums to reach legally binding agreements on the government of local areas. The ANC Alliance, fearing that their weak technical capacity in many local forums would result in agreements that entrenched white privilege, rejected the legislation. A National Local Government Forum (NLGF) was then formed to negotiate a framework for local negotiations. Civic associations were represented in the NLGF through the South African National Civic Association (SANCO). In 1993 the NLGF reached an agreement, which was subsequently legislated in the form of the “Local Government Transition Act” (LGTA).

Rather than prescribing a new system of local government for South Africa, the LGTA outlined a process for change, consisting of three broad stages:

- *A pre-interim stage* to last from the promulgation of the LGTA in 1993, until the first local elections. During this phase negotiation forums had to be established to reach agreement on the boundaries (specifically to amalgamate former “white” and “black” municipal jurisdictions), the allocation of municipal powers and authority, and the composition of interim “power-sharing” structures.
- *An interim stage* to begin with local elections in November 1995 that would elect representatives to the structures that had emerged as a result of local negotiations. These interim structures would govern until the next elections, which would be held under a new system of local government located within the new national constitution.
- *The final stage* of the transition process commenced with local government elections in November 2000 in line with the new policy and legal framework for local government.

Phase Two (1993–1994): Negotiation

The LGTA entrenched local negotiations as the key vehicle for affecting change at the local level – representing a break with racially-defined apartheid structures and set-

ting the scene for joint governance of South Africa's cities, towns, and rural areas. Mass mobilization diminished and its purpose, when used, changed from effecting a "seat at the table" to supporting negotiating positions at the "table". The LGTA's staggered process both guided the local level transition and radically affected the dynamics of civil society participation. Possibly the most significant change was a shift from direct resident accountability towards political party caucuses.

Each local negotiating forum had to reach an agreement on which type of local government would be established in that area (e.g., metropolitan or local system), and on issues such as the boundaries for a new local government in the area. The "statutory" (representatives from existing local government structures and political parties that participated in the previous local elections) and "non-statutory" sides (community representatives and political parties that had not participated in the previous local elections) then prepared lists of candidates, and a new political council was appointed from these lists on a 50/50 basis, to govern until local government elections could be held.

The enactment of the LGTA and "power-sharing" by civil society in local forums leading up to the establishment of interim or "appointed" councils affected the dynamics of civil society participation in several ways:

- It was mandatory to establish a negotiating forum in each local area, consisting of representatives of statutory and non-statutory parties. The structure of early negotiating forums was unregulated, with the result that each local forum set its own rules. On the statutory side, seats were allocated roughly in proportion to the number of seats political parties had won in previous local government elections. On the non-statutory side, the issue was more vexing. In many areas political parties who had not previously participated in local negotiations entered local forums and competed with civic leaders for the right to represent township communities in negotiations.
- In one sense this rearrangement increased the number of vehicles through which civil society could participate in local negotiations (e.g., through either civic associations or a political party). However, coalitions of similar interest tended to dominate both the statutory and non-statutory caucuses, with the result that smaller interest groups were often marginalized.

Participation by political parties (as the ANC began the transition from liberation movement to political party) saw a significant shift from accountability to civic structures (such as street and block committees) and mass residents meetings, towards accountability to party caucuses.

- The LGTA focused negotiations in local forums around a narrow and technical agenda. Participation became directed at the outputs specified in LGTA, including reaching agreement on new local boundaries, the allocation of municipal powers and functions, and the division of assets and liabilities. NGOs played an increas-

ingly important role in providing technical capacity to support the non-statutory side in these negotiations. In some instances this close collaboration between NGOs and broad community-based organizations led to ongoing and mutually beneficial relationships. In other instances, tensions surfaced between the predominantly white, NGO-based technocrats and activists who provided technical support to the non-statutory component of local forums, and the predominantly black community representatives they worked for.

- As negotiations progressed, the combined effect of an increasingly “technical” agenda, and the new party-political dynamics of a two-sided negotiation table, made it increasingly difficult for civic leaders to maintain their previous style of community mobilization. The shift from mass mobilization against the local state to engagement with the state through negotiations required new forms of representation, mandates and accountability.

