

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE  
ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT FORUMS IN  
FACILITATING PARTICIPATION IN THE  
CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN TOWN  
AND REGIONAL PLANNING**

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MARCH 1998**

HCA 98/01846  
BRN 319654



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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Attempts to involve different interest groups in planning is a growing trend in many cities. Forums are seen as the most inclusive and representative structures (Shubane, 1995). But the question is: Are they really participative or representative? The aim of the study is, therefore, to investigate the extent to which development forums enhance participation in development planning, that is, their level of representativity and effectiveness. The issue to be examined here is whether the commitment to work "with communities" or people is being implemented in practice. The study also seeks to investigate the future role of local development forums in the context of democratically elected local government.

The purpose of this chapter is to put the study into context. An outline of the research problem, research questions, hypothesis and the structure that the dissertation takes is given. The chapter also includes the scope and limitations of the study and the methodology employed in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A major characteristic of governance on the African continent following political independence was the overt centralisation of governmental authority. This was due partly to the historical legacies inherited from colonial administration with its rigid emphasis on control from the centre (Sabela and Reddy, 1996).

The traditional planning practices have been associated with what Healey (1992) terms "totalising scientific rationalism". The traditional approach to development planning saw individuals as homogenous subjects. Resources were allocated according to subjectively perceived wants and material opportunity of the authority. Planning took place in an undemocratic manner. Policy decisions were made without the involvement of the beneficiaries and as a result failed to consider some of their important needs and perspectives. This form of governance is now generally agreed to have failed.

The realisation of the ineffectiveness or unresponsiveness of centralised governance brought about radical changes in development thinking. It brought about pressure for an expanded role for the public in decision-making based on both philosophical and pragmatic considerations. The former is related primarily to the general belief that in democratic societies that the individual has a right to be informed and consulted and express his views on the matters that affect him personally. Pragmatic considerations cover chiefly the failure of plans or decisions to identify public preferences correctly. It is in these circumstances that questioning of traditional practices have been particularly intense.

There is now a call to derive development plans through a participatory, bottom-up process to enable people to take charge of their own circumstances, mobilise their own meagre resources, identify their strengths and opportunities upon which they can build and then mobilise external resources (Cullen, 1995). This is based more on the assumption that,

decentralised or democratised planning would improve the relevance and sustainability of development projects rather than a centrally driven process. It would bring about decisions or plans that are reflective of the peoples values and aspirations.

In the absence of effectual and legitimate local government structures, the result thereof was the emergence of local development forums. These forums particularly emerged as an attempt to negotiate urban development. The upsurge of local development forums provided the mechanism for democratising planning by creating structures responsive to local needs in the absence of appropriate government structures.

However, South Africa has finally staged its first democratic elections. Legitimate local government structures in South Africa are now in place. This raises some questions as to the future role of development forums. Will forums be necessary now that the local government structures are in place? If the answer is yes, then we need to know what role they might play.

It is against this background that a study that aims at investigating development forums as ways of democratising planning and also look at their future role in the light of the currently elected democratic local government is undertaken.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As mentioned previously, forums represent a search for democratic forms of development planning. They portray an attempt by previously excluded groups to gain entry to

policy or decision making arenas. However, the question is, to what extent do these previously excluded groups influence policy making? Of major concern, therefore, is that forums may not be as inclusive and representative as they claim to be.

The question of who the representatives of the community are and the basis of their legitimacy has important implications for the nature of development outcomes. The Development Forums may be exploited as a power-base for ambitious leadership and therefore undermine broader community participation.

Secondly, in the South African context, there is uncertainty as to the future role of these development forums. Some may argue that there are now democratically elected councillors and there is no need for development forums. This is one of the central issues that this dissertation seeks to uncover, that is, whether legitimate local government has replaced the need for development forums.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Are development forums an effective and necessary mechanism for community participation in local development? What will their future role be, now that a democratic local government is in place?

#### **1.5 SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS.**

To expand on the main research question, the following sub-questions were utilised:

- \* What is the composition and role of development forums?
- \* Do post-election development forums have similar characteristics and roles as pre-election local forums?
- \* What is the nature of the involvement of communities in development planning?
- \* How do the forums ensure full participation of the community in development planning?
- \* What is the relationship between local government and development forums?
- \* Does the role of local government differ from that of development forums in development?
- \* What are the current factors militating against the effectiveness of development forums?

#### **1.6 HYPOTHESIS.**

As stated earlier on, the legitimate local government in South Africa has now been instituted. However, its adequacy is still to be seen. The basic assumption is that the elected democratic local government may not replace the need for institutional form that facilitate participation in planning. The election of local authorities in an attempt to democratise planning and governance is a vital ingredient, but this alone may not be enough. The elected official may find it difficult to evaluate the diverse needs of the electorate. Owing to the complex nature of our country, direct involvement of the communities in development processes through forums is indispensable. Thus, even though the democratic local government structures now exist development forums may still have a significant role to play in planning. Local government may need the assistance of

development forums in order to bring about sound governance, that is, planning reflective of people's needs.

### **1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research for the study focuses on the usefulness of development forums in democratising planning. Attention is paid to examining the degree of participation of communities in development forums, that is, the representativity and inclusivity of the forums. The study also seeks to examine the future role of these forums within the context of local government.

The limitations of the study includes the fact that it is difficult to measure the representativeness of development forums. This, as it will be argued further in the dissertation, depends on how well organised the communities are and the willingness of the communities to co-operate.

In addition, the factors that led to the formation of the forum may differ from one locality to another. Different forums may also encapsulate different objectives and principles. Thus, a danger of importing models from elsewhere always exists, as the context or circumstances often differ for each locality. The frailties of the study, focusing on one development forum, therefore, is that the findings cannot be replicated.

### **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section presents the methodology employed in undertaking the study. The general approach upon which the research has been conducted is the qualitative approach.

This is deemed the most appropriate method of achieving the perceived aims and objectives of this study. The content of this chapter is derived through primary research and secondary research, through a literature review of books, journals and planning reports. A detailed outline and breakdown of the methodology employed in order to address all the issues around the topic is discussed below.

### 1.8.1 PRIMARY DATA SOURCES

The primary data was collected by the researcher during the case study analysis. This was done by conducting interview surveys with "key parties" and executive members of the Inanda Development Forum (IDF). As it will be elaborated below the "key parties" include local government officials (the planner and the North Central Councillor), the leadership of the Inanda Landowners Association (ILA) and the leadership of Inanda Civic Association (ICA). The community representatives refer to the ward councillors. Out of ten ward councillors, four were interviewed. The executive members refer to the chairperson of the IDF, both the general and the deputy secretary.

Primary data was also obtained from community representative. These are people elected from each of the ten wards in Inanda. The community representatives or ward councillors serve as a link between the local communities and the IDF. Community trainees were also interviewed. These are the people involved in co-ordinating development projects and they also serve as a link between the professionals and the communities. The information obtained from primary data sources was useful in that it aided the process of corroborating the information derived

from the secondary data sources and it also helped answer the research questions in the context of a development forum on the ground.

Interview surveys were used to obtain information pertaining to the subject under investigation. In asking questions, the interviewer used open-ended questions in order to elicit more information from the respondents. Interviewing was done in a face-to-face encounter and the respondent was made to report verbally to an interviewer. The use of semi-structured interviews was very useful as it allowed for additional questions to be asked so as to pursue interesting issues that arise. Because a similar set of questions were asked, a degree of comparison was possible from the different respondent's answers to the questions.

The questions asked dealt with issues pertaining to: the background information of the IDF: its structure, objectives, role and achievements; the level and nature of representation: how does the Inanda Development Forum ensure full participation, who participates, techniques employed to ensure meaningful participation; the role of the local government as opposed to that of the forum; the relationship relationship between the local government, the IDF and the community; problems militating against the effectiveness of the Inanda Development Forum; the role that the forum has in increasing the capacity of communities to engage in development planning; and the future role of development forums now that there is legitimate local government. The set of semi-structured questions (refer to appendix 1) was asked specifically to the community representatives or trainees, ILA and ICA members, a member

for Centre for Community and Labour Studies (CCLS) and to the executive members of the IDF.

Another set of questions were formulated for local government officials (see appendix 2). Of concern here was a question about the mechanisms used by local authorities to ensure democratised planning. The questions to the officials also sought to obtain information on the role of local government in development planning. The aim here is to make a comparison between the role of the IDF and that of local government and see if there is any relationship. Lastly, the interviews sought to obtain perceptions of the government officials with regard to the necessity of the forums, particularly Inanda Development Forum, now that the legitimate local government is in place. That is, whether they see the forum as a new strength or just an interim structure.

The people interviewed were:

- \* Sogen Moodley - A town planner, Durban City council - government
- \* Vusi Ngongoma - North Central Councillor - government
- \* Phillip Sithole - Inanda Civic Association (ICA)
- \* Thulani Dladla - Inanda Landowners Association (ILA)
- \* Thulani Mncwane - IDF chairperson
- \* Bongani Ndlovu - Development co-ordinator (ICA)
- \* Mondli Mthembu - IDF General Secretary
- \* Sandile Thusi - Centre for Community and Labour Studies (CCLS) - NGO
- \* Skuta - Development co-ordinator - government

Community Trainees:

- \* Thamie Madubane
- \* Conrad Dlamini
- \* David Hlongwa
- \* Msizi Khuzwayo

The researcher could not obtain a representative sample of community trainees. However, this does not impact on the quality of the information obtained. Of ten ward councillors four were interviewed. These were interviewed in a group and no names were given.

#### **1.8.1.1 THE ADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEW SURVEYS**

The advantages of interview surveys are that they typically attain higher response rates. Interview surveys are flexible; if the respondent misunderstands the intent of a question or indicates that he or she does not understand, the interviewer can always explain and thereby eliminate irrelevant responses; he or she can also use probes to elicit responses. The interviewer can observe the respondents reactions to the study. From the respondents reaction to the questions asked, you can tell if you are getting the honest answers. The researcher found this technique very useful in that it helped improve the quality of information obtained from the field research. The respondents were very co-operative and resourceful.