Phase Three (1994–1995): Joint Decision-Making

The joint decision-making phase entailed previously excluded people taking responsibility for a system that they had not created and had limited scope to change. The conclusion of the major constitutional issues allowed more distributive issues to come to the fore, although this phase marked the beginning of a period of internal focus whereby organizational change was seen as crucial to improved service delivery. Relationships between and within civil society organizations continued to change and the emergence of increasingly diverse interests from under the broad opposition banner raised dilemmas for those within and outside the new system.

The onset of interim or “appointed” councils found newly appointed councillors from the non-statutory side of the 50/50 model responsible for managing municipal organizations designed to selectively service the white population. By entering local government, these people, often community activists with a background in the anti-apartheid struggle, entered a new “terrain of struggle”.

Simultaneously, many of the old negotiating forums were transformed into “Local Development Forums”, where community organizations engaged with the new agenda of defining infrastructure investment plans, planning capital projects and the like.

If the shift from the “street” to the negotiation table had been difficult, the move from the negotiating table to boardrooms where municipal budgets, staff structures and services were discussed, proved as profound. The days of participation equalling opposition to the formal “system” were fading fast and instead participation was now associated with joint responsibility for service delivery. The shift from negotiation to joint decision-making had further impact on the nature of civil society participation and the period reconfigured a number of relationships:

- Many former community leaders and activists entered government, and found themselves in a position where they had to manage tensions with their former con-

stituencies over issues they had been part of creating, such as land invasions, reinstating a culture of payment for services and the like.

- Many white activists with technical skills moved away from offering their services as members and associates of community based organizations and civic movements, towards a more professional “consulting” approach. This transition of intellectual capital and experience coincided with the entrance of mainstream consultants and service providers who had positioned themselves for work in restructuring local government.
- The introduction of resources into communities by inexperienced local councillors desperate to deliver on high expectations before an election led to destructive conflicts between various interest groups and undermined trust between community constituencies and councillors.
- Divisions between political party structures and community and civic associations, which had been blurred to a large degree under the banner of the national anti-apartheid alliance and local “non-statutory” side, became more distinct. Activists made personal choices about whether to go into political parties and into government, or to remain in community-based organizations. Others avoided the choice or, by virtue of their status or skill set, were encouraged not to. This meant that it was not uncommon for a single individual to simultaneously be a councillor and hold senior positions in a political party, a civic association, and a youth or women’s movement. Meetings of development forums often began with a tongue-in-cheek request for participants to identify which “hat” they were wearing to the meeting. This rapid reshuffling of roles and relationships even led to situations where a councillor responsible for consulting civil society on a specific issue, was also head of the community organization or lobby dealing with that issue.
- While the major municipal union, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), had been firmly aligned with the ANC Alliance in the negotiating phase, tensions now surfaced as councillors drawn from the ANC Alliance took on the role of employers. In most cases new councils inherited poorly managed organizations with huge discrepancies in conditions of service between staff. Within the context of limited municipal budgets, councillors had to juggle demands for improved services in former black areas, and pressure from unions to standardize conditions of service and bring employees of former Black Local Authorities up to the same salary scales as their white counterparts. As councillors prioritized resources between service delivery and staffing concerns, the tensions between new councillors and their allied unions began to simmer.
- The notion of “community” also became increasingly problematic. In the negotiating phase, the interests of most residents in localities converged to a sufficient

extent to enable a fairly non-critical use of the term and concept “community”. For example, the desire to replace illegitimate political structures with a non-racial local government, and the desire for non-racial local boundaries that ensured that all residents could access the local tax-base, were often common to a large majority of township residents. Once these broad goals were achieved, the differing interests of residents in the same locality became more apparent. Local Development Forums were often split into different sectoral groups (for example housing, water, electricity) to enable new councils to consult “communities” on a sectoral basis. New councils not only had to distinguish parts of the “community” to enable policy formulation on sectoral issues, but also found themselves mediating between different parts of the community (for example mediating between shop-owners and informal traders or between land-owners and squatters).

Phase Four (1995–2000): Democratic Local Government

Newly-elected democratic local government embraced co-operative governance approaches and encouraged civil society participation. The adoption of a participative approach can be explained by both a principled commitment to the idea of grass-roots consultation as well as the experience base of the ex-activists-now-councillors. However, the complexity of organizational transformation and the pressure to provide infrastructure and deliver services has meant that participation has been easier to talk about than to implement. Alternatively, participation has been widespread and thorough but has taken long periods of time and led to unsustainable outcomes or provided an excuse for officials not to take hard distributive decisions. These difficulties, combined with a deepening of divisions between civil society (and within community-based organizations) and government and the growing confidence of the ANC to act as the majority political party within a representative democratic system, has ensured that the form and style of participation remains controversial and continues to evolve.

The short local joint decision-making period ended with the election of democratic local government structures in late 1995/early 1996. Against the background of a struggle for black residents to be recognized as full citizens and to make their voice heard in the governance of their local areas, the premise that development must incorporate the needs of the community at which it is targeted, as expressed by that community itself, was widely accepted. Given the ethos of the mass democratic movement and that the local transition process was driven by civil society participation, it is not surprising that most new councils enthusiastically seized participation as a necessary component of democratic local governance.

But despite this widespread commitment, new municipal councils have not found the implementation of participative approaches to be straightforward. Difficulties have included:

- The need for both councillors and civil society organizations to adjust to working together within a representative democracy. At the heart of the tensions that have emerged is a failure to distinguish between a commitment by local councils to *sharing information and consulting* with civil society and *joint decision-making* whereby organized interest groups hold a veto over development decisions. This problem has two aspects. The *first aspect* relates to the legitimacy and status of non-governmental forums. Prior to the election of democratic local government, there was an assumption that forums and broad-based development committees had as much of a legitimate right to take decisions on behalf of the community, as did the discredited local government structures. Following elections, new local councils were trying to establish themselves as the legitimate voice and decision-making locus of the local community and did not want to be demoted to partner status and lose their authority to make decisions independently on the basis of their representative mandate to govern. The *second aspect* stems from confusion as to the difference between consultation and negotiation as “consensus-based processes”, and “consensus” as a desired outcome. Local development forums were not always willing to simply be consulted by their former comrades, who – as councillors – now claimed the right to take decisions regardless of whether consultations resulted in consensus. Similarly, newly-elected councillors were not prepared to grant veto rights to the myriad of interest groups that would line up to support or oppose local issues.
- The need to reform municipal bureaucracies, designed to exclude participation under apartheid, in order to enable civil society participation. The culture and practice of local government administrations was geared to suppress local voices, deny residents citizenship rights and ignore demands for improved delivery. Although many new councils adopted a sincere and strong commitment to participative local development, the reality was that organizational structures, practices and cultures could not be changed overnight.
- The complexity of integrating the national political agenda of the majority parties in a particular local council, with local needs and demands. Furthermore, budgeting mechanisms changed and the fiscal discipline demanded by national government increased making the availability of funds more scarce and the means to access them more difficult. The sophistication required to engage with the fast-changing and complex regulatory environment simultaneously made participation more difficult for grassroots leadership and the need for participation more onerous on over-worked councillors who increasingly looked to technical experts for assistance.
- The culture of “veto” politics in civil society organizations that had grown from the seeds sown through a history of negative behaviour. Civil society power had largely been built on “refusal” tactics, such as boycotts and not on positive organization. This made it difficult for newly elected councillors to encourage communities to

begin to pay for services and even more difficult for civil society leadership to maintain legitimacy at the negotiating table (by assisting councillors with the call to pay) and with their constituencies who were expecting improved services without necessarily paying for them.