#### **1.8.2 SECONDARY DATA SOURCES**

In order to establish the theoretical framework for this study, a literature overview was conducted. This comprised reviewing the available literature in the form of books and journal articles. In the end the information obtained from

both the primary and secondary data sources was collated, analysed and general conclusions were drawn therefrom. Some reports from the IDF and the paper by Nene (1997) were used to supplement empirical findings.

## 1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The dissertation is divided into four separate inextricably linked chapters. An attempt is made to organise the chapters in sequence that will aid in understanding the storyline.

### CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter is an introductory chapter. It explains the aim and the background of the study. Information incorporated in this chapter include the outline of research problem, research question and sub-questions. Finally, the hypothesis is presented.

### CHAPTER TWO

The second chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of community participation in development planning. A definition of legitimate development planning is made. Forms, arguments for and limitations of community participation are dealt with in this chapter. This chapter also makes an attempt to conceptualise local government. Arguments around decentralised forms of governance and democracy are presented. Finally, an attempt to evaluate local government participation is made.

### CHAPTER THREE

Chapter three provides a conceptualisation of development forums. Merits and shortcomings of development forums are also highlighted. A brief account of experience with development forums is also given. This is deemed necessary for comparative purposes.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

This chapter provides some descriptive background information of the case study area. It looks at the historical background to the founding of the IDF; the constitution, objectives and the role of the forum and finally the achievements of the IDF.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

Chapter five forms the presentation and analysis of the research findings. This is an attempt to answer the research questions and to test the validity of the hypothesis. The conceptual framework is used as a means to assess the empirical results.

#### **CHAPTER SIX**

The final chapter provides some conclusions, recommendations and areas for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the theoretical outline on which to base the study. It outlines a conceptual framework that has been evolved from the review of the relevant international and local literature.

Although the conceptual framework presents one body of thought, it has been divided into different sections in order to provide clarity. This chapter focuses on the concept of legitimate development planning. An attempt to define what is meant by "legitimate development planning" is made. The concept of "community participation" is defined. A working definition is important since the concept has been subject to a wide range of interpretations by different authors. This section also provides an outline of some forms techniques of community participation. The role of or arguments for participatory planning and its dilemmas are also addressed. The chapter also looks at local government and participatory planning.

#### 2.2.1 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF LEGITIMATE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Planning has many dimensions. The word conjures up many different meanings to different groups, different professions and different organisations. Eddison (1975:12) defines planning as, "the process of preparing a set of

decisions for the future action in the future directed at achieving goals by optimal means and of learning from the outcome about possible new sets of decisions and new goals to be achieved". The notion of planning as a process is probably the most important aspect of this definition.

Batley cited in Devas and Rakodi (1993) maintains that planning is political not only in the sense that it produces outcomes from which some gain and others lose, but also in the sense that it is a political process for conciliating interests which cannot be equally satisfied. Planning should be conceived, therefore, not as the identification of problems and their resolution, but as a process of balancing conflicting claims on scarce resources, of deciding who is to benefit and who is to bear the costs of planning decisions, and of achieving compromises between conflicting interests.

Moore (1978) defines "planning" as decision-making in the public sector, about the allocation and distribution of public resources, decisions which may lead to a more desirable future. Planning is seen as equivalent to government intervention.

Theory of public goods provides a theory of the justification of planning. For most planners the question, why plan? is answered quite simply: because planning is good. Good usually is not defined theoretically, but rather on a case by case basis. It is most often synonymous with necessary (if planning does not occur this will get worse), rational (by gathering and analysing data planning produces superior decisions and outcomes) or efficient (planning results in solutions which minimise costs and maximise

benefits). In general the goodness of planning is derived from its presumed ability to increase public welfare. These definitions, though not incorrect, are insufficient to produce an adequate justification for planning. They fail to resolve a fundamental question: Is planning more likely to promote public welfare than not planning? The planners presume that the answer to this question is unequivocally affirmative.

Unfortunately for planners that answer is not always shared by the public for whom they are planning. Planners are embroiled in a conflict about the basic legitimacy of planning. The lack of support is costly to planners. It is for this reason that planning with communities other than planning for communities is advocated. Thus, the preferable manner in which the conflict about the legitimacy of planning can be resolved is by the development of mutual values for planners and their clients. This derives from the conception that planning is value-laden and conflictual in nature and any attempt to intervene through planning should take this into consideration.

Cullen (1995) states that the development planning process can be viewed as a series of interconnected steps which include:

- \* The collection of information
- \* The identification of needs and opportunities through strategic planning (that is, analysing the existing situation, formulation of a vision and setting policy objectives) and operational planning (defining specific actions); and
- \* The implementation of the policy.

Communities need to be involved in all the stages of development in order to fully understand the development issues facing our communities and in order to ensure responsive development. Cullen (1995) and Harrison (1988) assert that, in most cases, community involvement in development planning has been restricted to the implementation stage, where the community is expected to provide the necessary cheap labour. Despite the rhetoric of the community participation, the community is rarely brought into the early stages of conceptualisation (data collection and issue identification). At best there is token participation. Professionals or experts extract information from the communities and make them comment on vision and strategy proposals. The community could be given the opportunity to choose a solution from a set of predefined alternatives. This imposition of plans from outside could be dangerous and wasteful.

Participation rhetoric is employed to project an illusion of community involvement. Much so-called participation encourage greater dependency rather than promoting community responsibility, initiative and self-reliance. Forums, as stated before, call for a planning process that moves beyond tokenism or manipulation and is genuinely empowering. This calls for the need for a closer more interactive relationship between the community, local government and other development agencies.

Legitimate development planning should, therefore, be a means to build democratic community organisations which can articulate the interests of the communities and make effective demands on the state. It entails some form of

participation by end-users in decision-making that will eventually affect their lives.

### 2.2.2 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Defining the concept of "community participation" is no easy task. Goodey (1981) defines participation as the involvement of the people affected or people who will eventually be affected by development outcomes, in societal decision-making. However, there is no clear consensus as to what is meant by involving local communities in the development planning process. The concept is subject to a wide variety of interpretations.

Paul (1987) states: In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits. For the purpose of this study, the author will use Paul's definition of community participation. Meaningful participation, therefore, implies involvement of beneficiaries from project inception to the implementation phase, thereby, empowering local communities and giving them greater control over their own destiny. Appreciating diversity and recognising differences in value systems are key elements in this conception.

Having defined participation, we need to look at the concept of community to see who is it we are talking about when we make reference to participation of the "community". Arriving at a functional definition for the concept of "community" has serious implications for the way in which development occurs. Farouk (1996) makes a point that communities often

retard the development process by bringing projects into a standstill. Public institutions, therefore, need to be clear as to what they are basing their policies upon.

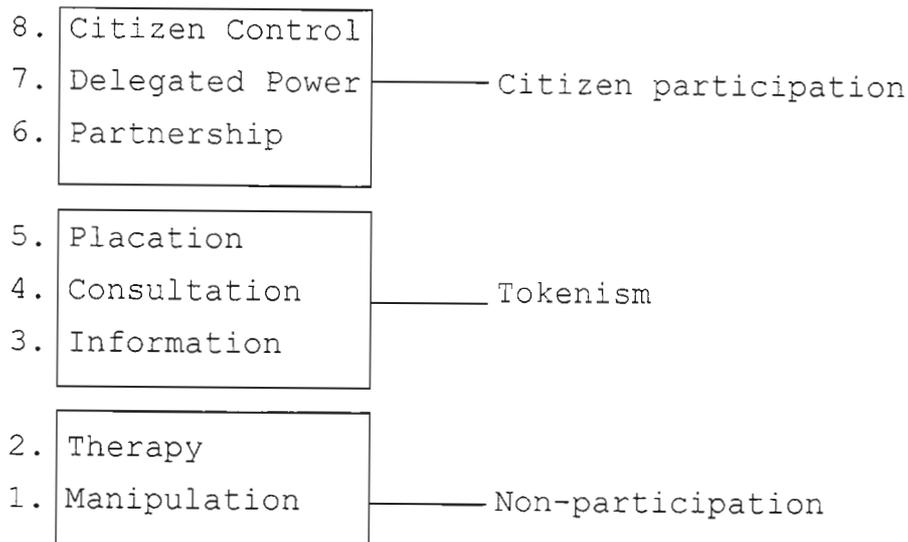
Different interpretations of the word are explored by Burns (1994). On the one hand "community" is a unifying concept, the expression of common interests, solidarity, integration and consensus. On the other hand, community is not a singular concept but in reality represents a mere umbrella under which shelter a multitude of varying, competing and often conflicting interests. The politics of community in the second model are pluralistic rather than consensual, with the role of the authority in the community one of mediation of interest and the management of complexity rather than representative of a single "community".

In view of the complex nature of our society, the author advances the use of the complex rather than the simple model. A community is not a homogenous entity but a collection of different interest groups, often in conflict, that together make up the community profile. It is important to note that there are also differences within each group. Decision-makers need to take this into account when trying to involve communities in development planning, they need to recognise the heterogeneous nature of the community and thus the complexity of community involvement in decision-making.

### **2.2.3 FORMS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

There are a wide variety of forms of participation in development planning. Thus, the actual form of community involvement in the development process varies considerably. Because of the apparent manipulation of participation by

professionals, there has been much reference in the literature to a "Ladder of citizenship participation" with each rung corresponding to a degree of citizen participation, Goodey (1981). These are taken up below:



**Figure 2.1 The eight rungs on the ladder of citizenship participation (Goodey, 1981)**

The two rungs at the bottom of the ladder of participation are Manipulation and Therapy, and describe levels of non-"participation". These two rungs are a substitute of genuine participation and do not enable people to participate in planning programmes, but enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants (Kahn, 1982). The population is made to accept the professional view or the eventual planning decision.

Rungs 3 and 4, Informing and consultation, progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the citizens or public groups to hear and have a voice. Under these conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by decision-takers (as development agents are not usually

obliged to take cognisance of any recommendation or objection). In both levels people have no control over the planning process but by consulting with various people, planners and developers gain greater legitimacy for their actions. Placation is simply a higher level form of tokenism, because the ground rules allow the various groups to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide. In these lower rungs of the 'ladder of participation', participation is usually passive or very limited in its form. The message is that much of what passes for 'participation' is not really participation (involvement in societal decision-making) at all but an illusion.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen influence and power. On rung 6 citizens can enter into a partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in the decision-making process. At the uppermost rungs, Delegated Power and Citizen Control, the public obtains the majority of decision-making or management power (Kahn, 1982).