- The fact that organized structures of civil society have dissolved in recent years. This may be a predominantly short-term phenomenon arising from the absorption of many civil society leaders into government and parastatal structures, and the need to reconfigure civil society organizations to engage with the state in a new way (i.e., to move from mobilization against the apartheid state to participation in a democratic state). While it is possible that new forms of civil society organization more appropriate to the democratic era will soon emerge, organizations representing the interests of less affluent local areas are currently weak. The irony of the current situation is that the most organized civil society lobbies are often conservative ratepayer and business organizations, that have adopted the style and techniques of the old mass democratic movement to challenge the new democratic state.
- The inexperience of newly-elected councillors in making, and sticking to hard distributive decisions. This inexperience, often coupled with or exacerbated by uncertain political will, led to many councils trying to cover up their own confusion and/or unwillingness to antagonize any constituency by adopting processes that sought consensus at all costs thus often resulting in no substantive outcome at all.
- The shift from issue-based to interest-based organization. During the earlier periods of mobilization many different interest groups were united by a common need to oppose apartheid. With the introduction of democratic local government these interests began to be raised leading to conflict within civil society organizations. These conflicts were often combined with, or mired by, leadership struggles and led to the formation of splinter groups around certain issues. This raised a whole new dilemma for councillors as they tried to distinguish between different types of participation for different sectors and constituencies who relied on, or asserted the need to operate by consensus.

With hindsight it was inevitable that the simultaneous assertion of the "right to govern" and commitment to participative development from new municipal councils would result in tensions emerging between development and consultative forums, and government decision-making structures. It is also obvious that the major challenge facing South African local government is to develop the skills, methods and systems that will extend the commitment to participation from the council itself to the whole municipal organization. This said, some local councils are revisiting the forums and practices through which participation and consultation took place in the pre-election era and many municipalities are experimenting with participative forms of

budgeting, planning and service delivery. Municipal councils are now experimenting with a wide range of approaches. In some areas Development Forums remain in place, but function predominantly as consultative forums. In other areas, other forms of consultation, ranging from issue or area specific meetings, through to more traditional "customer-surveys" and focus-group approaches, have replaced the "forum-approach".

Towards the "Final Phase"

Since local government elections in 1995-1996, national government has run a highly consultative policy process to define a "final" local government system for South Africa. In March 1998 the Local Government White Paper was published, followed by the Municipal Demarcation Act (1998), Municipal Structures Act (1999), and Municipal Systems Bill (currently before parliament). This legislation addresses some of the inequities that resulted from the locally-negotiated approach to the current interim municipal structures, and allows for the re-demarcation of municipal boundaries. In November 2000, local government elections were held on the basis of the new municipal boundaries, to elect structures as defined in the new legislation. These elections marked the beginning of the "final phase" defined in the LGTA.

Just as the structural transformation of local government remains incomplete and frustratingly complex, so too the role played by civil society continues to evolve and diversify. Although its evolution has often been misunderstood and remains poorly documented a new initiative has recently been launched to ensure effective analysis of the manner in which councils grapple with new ways of engaging civil society and developing workable participative approaches to development. The three spheres of government (represented by organized local government, provincial departments responsible for local government, and the national departments responsible for local government and finance) have launched a "Local Government Transformation Programme", a central feature of which is an attempt to share municipal learning and experience during the transition period through the establishment of a "Learning Network".

This newly initiated "Learning Network" provides an opportunity for municipalities to reflect on their own approaches to participation and offers the hope that, in five years time when we look back at how participation in local development has been fostered, there will be a body of documented case studies and experiences to enable an informed analysis. It is only if such an analysis is fed into the development of new local government institutions that the practice of "exclusionary development" can be transformed into a practice of "participative development" within South Africa's fledgling democracy.

The November 2000 local elections were an important milestone in the development of South Africa's democracy and its system of local government. For the first

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time, local governments will be working under a stable set of rules that give them certain, specific powers and responsibilities. The newly elected governments are now imbued with a sense of legitimacy that has been lacking in previous years. A critical question will be whether these newly elected officials, working together with civil society, can bring the kind of service delivery that urban residents in South Africa desperately need.

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