It is, therefore, through Partnership in decision-making, through Delegated Power or ultimately through Citizen Control that genuine participation can be achieved. These represent more extensive forms of participation. Very few experiences of participation have reached the higher rungs of the ladder of participation. Whilst these can be vital steps to full participation, the success of these forms of participation will be undermined if they are not carried through to the implementation phase.

The eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but illustrates the point that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. The ladder deals essentially with

participation by various kinds of public or citizen groups in the planning process, and does not take account of the participation of the allied professionals, etc. The contribution of such groups is essential as it can assist improve the quality of planning outcomes.

The need to involve as many groups as possible can not be overemphasised. How to involve these groups is a critical issue. We now turn our attention to the examination of techniques and procedures which might be used in order to bring about meaningful participation.

#### 2.2.4 THE MEANS OF PARTICIPATION

The means which are commonly adopted in programmes of citizen participation are those which are least costly, are least demanding on the time and the decision-making responsibilities of the local politicians and their professional staff and are most conventional. These include conferences, public meetings or hearings, exhibitions, distribution of leaflets and brochures, questionnaire surveys and the documentary reporting to collect information (Fagence, 1977). Each of these has a specific level of participation, purpose and scope, and their impacts on planning decisions vary accordingly.

The conventional methods of participation have been criticised on the basis that they are manipulative and susceptible to domination by the articulate, the vociferous and the well organised and prepared individuals or groups. They cater for the literate and skilful sections of the community.

Kahn (1982) argues that the intention to involve as many groups as possible cannot be fulfilled by conventional means, various techniques are needed for obviating parochial conflicts, where ideas and priorities are searched for; rather than the presentation of narrow views.

Innovative means of participation to improve the dialogue between planners and the community will be constrained by the differential ability of the participants to contribute effectively. A few of these innovative techniques are suitable with the more informed representative form of participation and include Delphi and Nominal Group method of soliciting opinions, predictions and priorities of a diverse group of informed people in the decision-making, with the purpose of arriving at consensus towards the development of policies and plans; while the Brainstorming method is used to encourage creative thinking without criticism of ideas at the early stages. The Charrette method of participation is both an exercise in public relations and a learning device, that establishes a working relationship between members of the community and officials, where the participants work together informally to complete a task in a fixed time period through a series of workshops.

In the face of this range of participation techniques it is important to be reminded that the abovementioned strategies are descriptive rather than prescriptive. There is no one strategy which is suitable for every participatory situation. There is a need to experiment with techniques more capable to achieve the desired ends and adapt these to an organisational environment. Also important to note is that the real key to effective participation is the willingness on the part of the policy makers to involve

citizens, on one hand, and on the willingness of the communities to participate, on the other. The challenge is therefore to build the culture of participation and the need for more organised communities in order to ease the planning process cannot be overlooked.

#### 2.2.5 ARGUMENTS FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY APPROACH

A variety of arguments have been presented in support of participation in local development. Moser (1989) suggests that the various arguments for community participation can be grouped into two categories, namely: arguments for participation as a means to development and arguments for participation as an end in itself.

"Means" arguments essentially suggests community participation is more efficient for the facilitation of development. It is argued that since planning is contextual, planning of development programmes is more effective and sensitive to community needs when it draws on local knowledge and resources. Since local people know the context better than any outsider, they are better equipped to plan than a professional is.

Brynard (1996) argues that participation has a creative potential in that the planning process is being linked to the outside world. This has a potential to create a network which could enable a much more divergent form of thinking to take place.

Paul (1987) points out that, a community approach expedites the implementation of plans. When people have contributed to the planning process and have accepted the final plans, then

they will be much more willing to involve themselves in the implementation of the plans, reducing the cost of implementation for the external agent. Efficiency of implementation can also be enhanced by handing over to the community organisation functions that it can fulfil better than the outside agency.

It is argued that community participation programme increases a community's acceptance of a development programme and ensures greater commitment to the long term maintenance of facilities and services provided. The community identifies with the programme and feels that it has a stake in the programme (Brynard, 1996) and therefore it will have something to lose if the programme does not succeed.

Participation provides a mechanism to ensure the democratisation of the process of planning. In most countries participation is considered to be a basic right of the people to be involved in local government (Brynard, 1996). This is linked to the notion that local government should be a creation of the citizenry rather than a separate entity above it.

Participation is a means of fostering equality. This is based on the democratic principle that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to exert influence through participation in the planning process of the local authority (Atkinson, 1992).

Participatory planning therefore is an essential precondition for the efficient, effective and sustainable development practices. Harrison (1988) holds a view that

community participation can be used to ensure more effective programmes, increased policy performance, more accurate information flows, higher output quality and better maintenance.

With regard to participation as an 'end' in itself, it is argued that community participation should be the cornerstone of development. Emphasis is placed on defining participation as a process of empowerment. There are arguments which justify community participation in terms of the notion of human self-actualisation. Participation is believed to satisfy a basic emotional need for involvement, it renews self-worth and dignity by developing a sense among people that they have some control over their own destiny. Community participation is thus argued to have an intrinsic value and should, therefore, be used as an end in itself.

Other arguments stress the ability of participation to raise collective spirit. It builds up the co-operative spirit of the community, enabling people to identify common problems and act together to solve them. The benefit of participation is derived from the process itself and not just from physical goods that are produced.

It is implicit from the discussion that community participation has no common coherent theoretical basis. Different people have different reasons for pursuing a participatory community approach. However, one thing that sceptics ask is: How real is local government participation? One would argue that, to effectively participate must mean to be able as a consequence of the participation, to have some influence over the resultant decision.

However, participation is not without problems. These will be addressed in the following section.

#### 2.2.6 THE IMPEDIMENTS TO PARTICIPATION

Promoting participation in planning is no easy task at all. Firstly, although the notion of community participation has been proclaimed as a means to democratic development processes and therefore to the formulation of development plans relevant or responsive to local needs, the participation process is fraught with problems.

The question of who participates in an attempt to determine the characteristics of principal participants and the characteristics of those citizens that persistently remain outside the ranks of the intentionally involved public needs to be addressed. One has to accept the fact that not every citizen can participate in all the planning activities for local government. The factors that prevent citizens from participating in decision making are captured in the analysis of democratic principles by Geldenhuys's (1996). These are to be dealt with in the subsequent section (2.3.5).

As highlighted by Geldenhuys (1996) one of the obstacles to effective community participation is that participants are often people who lack technical expertise. People who lack technical expertise or who lack confidence in their competence, may be intimidated by the prospect of participation and therefore exempt themselves from the process. This may serve as a barrier to effective community participation.

Fagence (1977) denotes the impact of socio-economic status of the community concerned on participation. In the South African situation, for instance, an interplay of negative factors like disaggregation and the erosion of the social fabric of safety, an economic decline and the rising tides of turbulence and violence could impact adversely on the degree to which people participate in the planning of local government activities. Participation may, therefore, be hampered by obstacles such as the present fragmented nature of South African cities. How to accommodate these people meaningfully in the participatory process produces a unique dilemma.

Another dilemma is based on the barriers such as age and illiteracy of some citizens. Fagence (1977) has remarked that to a significant degree the successful collaboration of a diversity of participants in planning will be determined by their education levels. In addition, the fact that some segments of the population may be less informed about the current planning problems and possible solutions may impede meaningful community participation in decision making. In view of these factors, one should be realistic about the extent of community involvement of citizens in the planning processes.

Community participation has the effect of slowing up the planning process. Local authorities may become cynical, or even disillusioned, about participation. An impatience with the supposedly slow process of planning may prompt local authorities to ignore the process of involving communities in planning.

Unfulfilled expectations and the time that elapses before the actual implementation of the plans may be yet another dilemma of participation. One can predict that people who feel that their participation will have little or no effect on the activities of local government will be reluctant to participate in planning. This attitude may also be the result of people's past experience, in which they have participated but have not had any noticeable effect on the course of events. Failure to deliver or slow delivery may be another cause of frustration on the part of beneficiaries, resulting in reluctance to participate in the development planning process.

Community participation in the planning process can be very costly, unwieldy, and time consuming. The challenge to local government is to make community participation in the planning process less expensive, less stringent on time frames and less demanding upon its supporters.

Having considered the dilemmas associated with participatory planning, one begins to understand why its practicability is often questioned. Participatory planning is not the most efficient way of making decisions, in the sense that it makes the planning process longer, more expensive and more complex. Nevertheless, in spite of these dilemmas, the arguments for participation that were discussed earlier outweigh the risks and costs endemic to such participation.

#### **2.2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has looked at the concept of community participation, its forms and methods, arguments in favour of the participation process and problems associated with the

process. It reaches a conclusion that, although participatory planning is sometimes time consuming and costly, the value that is added to planning through this principle cannot be overemphasised. It makes the implementation of plans more legitimate, outcome focused and people-centred. The development outcomes are more likely to be relevant to people's wants.

Moreover, it is inferred that participation must be measured by more than the numbers involved or the useful information produced. It benefits the participants in more intangible ways. Participation educates, raises confidence, throws up new ideas about policy and action which transcend traditional approaches. It can form new relationships and deepen understandings. Ultimately, local government is a political arena where values are compared and contested. To neglect public participation is to undermine local democracy. No one technique is adequate, a combination of several is usually required and these should be adapted to the local context.

## 2.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE LOCAL STATE

### 2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Local government in South Africa is undergoing a process of fundamental transformation. This resulted from deepening crisis of legitimisation which faced the apartheid state since the late 1970s. Opposition in townships, a deepening economic crisis and spreading international hostility to apartheid were among the factors that gave the impetus that led to fundamental restructuring of the modern political order from the mid-1980s (Local government Green Paper, 1997). This transition process which has had as its major objective the deracialisation and democratisation of existing local government structures, and the establishment of democratically elected local government structures in those parts of South Africa not previously governed by local government, has occurred under Local Government Transitional Act, 209 of 1993.

This chapter looks at local government and participatory planning. Firstly, it tries to unravel the concept of "local government". A brief outline of the functions performed by this tier of government is given. This is followed by arguments for decentralised or localised forms of governance. A short description of the models of participation in local government is then discussed. These are not mere abstractions; they are used to illustrate the dynamics of government decision making. There is often a tendency to equate decentralisation with democracy. This chapter also tries to show that the relationship between the two concepts is not axiomatic.

### 2.3.2 THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND IT'S FUNCTIONS

The term local government is generally used to refer to:

- \* a "decentralised", representative institution
- \* with general and specific powers,
- \* devolved upon it and delegated to it by the national and provincial government
- \* in respect of a restricted geographical area within a nation or state,
- \* where it can exercise those powers (Local Government :Green Paper, 1997).

The constitution mandates local government to perform the following functions:

- \* Maximise economic growth and social development: Local government is responsible for the provision of basic services in a sustainable manner, an essential component of social and economic development;
- \* Integrate and co-ordinate development: as a sphere of government closest to the ground, local government has a broader role to play - it has to co-ordinate and integrate the activities of other agents;
- \* Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities: local government has a unique role to play in terms of building and promoting democracy. This goes beyond simply representing their constituents. It involves facilitating and encouraging the fullest possible participation of citizens. Local government is uniquely placed to promote active participation of

citizens in all the stages of development, that is from inception to execution; and

\* Promote a safe and a healthy environment.

This mandate places local government at the centre of building local environments in which our communities can develop and grow. The task is daunting: apartheid has fundamentally damaged the spatial, social and economic environment in which people live, work and seek to fulfil their aspirations. For local government to rise to the challenge of reversing the legacy of the past and for constructing sustainable living environments for the future, it has to be transformed and capacitated. Central to this is the move away from traditional practices of governance and towards a creation of developmental local government structures. This calls for the need to fodge partnerships with other development agents and most importantly with organisations of civil society.

### **2.3.3 DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

By definition the concept of decentralisation entails the devolution of power to the lowest levels of government.

The centralisation of power has characterised most of the developing world. The powers devolved to local government structures were used to serve the needs of colonial regime. Because these local government structures operated from the top and therefore far removed from the local context, they largely remained undemocratic and unresponsive to the needs at local level. Some had sectoral interests only.

Centralised planning has hampered development efforts. It produced programmes that appear impressive, but is unlikely to meet effectively the felt needs of the people. It is also a paternalistic approach which fosters dependency rather than self-reliance. The need for effective, decentralised local government as a vehicle for development is imperative. The importance of local as the basis of all structures of governance, and its role in the quest for a stable democratic society cannot be overemphasised.

#### **2.3.4 ARGUMENTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Arguments for local government are based on that it is the tier closest to the people and their needs. It is therefore more likely to be responsive. Local government is created deliberately to bring government to the grassroots, giving people a sense of involvement in the processes controlling their lives. Sabela, et al (1996) provide an outline of arguments in favour of decentralisation or local governance.

Firstly, they argue that the demand for local public services varies from place to place. Physical and bureaucratic distance between local areas and the centre frustrates development needs of the country. Only the decentralised forms of governance will meet the multi-faceted demands and since the local governments are closer to the people they should be more responsive to them. Local authorities are said to be better informed about their locality's actual needs and opportunities.

Managerial or technical arguments include the need for planning to be based on accurate and detailed information of local conditions. This is based on the belief that

decentralised governance improves the efficiency or the responsiveness of local level planning through involvement of local knowledge and choice. There is also a greater likelihood that development programmes will be supported and maintained by the local population.

Political arguments relate to the basic right that people have to enjoy some control over their own destiny. It is argued that decentralisation of decision making may empower citizens vis-à-vis public officials. Citizen participation is not morally valuable in its own right, but it may help to overcome bureaucratic dysfunctions.

Local government is also said to be an important training ground for democracy. Olowu (1992) points out that effective local government is perceived as providing opportunities to involve long-neglected citizens in the decision-making process.

While decentralisation is often desirable to improve the effectiveness of local government as a whole, it is not without problems and it does not necessarily lead to democratised and most efficient forms of planning. This will be briefly explained below.

#### **2.3.5 DOES DECENTRALISATION EQUAL DEMOCRACY: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEMOCRACY**

Local government is often associated with the notion of decentralisation. This section presents the debate about the link between "decentralisation" and "democracy" in the context of local government.

The two concepts do not necessarily go together. Pickvance (1997) makes a distinction between the two concepts. He argues that decentralisation is a multi-dimensional concept and the local government system can be positioned differently on each dimension (functions, control and finance). Relation between the concepts of decentralisation and democracy is not as clear-cut as it may seem. In the Eastern European context it is understandable that decentralisation is considered a self-evident goal of administrative and political reform, and that decentralisation should be seen as conterminous with democracy. However to phrase the debate in these terms is oversimple. The concepts of decentralisation and democracy are complex in nature; decentralised systems of government have as many disadvantages as do centralised ones - so any assumption that decentralisation means democratic or that centralisation means undemocratic is misleading. Kingsley (1996) also seems to be cynical about the idea of equating decentralisation with democratisation of planning. He contends that decentralisation is a necessary but insufficient condition for democracy. It is argued that the relation between decentralisation and democracy is an empirically variable one rather than a necessary one.

Decentralisation on its own is not inherently democratic and could infect even reinforce the existing power structure if there are major class and other cleavages in a community and the leaders represent the local elite. This suggest the need for active resident involvement in planning and control over public affairs. This notion relies on an active civil society which promotes the interests of the most civil society. Local authorities should therefore promote organisations of civil society.

Geldenhuis cited in Bekker (1996) takes the argument further. He points out that if democracy is instituted at local government level it does not necessarily and automatically mean that there will be responsibility or truly representative government structures. There are certain conditions for the establishment of democratic local government. He identifies the following conditions that would contribute to a proper functioning of democratic arrangements at the level of local government:

- \* There must be a certain level of education and intellectual sophistication among members of society within specific municipality;
- \* Information must flow freely and the public must also be informed about local government and administration;
- \* A liberal ethos as a matter of public morality, and thus cherished in the hearts and minds of a cross section of the inhabitants, must be in place;
- \* There must be a measure of material prosperity and economic development that more or less makes for comfortable living in the municipality;
- \* A sense of national as well as local pride and loyalty to collective aspirations that transcends the impetus of self-interest must exist; and
- \* A situation of political stability and overall peace must prevail, which will permit the effective functioning of local government structures.

Geldenhuis (1996) argues that if these conditions are wholly or partially absent, democracy will in all likelihood not

live up to its proponent's expectations of securing responsible and responsive rule.

De Valk et al, (1990) presents an argument that, participation by people in development activities initiated by local authorities is desirable from governments' point of view either as a confirmation of political support/or as essential ingredient of more effective implementation. Generally this instrumental use of participation has not resulted in meaningful participation, in any sense of the term, by the poor in urban development. This argument will be developed further later in the report.

#### **2.3.6 MEANS OF PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Local government is said to be democratic, due to its closeness to the local community both in a geographical sense and as far as its potential responsiveness is concerned. But, as discussed in the previous section, the relationship between decentralised forms of governance and democracy is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Before the discussion of some mechanisms that local government employ to facilitate participation in decision-making is made, a brief description of what is meant by "democracy" will be provided.

A simple definition for "democracy" is that it implies rule by the people. Geldenhuys (1996) states: Democracy implies rule by justice. Most important test for democracy is that it must have legitimacy. The democratic system must be accepted by the citizens as a system, that they are proud of, that they are prepared to defend and with what they want to identify.

Democracy requires conditions of free debate, free choice, free decision-making by individuals. It is furthermore characterised by representativity, inclusivity, transparency and accountability. Individuals must be effectively represented by leaders of their own choice in the organisation of government, and these must be accountable. These are important qualities without which one could not really talk of democracy. But it is evident from international literature that a uniform commitment to democracy has not been fully realised (Geldenhuis, 1996).

Looking at local government we can appreciate that already there are established mechanisms for bringing the public into the decision-making process. One way in which government can make decisions is through the participatory democratic model, where every citizen has a chance to participate directly in local decision making. In participatory democracy also referred to as direct democracy all citizens gather to govern themselves according to the principles of universal participation, political equality and majority rule. Associated with participatory democracy is the majoritarian model. In majoritarian democracy, individual citizens control government actions. This model assumes that people are knowledgeable about government, that they want to participate in political processes. But this is not necessarily the case.

However, in modern urban areas, which have become so large and complex, the model of participatory democracy is no longer feasible. Consequently, the best democratic model is that in which local representatives are elected by popular vote and held responsible for local decision making and

where voter control is exercised through the principle of accountability. In other words, elected representatives are answerable for their actions to their constituencies. This is what is termed indirect democracy or indirect participation. Because the elected officials are expected to represent their voters views and interests, that is, to serve as the agents of the citizenry, indirect democracy is also known as representative government. This form of government is associated with pluralist models of democracy.

The way local government operates in South Africa is more in keeping with pluralist model of democracy than with the majoritarian model. In "pluralist democracy" governments are believed to represent different parties and interest groups. Compared with majoritarian thinking, pluralist theory shifts the focus of democratic government from the mass electorate to organised groups. It changes the criterion for democratic government from responsiveness to mass public opinion to responsiveness to organised groups of citizens (Janda et al , 1989). Decisions are, therefore, compromises which reflect a balance of different interests.

Some influential concepts of participation are based on pluralist notions of democracy. Since pluralism maintains that all groups should have the opportunity to influence decision-making, it is considered important in that poor communities are adequately represented and have their voice strengthened.

#### **2.3.7 AN EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION**

Adhering to the principles of universal participation we can guarantee that the election of representatives is

democratic. However, the adequacy of representative democracy is challenged by proponents of public participation in planning. It is argued that this model does not guarantee democratic government. The concept of 'pluralism' is believed to disguise the way dominant groups in society manoeuvre and manipulate other groups to ensure that the end product is in their favour (Harrison, 1988).

Atkinson (1992) takes this argument further, she contends that what can happen is that the representative system does not function effectively. It can be argued that representative institutions do not fully encapsulate democratic values, for various reasons:

- \* politicians are concerned primarily with the initial decision to formulate a plan and with its final adoption or rejection, so that the public's views are not fed into the earlier planning stages where alternatives are formulated;
- \* Councillors (as lay people) cannot match the technical knowledge and experience of their officials;
- \* representatives are normally elected every 2 to 5 years, and this does not serve as an adequate channel for public opinion and interests;
- \* it may be difficult for politicians to evaluate the variety of attitudes and interests of voters;
- \* The increasing diversity and complexity of urban society has made it more difficult for elected representatives to know the wishes of the citizens whom they represent;
- \* There is often pressure towards oligarchy in city councils, which reduces their responsiveness to the electorate;

\* in many local governments, the philosophical basis of representation may be unclear. Are councillors supposed to be "delegates" (i.e. tied to the mandates of their ward constituents), or "representatives" (i.e. entitled to exercise their own judgement after deliberation with their peers)? This lack of clarity prevents the emergence of clear lines of responsibility, both to their constituents and their peers.

Governments must, therefore, devise some means for determining what the people want, as well as some means for translating those wants into decisions. In other words, democratic government requires institutional mechanisms - established procedures and organisations, to translate public opinion into government policy, to be responsive. To cope with the possibility whereby the representative government does not make decisions that reflect peoples wants, it should work hand in hand with structures such as development forums, structures that serve as organs of the civil society and structures that are capable of making local government people-centred.

### **2.3.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

In the South African situation, negative factors like the erosion of the social fabric of society, economic disparities, the rising tides of turbulence and violence, political fragmentation, etc. could impact adversely on the degree to which people feel obliged to participate in the planning of local government. Moreover, with all the conditions for proper functioning of democratic arrangements at the level of local government highlighted by Geldenhuys (1996), and the fragmented nature of South African cities

in mind, the question is: Will it be possible for South African local governments to achieve meaningful participation or democratisation in planning, given the country's complex, diverse and fragmented character? It seems like we still have a long way to go.

In addition, the extent to which the general public participates in decentralised government activities and the extent to which public interests are met will depend much on who holds the power and on what sort of links they have with the local community as a whole. The culture of power struggle and corruption in our society is long-standing. The tendency is that decentralised government often become the power bases for local elites. The so-called responsiveness of local government generally means responsiveness to the demands of the local elite. In this case the notion of participatory development planning may lose its essence.

Looking at the South African situation, the country seems to be faced with enormous challenges in its transition to democracy. Unless these challenges are met, the country may not succeed in bringing about true democracy or meaningful participation in planning.

#### **2.3.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has examined the means of participation in local government. An attempt to explore the link between local government decentralisation and democracy has been made and the literature shows that the link between the two concepts is empirical rather than axiomatic. Some aspects which are essential to effectiveness and efficiency of

governance at the local level have also been indicated. Finally, implications for South Africa have been examined.

Commentators argue that local government needs to be reorganised and gear itself for the new challenges. Not only does local government have to deliver services, but it also has to ensure that it does so in a sustainable manner. The nature of many development problems go beyond the capacity of any government to resolve in isolation of other development partners and most significantly the residents themselves. This implies the need for a closer more interactive relationship between the community, local government and other development agencies.

While decentralised decision-making and democratised planning is essential, in that it produces the desired outcomes and other positive spin-offs such as social upliftment, conscientisation, sustainability of development projects, etc., not every citizen can be involved in decision-making. In a country like South Africa that has grown too large, diverse and complex for direct participation, representative democracy is the best form of participation in local government available. This implies the need for some alternative mechanism to effect meaningful participation in development planning processes. As it will be discussed in the following section, development forums because of their nature or constitution are more effective means of ensuring participatory development planning processes. The following chapter will then look at local development forums.

## 2.4 FORUMS AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

### 2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide some literature review on development forums. It will start by looking at the emergence of development forums and factors that have precipitated their resurgence. Then, the chapter will attempt to define the concept of development forums and their constraints. Finally, the future role of the forums will be dealt with.

### 2.4.2 THE EMERGENCE OF DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Generally, forums can be distinguished by the tier of government on which they operate: these bodies have appeared at national and regional as well as local level. National forums have tended to be sector or issue specific. At regional level, forums have crystallised around two central issues. They are aimed at bringing together the major political actors in the region concerned to debate political and regionally related constitutional issues; an example of this is the Northern Transvaal Political Discussion Forum. However most regional forums concern themselves with regional economic and development issues. The study shall focus mainly on local development forums.

At a local level, a vast number of smaller forums have sprung up; these include central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber, Cato Manor Development Forum, Inanda Development Forum and so on. Godsell (1994) points out that two sets of reasons are advanced for the sudden blossoming of forums in South Africa. The first set relates to 'the struggle'.

It arises out of a stage in the struggle against apartheid, a set of strategies, which at a moment in time called for a particular mode of engagement with other actors in society and, in some cases with government.

The struggle reasons, then, are very much related to the illegitimacy of the previous government and its non-democratic, racially exclusive character. The people who have operated from this set of reasons have sought to build an alternative form of making decisions and of allocating resources, and in some sense, an alternative form of government.

The other set of reasons centres on an interest in and a commitment to civil society, and an interest in particular role for civil society in decision-making, in democracy, in public debate, in allocating resources, and also in implementing public action.

Forums are, therefore, a result of a specific historical period in South Africa, broadly described as the transition to democracy. Forums at all levels were developed during the transition, from the late 1980's onwards. All of them were formed on the presumption that governmental structures were in some way illegitimate, ineffectual or unrepresentative of their members' interests. The centralist government failed to reach the target groups. Subsequently, an argument was that development could be more effective and efficient through the use of forums as mechanisms for democratising or promoting participation by involving end-users in development planning.

### 2.4.3 WHAT ARE THE FORUMS?

It is difficult to find a meaningful, all-encompassing definition for the development forums. However they are easy to explain in terms of their role in the community. Many local forums have emerged in our communities since the early 1990's. This has been a response to the failure of the previous local government structures.

Forums draw on a wide range of participants. The parties involved include representatives of the various local government structures, business, municipal service providers, civic associations and residents' organisations. Forums developed out of the need to organise to a far greater extent in order to express a unified view and out of the need for inclusivity and representativity. This wide ranging constitution of forums is what differentiates them from earlier urban social movements such as civic organisations. Forums deal with a wider range of issues and rely on different means to influence policy. This serves to prevent the ruling party from taking decisions alone and thus provide communities (through their representatives) with an opportunity to influence policy making.

An important point to make is that development forums seek to be inclusive bodies which are focused on development processes, that is, they are developmental institutions. This differs from local government participation in that it tends to be politically driven rather than developmental. However, as mentioned earlier on, with the establishment of legitimate local government structures a change of attitude is now advocated. In order to work towards achieving effective governance, developmental local government structures are now needed.

Another feature of development forums is that, they seek to intervene in policy. Most of them do not want to get involved in delivery in their given fields of interest. They merely want to be active at the point where one focuses one's attention on the policy within which delivery takes place. Forums are the voice of the people. They serve as mechanisms through which the grass-root sectors of the community can articulate their needs and aspirations, and direct policy making.

Forums are also not statutory bodies, certainly not in the normal sense of the word. Forums have remained non-statutory bodies or non-governmental bodies and their activities have given rise to the statutory bodies. Thus, although forums are not legally recognised, the significance of their work in bringing about effective community participation is acknowledged.

Another important feature of the forums is that they try to introduce more democratisation in the field in which they are involved. In this respect the perception is that, as long as the process they are involved in, is driven by the state, it will be done in an authoritarian way. They believe their involvement in those processes will introduce democratic participation and so on.

#### **2.4.4 LIMITATIONS**

Forums provide a fair amount of room to manoeuvre for the dominated classes. Because forums are composed of both dominant and dominated factions, and because it is focused on the need to compromise, there is space created for the dominated to influence the process to a greater

extent. Taking the more class theoretical approach, the ability of the dominated classes to influence development is also dependent on the ability of the dominated classes to organise strategies in terms of the achievement of their goals. This poses a question to the assumption that all forum participants are participating from an equal footing.

The forum process implies representation via organisations and organisational means. Thus, for any interest wanting to be represented within a forum, organisation into a structure is generally the first step towards participation within a forum process. Within this particular framework, the poor are very seldom properly organised in terms of being able to be represented at this level. The representativeness of forums may also be hampered by the limited capacity of participants. Previously excluded groups in particular have a limited number of individuals who can represent them adequately.

Another important issue to be examined is the importance of funding. This has implications for the continued existence of development forums. Ensuring that all parties have equal access to forum processes has significant cost implications. The parties' unequal access to resources also requires unusual expenditure; bringing people together for meetings, 'mass' organisations and 'capacity building' require funding.

The constitutions of forums allow for the inclusivity (the extent to which forums include all interests) and representation (the extent to which beneficiaries of development are represented or merely spoken for) of all interested participants. Thus tripartism is a key feature of development forums and has an important influence on how they work. The success or failure of a forum rests on

the extent to which all interests are accommodated within the forum process. Despite the widely held view that forums are the most inclusive bodies in any field of interest in South Africa, Botha (1994) reveals that most forums are being criticised for being non-representative by those who feel left out and by critical observers. Many of the forums have been criticised for not having representation from the unemployed, etc. As it was discussed earlier on in the chapter, there are many factors that may inhibit some groups from participating in the forum. The weaker and less organised groups, for instance, are more likely to be left out in negotiations and therefore claim not to be represented in the forum. It is the responsibility of both the forum and local government, therefore, to co-ordinate and facilitate the development process and see to it that the interests of these groups are accommodated.

All the forums appear to take an inordinately long time to discuss and debate issues, but given their representativity and the broad interests involved, this is not surprising.

Friedman (1993) identifies some constraints which faces any attempt to generate inclusive processes. One of these is the pressure to deliver. Community participation exercises often encounter impatience from within the organisation because they delay the delivery of physical products. Thus, potential beneficiaries often get impatient at processes which appear to involve endless discussion without any sign of delivery. There is, therefore, an implicit tension between inclusiveness and delivery which appears to face all development work. (Problems with participation are discussed broadly in chapter 1).

#### 2.4.5 THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT FORUMS

This section looks at the future role of development forums as well as the relationship between local government and development forums.

Riaan de Villiers (1994) states that forums have provided new opportunities for many persons and constituencies to participate in decision-making and problem-solving. This seems to be a relatively new experience for most South Africans.

However, the future of forums remains a keenly debated issue, eliciting sharply divergent views. Many view development forums as interim structures whose role will soon vanish once the local government is elected. As mentioned earlier, forums developed to compensate the lack of legitimate local government. With regard to this, an argument is often presented that with the emergence of the democratic local government the need for community participation and of forums will fall away. The post-election order would severely reduce the impetus of forums, and cut down the space in which they operate. On the other hand, it is believed that forums are enduringly valuable structures for increasing popular participation and widening the involvement of civil society in government decision-making and in creating a common understanding around a variety of issues. As discussed in the previous chapter, the author firmly believes that, forums have a longer term use which might not be entirely supplanted by the advent of democratic government.

The concept that with the emergence of democratic local government the need for forums will fall away is also disputable on the following basis. There is scepticism about the hoped for success of the elected local

government. One of the reasons for this is that a number of documented success stories of local government is limited. Thus, popular distrust of ruling institutions, rooted in historical experience, often gets translated into uncertainty about the government future capabilities. Historically, local government has not played a strong role in promoting local democracy or participation by communities in development planning. It is envisaged that local government may take a long time to adapt to its new democratic role, hence the need for forums which play a complementary role to that of local government.

If we were certain that the representative democracy was a perfect system which, by its very nature, would produce well-informed decisions and guarantee widely accepted outcomes, then mechanism such as forums would not be necessary. However, this is not the case, as local government officials are incapable of understanding the diverse situation of their electorate, hence some mechanisms necessary for the direct or fuller participation of private and group interests in decision making are needed.

Within the forums themselves three dominant views have been presented:

The first view sees forums as a special and legitimate device to help the country through the transition: once a democratic government is in place their utility will end. The second suggests that they should become government advisory bodies. The third argues that they should be seen as a platform for non-governmental organisations: once the abnormalities created by apartheid have been resolved, they should continue to give these groups a role in policy making.

The view which limits the utility of the forums to the transition period accepts the need for access to policy making by the broadest possible spread of interests, but assumes that, in any society, government is the institution with the greatest capacity to represent the full spread of interests. Some key groups, particularly political parties, which participate in the forums will no longer need to seek consensus from other interests in forums: the access to the new government may ensure that they will wield greater influence by lobbying the government outside forums.

The second view, that forums should become government advisory bodies, also insist that it is the role of the government to govern. But it adds that present advisory bodies represent too narrow a spectrum of interests - since they were constituted by the previous government and their members consist of people to whom it chooses to listen. It then suggests that the 'present advisory bodies' be combined with forums. Again, this model holds that government should wield the ultimate power to make policy; hence development forums should accept that their role is subordinate; and thus advisory.

The third view assumes that participation by organised non-governmental groups in decisions is essential to a functioning democracy. Therefore, forums should be viewed as a means of institutionalising this role and thus deepening democracy. Forums then become necessary vehicles for participation by non governmental interests.

Another set of views on whether forums will continue to exist is centred around the issue of political representation. Shubane and Shaw (1994) hold the view that the future of development forums will rely on the

degree to which political parties continue to participate in them. If it is clear to political representatives that policy is being made elsewhere, their concentration may shift. For some actors certain forums may have fulfilled their role during the transition, prior to any better alternative arising.

Ironically, then, the forums which have the least political representation may be those that survive the longest. The National Economic Forum seems to be a good illustration here.

Godsell (1994) sets some aspects or tests which will determine whether particular forums will continue to exist. The first is that the forums that survive will be those that have appropriate objectives. Forums that seek to either monopolise or pre-empt the process of determining the public good are going to die. Secondly, the forum that would set itself up in opposition to a democratically elected legislature will lose power contest. And, then, forums that seek to govern will also get into a lot of trouble.

Whatever their future, the emergence of forums has been a significant development. By freeing decision making from the structures of apartheid, and by stressing the need for the main parties and interests to agree through negotiations, on policy and then accept joint responsibility, they have created the potential to reduce the danger that development will be seen as a means of gaining sectional competitive advantage, usually at the expense of presumed beneficiaries. It is assumed that forums will survive if they produce useful outcomes and if they are useful to the government and their constituencies on the other hand. However, for the forums to carry out their responsibilities effectively financial

and technical support from local government is required. Adoption of a developmental approach rather than a political approach is also necessary for the effectiveness as well as continued existence of development forums.

As stated earlier in the text, it is a feature of the forums in general that they are critical in building agreement on policy and visions, but are not sufficient to manage development implementation. To an extent this is linked to the lack of capacity of forums. Thus, forums as they stand, are best used as platforms to reach agreement on policy decisions as well as influence policies. Since state structures possess implementational capacity, forums are forced to rely on local government for implementation and this implies a need for a closer co-operative relationship between the forum and local government.

On the other hand, given that local government has only recently been instated, the level of their representativity is difficult to determine. However it is generally the case that local government lack adequate capacity with respect to some skills. Thus partnerships with organs of the state, the private sector, NGOs, CBOs or other civil society structures that can mobilise additional capacity to address the capacity constraints facing both the forums and local government. The need for a closer relationship between forums and local government cannot be overemphasised. Thus a blending of forum knowledge or skills in facilitating the participatory development process with technical and professional expertise provided by local government is essential for effective participation and sound governance. The forum and local government should, therefore, complement each other.

Another concern is that a problem may arise with regard to the way development forums operate: communities are interdependent and so autonomous community planning which is not co-ordinated in some way at a higher level cannot be realistic in a long term solution. If local level planning efforts are not co-ordinated, it is possible that the most powerful and organised communities will gain a disproportionate share of development benefits. Local government intervention is necessary here, to ensure that equitable distribution of resources between communities is achieved. Thus planning of local communities should take into consideration the broader context. To avoid confusion, misutilisation of resources and a reinforcement of inequalities local government need to serve as a co-ordinating body of all local development initiatives.

#### 2.4.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter has looked at development forums, putting emphasis on local development forums. Some debates relating to the future of these forums and their relationship with local government have been presented.

Participation in planning is a useful concept in the light of the diverse nature of our country. This is necessary in order to limit the risks of poor administration. Owing to the complex and diverse nature of our communities, local government representative democracy may not be sufficient. Local authorities may be unable to reach the marginalised sectors of the community. Forums provide mechanisms to facilitate participation in planning and to articulate the wants of the people on the ground by ensuring the direct and optimal involvement of the community in decision making.

The inclusive nature of development forums, therefore, allows for the accommodation of a wide range of interests in development planning. Forums become an integral step towards stronger and more effective forms of local governance. Both the forums and local government have their strengths and weaknesses. There is no single best model. The challenge, therefore, is to appraise their strengths and their weaknesses and define tasks which each can most effectively carry out. The collaboration of local government and development forums, working towards a unified vision and improved living standards in our communities is imperative.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CASE STUDY: INANDA DEVELOPMENT FORUM

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides a brief history of the case study area. The contextualisation of Inanda in the Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA) is important because socio-economic character of the area, for instance, may impact on the levels of participation in the area. Factors that led to the resurgence of the IDF, the IDF constitution, roles and functions are also discussed. One of the IDF greatest achievements is the formulation of Inanda Development Framework. The assessment of the Development Framework and its outcomes is necessary, since the products of the IDF will have repercussions for the future of the Inanda Development Forum.

#### 3.2 INANDA IN THE METROPOLITAN CONTEXT

The Greater Inanda area lies in the periphery of the Durban Metropolitan area (DMA) some 25 kilometres north-west of the centre of Durban. It forms part of the North Central Council. It is bounded by the industrial and residential areas of Phoenix to the east, rural areas to the west and north, and the townships of KwaMashu and Ntuzuma to the south (Figure 3.1).

Inanda is characterised by:

- \* inward focussed communities with weak economic and social links between them, thereby severely undermining the threshold required for viable local economic development strategies.

### 3.3 REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE CASE STUDY

The area was chosen as a case study because it represents one of the greatest challenges for urban reconstruction and development in the Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA). The area is characterised by deep internal social divisions and conflicts, and a vicious circle of human and environmental degradation. This is partly due to inadequate local government within the area. The problems within Inanda can also be attributed to endemic violence and political instability in the area. Despite all this Inanda has managed to pull through. Thus, most importantly, Inanda as a case study is also significant because of the efforts of its people, acting together with other players based within the DMA, to surmount these problems.

### 3.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FOUNDING OF THE INANDA DEVELOPMENT FORUM

This section presents a brief historical background of the case study. Attention will be given to the founding of the forum and the factors that precipitated its resurgence. The section also looks at the constitution, objectives, role and achievements of the forum.

Inanda has suffered a long history of administrative incoherence and neglect. Much of Inanda has been made ungovernable by the upheavals of in the 1980s. The KZNPA had withdrawn from Inanda in many ways and the transition to jurisdiction by the Durban City Council was delayed because of political disagreements beyond Inanda. Therefore

community organisations were left to operate on their own in a difficult and ill-defined situation.

Violence deeply wounded many communities and left the legacy of hostility and suspicion in the area. This made planned development and co-ordinated servicing of the area extremely difficult. Improving the quality of life of the residents of Inanda, and finding a way to embark on a path of sustained development there, is an enormous and complex undertaking. It requires involvement by residents, co-ordination amongst the communities in this large and diverse region, and careful consultation and co-operation with local authorities, NGO's and the private sector.

General elections in 1994 marked a decline in party political violence in Inanda. Violence arising out of political differences is now confined to a few pockets of Inanda, notably Bhambayi, where it is closely associated with criminal violence. A Spirit of reconciliation had begun to replace violent confrontation in the political life of the region. This was best symbolised by the Inanda Development Forum (IDF) a body which brought together both the Inanda Landowners Association and the Inanda Civic Association and had representatives from almost all the communities of Inanda.

### **3.5 LAUNCH OF THE IDF**

The Inanda Development Forum was officially launched in March 1994 with four principal parties being the Inanda Civic Association (ICA), Inanda Land Owners Association (ILA), Durban City Council (DCC) and KwaZulu Natal Provincial Authority (KZNPA), and with support that ranged



from the Transitional Executive Council (National Government), the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the Durban Functional Region Development Forum, local community organisation, development agencies, and non-government service organisations.

The IDF forms part of the broader framework of organs of change embracing and aspiring to the principles of the National RDP policy which commits the government to structured consultation processes at all levels of government to ensure community participation in policy making and planning as well as project implementation.

The establishment of the IDF was especially significant as a first effort to develop effective community co-operation and policy toward development following a long period of upheaval across Inanda which had resulted in much violence, loss of human life and social disorder.

The IDF created an arena where Inanda's 28 out of 32 communities were represented and where a foundation for consultation between these communities and the local authority could be built.

### **3.6 THE IDF CONSTITUTION**

The Inanda Development Forum Constitution legally binds all the principal parties to a development partnership with the area of jurisdiction extending over thirty two community areas that sought to be represented through the IDF, these are illustrated in figure 3.2.

From its inception, the IDF was committed to formulating a holistic plan for the development of Inanda, rather than approaching development by individual communities competing to fund specific projects on a piecemeal basis. Effective community participation and partnership between the community and the local authorities were also core principles of the IDF.

The IDF stated its aims and objectives as follows:

- \* to co-ordinate and facilitate current and future planning and development initiatives within the Greater Inanda;
- \* to ensure that development occurs holistically and not on a piecemeal basis
- \* to ensure proper and genuine community representation and decision making regarding development premised on the principle of inclusivity;
- \* to ensure joint responsibility and accountability between the community and the public authorities and/or development agents for development of Inanda and
- \* to assist inhabitants towards achieving self management of the development processes (Development Framework Report, 1995).

The IDF Constitution also makes provision for the establishment and operation of certain standing committees to assist in achieving its development objectives.

### **3.7 THE ROLE OF THE IDF**

The IDF realises that development is conflictual by nature hence there are various interests and competing viewpoints

that are found in communities, their organisations and the numerous other role players and stakeholders. One of the primary roles of the IDF to date has been to bring to bear the principles of community participation and partnership on existing projects in Inanda.

The IDF plays a major role in facilitating and co-ordinating development projects. Local Development Forums and individual organisations have a right to initiate and execute their programmes. These programmes through the linkages created by the development workers are entered into the IDF computerised data base so as to fit in the broader plan and context of the IDF.

The fact that the IDF has been in existence for only a short period of time inevitably means that its functions and roles are still in the process of definition and redefinition. Further challenging areas for further role definition are its relation to the local communities and its relationship to the newly elected local government. These relationships are been briefly discussed in subsequent chapters.

The forum has held on to its uniqueness as a role model with prestige and has proved to be a developing forum. However, the IDF has undergone some fundamental changes since its initiation. During the time of its initiation, it was exclusive of political parties due to the prevalent circumstances at that time and included them as conditions became conducive.

### 3.8 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE IDF

#### 3.8.1 CO-ORDINATING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

One of the greatest achievements of the IDF is the success of the Development Framework Project. An overview of the Inanda Development Framework is essential as the outcome of the Development Framework process may impact on the future of the forum.

The IDF recognised the critical importance of the Development Framework that would enable the IDF to prevent duplication and wastage of valuable resources, and facilitate and co-ordinate development in Inanda through the active participation of the ordinary residents of the area.

##### 3.8.1.1 THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The development approach of the Development Framework project is the major point of departure from traditional planning exercises. It is based on the principles of negotiated solutions, transparency, skill transfer, stakeholder involvement, etc. These require that the local authority and communities enter into a range of partnerships.

While previous planning initiatives were spatial in orientation with strong emphasis on physical upgrading and development, the Development Framework highlights the importance of non-physical problems. This is not to deny the significance of physical upgrading and the provision of essential services. Rather, the new vision for Inanda is a

holistic one, mixing the important relationships between the hard and soft components of development.

#### **3.8.1.2 SKILLS TRAINING**

- \* One of the important components of the Development Framework is the training programme. The premise for the inclusion of the training component in the Development Framework rests on the assumption that the people and communities must be the authors of their destiny and as such need to have the necessary skills to make informed choices about development issues that affect them. This model is the fundamental departure from earlier development initiatives that viewed people and communities as passive recipients of development aid. The training component was designed to provide the community's input into the unfolding development plan for Inanda. To enable all local communities of Inanda to have an input into this process a team of trainees, one from each area, was established. The objective of the training was two fold:
  
- \* To build a solid foundation of knowledge centred on urban development issues.
  
- \* To provide skills to the trainees to equip them to work with their local communities and elicit input from these communities to contribute to the overall development plan for Inanda.

The trainees were used as the principal link between the broader community and the professional team.

The criteria for the selection of the trainees was as follows:

- \* the trainee was to be a person who would be acceptable to all the role-players in the local community;
- \* a person who would be English literate; and
- \* a person who would preferably have experience in community development work.

### 3.8.1.3 THE METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

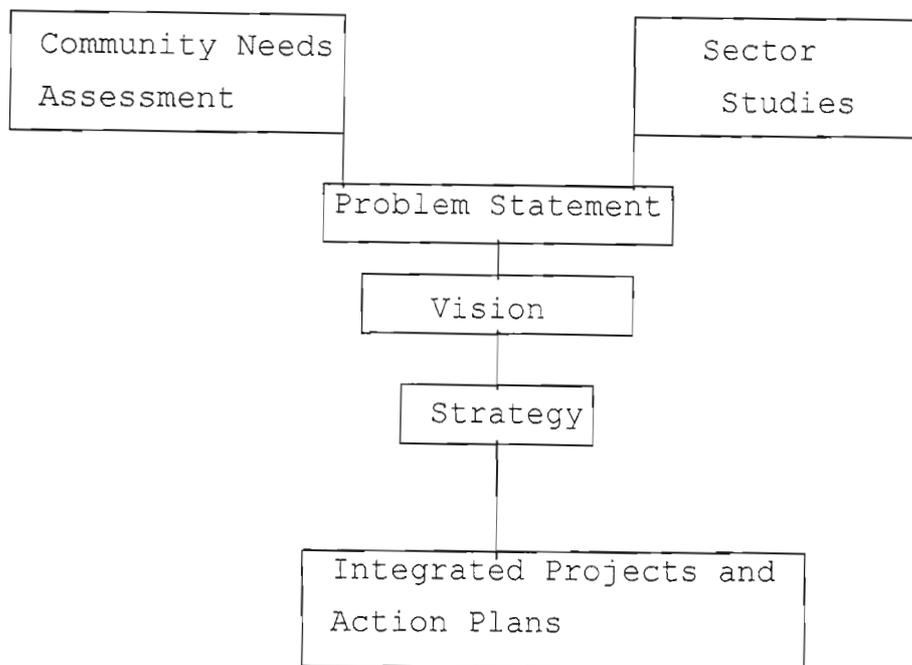


Figure 3.3 The methodology of the Inanda Development Framework

The information gathered from a community workshop process provided the basis for a community needs assessment and together with the results of sector study reports, was used to identify development concerns in Inanda. On the basis of an understanding of the problems confronting Inanda, a vision to guide the future development of Inanda was

developed by the trainees and intensely workshopped with the communities.

### **3.8.2 PROVISION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Most of the people interviewed raised the point that the availability of community development workers in the 28 areas of Inanda and the IDF as a co-ordinating body has contributed a great deal in the provision of safety and security to council staff and service providers. The smooth implementation of projects and the prevention of criminal elements from disrupting or delaying projects can be attributed to the creative preventive methods which were put in place by the forum.

### **3.8.3 HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to providing security, the existence and availability of community development workers in the 28 areas of Inanda has proved to be a great resource for local development fora, ward development fora and councillors. Also the availability of different task teams in the form of health services, for example, make things easier for the council and service providers to deliver in Inanda because of an ever ready human resources in the form of portfolio committees.

With the capacity that the IDF has attained, it has effectively managed and monitored the council investment to Inanda by ensuring full community participation in all council projects.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the interpretation and analysis of the research findings.

The interpretation and analysis of the research findings is largely informed by the theoretical background outlined in the text. Findings from the research will be used to ascertain whether the hypothesis made at the beginning of this dissertation is justified. The findings of the research drawn in this chapter will also form the basis for recommendations.

#### 4.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE IDF

The content of this dissertation advances arguments that support participation of the potential beneficiaries in decision making.

The IDF's primary aim is to empower people to participate in development in their own communities. Because Inanda is so vast, the IDF works with organisations that represent various stakeholders in the communities to seek development there. A wide range of interests and needs including those of women, the aged, the disabled, business, youth, children, etc., are accommodated both by the IDF. All these groups are invited to participate in the forum.

The interviewees revealed that the creation of development forums or ward forums at community level provides the most effective means of ensuring that the diversity of local interests are brought together at local level. These, together with community workers have created a particular kind of link between the IDF and the constituent communities of Inanda. Initially, the linkage tended to be influenced by party political affiliations. However, the forum has now adopted a developmental approach.

#### 4.3 INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATIVITY

Central to the study is the question pertaining to inclusivity and level of representativity of the Forums.

Inclusiveness is very difficult to measure. The conditions are determined by the specific area. In some situations (same applies to Inanda as revealed by community trainees) you find that there are weak organisations, taking the lead from the vociferous groups. So you find that other groups are sidelined in decision-making. Effective community participation, therefore, is determined by how active and organised community groups are.

Inanda is largely characterised by a variety of interest groups which, due to socio-economic gap between and within the groups, are not well organised. This, as pinpointed by the interviewees, has a major impact on levels of participation in the planning process. However, the respondents revealed that the development forum plays a major role in ensuring maximum representation of "organised groups" within the forum. What also came out of the

interviews is that women groups are not adequately represented. This is partly due to lack of organisation.

In order to facilitate community involvement, the IDF has espoused transparency and accountability (by ensuring that report back meetings are held regularly) and committed itself to make decisions in a way that is open and visible. In making decisions the IDF take into account that the communities are a collection of different interest groups with different life experience within the same geographical area. The IDF therefore sees the need to work with natural groupings of ordinary people. This type of community participation has proved, through the Development Framework process, to supply the planning team with more than just the identification of a perceived or real problem, to providing the team with a good understanding of the complexities of effectively addressing the needs of people in an integrated manner.

With regard to the legitimacy of representatives, this is confirmed because people were elected by the communities themselves. The representatives are selected from within Inanda and are therefore knowledgeable about the concerns of the area he represents.

Despite, the forums achievements in improving the participation in planning, some see it as being a bottleneck to development due to time period taken in decision-making and time that elapses before the actual implementation. However, this does not render the IDF ineffective, criticisms will always be there. More important, therefore is the need to strike a balance between the need to reach consensus around development issues and the need to deliver.

#### 4.4 RELATION BETWEEN THE IDF AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

The IDF was premised on the understanding that sustainable development was impossible without a partnership between communities and the local authority. To achieve this, the IDF needed to have as members both the KwaZulu Natal Provincial Administration (KZNPA) and the Durban City Council (DCC). Both were designated "principal parties" of the IDF. Both the DCC and KZNPA have given considerable support to the IDF.

The local government is more in keeping with the representative forms of democracy. As shown earlier in the dissertation and as witnessed by research findings, representative democracy does not insure democratic governance. Subsequently, as asserted by both the all the forum and local authority members interviewed, the need for the forum and local government to supplement each other if sound governance is to be achieved is of paramount importance.

Forums are important in order to ensure development outcomes that are responsive of people's aspirations. With regard to Inanda, initially there was a conflict between the council and the forum. The councillor wanted to act solely and to be seen as delivering. The interviewees revealed that there is now a healthy relationship between the forum and the council. The councillor now sits on the forum. The competition between the forum and the council could be dangerous and it could also serve as a stumbling block to development. As highlighted by the interviewees, if the

council decides to take up all development planning responsibilities it could find a difficulty reaching to the target groups of the communities hence the need for resolution of conflict and tension between different stakeholders and thus work towards effective participation and efficient governance.

The development forum has, as witnessed by the majority of interviewees, a major role in contributing to sound governance at local government level. Another point made by the interviewees is that the forum generally enjoys legitimacy but generally lacks expertise and supporting structures. There is therefore a need to marry the two structures to overcome this problem. The definition of roles to be played by either the forum or the local government has to be made. The forum could help in bringing about effective community involvement in development planning and in coordinating development projects while the local government, on the other hand, could help where financial and technical support is needed. Local government is also essential to manage the process of delivery.

#### **4.5 FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FORUM IN ACHIEVING ITS GOALS**

The major problems affecting the Inanda Development Forum include lack of capacity and funding. This may serve to undermine the role of development forums, if it is not attended to. Since the forum is the vehicle for democratising planning, local government needs to commit itself to in order to: ensure the continued operations of the forum, as well as to ensure accountable and effective governance.

#### 4.6 ROLE THE DEVELOPMENT FORUM HAS IN INCREASING THE CAPACITIES OF COMMUNITIES IN ENGAGING IN DEVELOPMENT

Central to the role of the IDF is the institutional capacity building responsibility. The development forum has to build a better understanding of development issues. Inanda Development Forum is involved in capacity building. This is significant in order to effect meaningful participation as it builds a better understanding around development issues. This, as mentioned earlier, has proved useful in the preparation of the Development Framework.

#### 4.7 IDF AND THE FUTURE: IS THERE A ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT FORUMS NOW THAT THERE ARE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED COUNCILS?

Democracy could be divided into two, namely:

- \* participative democracy and
- \* representative democracy

These have been discussed in depth earlier in chapter two. Local government is associated with the latter form of democracy. The representative form of participation is efficient and less laborious and tends to be appealing to most politicians at all levels of government (Nene,1997). It is, however, more risky as the electorate may disown such decisions and declare them null and void. It may also be introducing apathy and dependency and even be disempowering to communities that may already be disadvantaged.

In addition to representative democracy, as proved by the case study, there is a dire need for participative forms of

democracy. This will ensure sustained community participation. Thus, for meaningful community participation to occur there has to be strong organs of civil society. Apartheid has sown conflict and violence which have disintegrated many communities socially and structurally. In order to reverse this hostile environment there has to be empowering initiatives that are seen to be inclusive and participative. Inanda Development Forum offers a living example in this regard. Through participative democracy Inanda has surmounted many of its problems associated with violence. Through the IDF's commitment to work with communities, cases of vandalism at Inanda have now been minimised. This has paved a smooth path for development.

As pinpointed by Vusi Ngongoma (the North Central Councillor), Councillors have restrictions for them to satisfy this aspect of participative democracy as the process of transformation is demanding on them:

"Direct representation with the civil society is important. Councillors spend most of their time in meetings and chambers, so there is a need for people who are always there for the community. The local government need assistance from the forum. The partnership between the forum and the local government is important so as to expedite development and to ensure development outcomes are responsive to the needs of the community," (Ngongoma, interview, 1997).

Mthembu holds the same view as previous respondent, he makes an assertion that:

“Development forums, as organs of the civil society, ensure direct community involvement in development planning, the special skill that the local government lacks”, (Mthembu, interview, 1997).

It is on this basis that he believes the development forums are necessary mechanisms to effect participative planning and that local government will not replace the need for development forums.

The need for the existence of the forum is further compounded by the understanding that development is a process and not an event and the role of the development forum as a facilitator in resolving conflicts and disputes arising from development as well as building the capacity of the local community structures is indispensable.

#### 4.8 CONCLUSION

The Inanda Development Forum represents an attempt to bring about meaningful participation in decision making. Taking into account the social, economic, physical and political factors in Inanda, one can conclude that Inanda has made some great achievements. It has, to some degree, managed to bring together different interest groups to the planning process. However, in order to enhance inclusivity and representativity of the forum of the marginalised groups, these groups have to be assisted to organise themselves, they have to be educated about development issues,

innovative techniques need to be employed to ensure their full participation of these groups and the culture of participation developed. Otherwise decision making opportunities will remain open to the articulate groups.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This concluding chapter, is an attempt to consolidate the various aspects discussed in this dissertation. In this chapter a brief discussion as to whether the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of this research has been confirmed or not will be made. Finally, recommendations and future directions for research are suggested.

The focus of the study was to investigate development forums as mechanisms of facilitating participation in development planning in the context of local government. Legitimate development planning has been conceptualised as a democratic process of preparing a set of decisions about future actions. The concern with the legitimacy of the planning process derives from the fact that planning is value-laden and conflictual in nature and therefore in order to ensure effective and efficient planning practices one has to take this into consideration.

The study has also looked at local government participation. An attempt to draw a distinction between two concepts, decentralisation and democracy, which are often used interchangeably, is made. It is inferred that the relationship between the two concepts is empirical rather than axiomatic. Therefore, local (as decentralised) government, does not guarantee democratic forms of governance. Some mechanisms like development forums are needed to bring about true democracy or meaningful community participation.

Central to the study was the investigation of the future role of the development forums. A general assumption was made that, although legitimate local government in South Africa has now been instituted, its adequacy is uncertain. The basic assumption was that the elected democratic local government may not replace the need for institutional form that facilitate participation in planning. The election of local authorities in an attempt to democratise planning and governance is a vital ingredient, but this alone may not be enough. The elected official may find it difficult to evaluate the diverse needs of the electorate. The case study supported this statement.

Owing to the complex nature of our country, direct involvement of the communities in development processes through forums is indispensable. Thus, even though the democratic local government structures now exist development forums may still have a significant role to play in planning. Local government need the assistance of development forums in order to bring about sound governance, that is, planning reflective of people's needs and aspirations.

Different and yet complimentary roles played by the forums and local government have been outlined and the significance of the role played by each organisation has been spelt out. And the general conclusion arrived at is that forums should play a complimentary role to that of local government.

The findings from the interview survey reveal that forums have a very significant role to play in democratising planning. The hypothesis has, thus, been shown to be true.

On the basis of the evidence, based on the discussion of research findings presented above and theoretical underpinnings of the study, the author is, thus, led to come to the conclusion that we need forums, with the state being one of the parties.

South Africa is complex and very diverse in nature. The representative democracy is an insufficient form of participation. Forums are best available mechanisms for facilitating participative development planning. Forums and the newly elected local governments may serve to complement each other to ensure stronger and more effective forms of local governance. Both the government and forums can capitalise on the functions that they perform better.

Thus, as stated before in the conceptual framework, it is through partnership, delegated power and citizen control that effective participation can be achieved. The IDF has achieved this through forming alliances with professionals and other stakeholders. There is also some level of citizen control in development planning in Inanda. For planning to work effectively local government bodies need to realise that the collective strength is much more stronger than the sum of individual efforts. The challenge, therefore, is to define roles of development forums relative to representation by local authorities. Development partnerships also need to be extended. Local partnerships between development forums and outside actors can provide useful testing grounds for different development approaches.

The research findings have shown that forums often lack the financial and technical experience needed to drive the

development planning process and that this could lead to the role played by forums being undermined and subsequently inability of local government to carry out its responsibilities effectively by ensuring delivery that is reflective of peoples aspirations. To effect meaningful participation, therefore, councillors will have to commit themselves to capacity building of the development forums and at large the communities they serve and also to addressing the financial problems confronting the forums.

Training of development workers for each of the 28 communities in Inanda was a significant beginning of capacity building. More people need to be educated on development issues so that communities, and more especially the management of the IDF and the leadership, can become empowered to manage their own development sustainability.

Important to note, however, is that development planning issues are contextual in nature and the conditions differ from one setting to another. The lessons learnt from Inanda Development Forum cannot be adopted as a single best model. These need to be adapted to fit the situations of different localities.

#### **4.2 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study of development forums as ways of facilitating participation in development planning was more of an investigative research. Some important aspects in relation to the operations and effectiveness of the forums in bringing about legitimate forms of planning have been revealed. From the study, it is evident that both forums and local government structures are interdependent or

complimentary and thus have to co-operate in order to bring about effective and efficient development planning practices.

As stated in the report, forums are non-statutory bodies. This may affect the functioning of the forums as they often lack both financial and technical expertise. The future research could look at whether these forums should be legalised and institutionalised to form a part of the local government structure. This would include looking at implications for legislating and incorporating these development forums into local government. The inclusion of this could have enriched the content of the document. However, owing to the time constraints under which the study has been undertaken, this issue could not be examined.

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