

**A Critical Analysis of Public Participation in the Integrated
Development Plans (IDP) of Selected Municipalities in Some
Provinces (Gauteng, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and
Western Cape) in South Africa**

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Abstract

The dawn of democracy in South Africa saw a commitment from the African National Congress (ANC) government to address the ills of apartheid through establishing policies that would transform local government (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1998). The transformation of local government was seen as ensuring the inclusion of citizens, and particularly communities and groups, in society that were previously excluded in policy and decision-making processes of the country (RSA 1998). The Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is the planning tool of local government (RSA 2000) was seen as one of the ways to ensure this inclusion.

This study critically analyses how some municipalities promoted public participation in the IDP process. In so doing, it critically explores the understandings and conceptualisations of public participation by municipalities. It also analyses organisational structures and institutional mechanisms used by municipalities to promote public participation in the IDP process. The study explores the nature of public participation used through these mechanisms and in these structures.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology, relying mainly on secondary written sources of data, which reported on public participation and IDP processes. These sources include journal articles, books, internet sources, government legislation, IDP documents of selected municipalities, research and theses. The focus of the study was on some provinces (Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape) in South Africa. The studies of municipalities explored in the Gauteng province are the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, Emfuleni Local Municipality, Midvaal Local Municipality, Kungwini Municipality, West Rand District Municipality and Mogale City. In the Western Cape, the study analysed studies done in the Stellenbosch Municipality, City of Cape Town Municipality, Breede Valley Municipality and Boland Municipality. In the Eastern Cape, the study looked at studies done in Amathole District Municipality, Buffalo City

District Municipality and Makana Municipality. In Kwa-Zulu Natal studies done in Msinga and Hisbicus Municipalities in the Ugu District Municipality, Ugu District Municipality, eThekwini Metro Municipality, and Sisonke Municipality were utilised. Limitations with the availability of information restricted this study to only these municipalities. To analyse the data, the study used qualitative and data analytical techniques. In particular, content analysis was used.

One of the emerging conceptualisations of public participation by municipalities in this study is the commitment towards involving communities in the decision-making processes of municipalities. Another conceptualisation of public participation in the IDP process associates public participation with democracy and governance. Ward Committees were used by municipalities in this study as structures for public participation in the IDP process at local community level. These structures were faced with challenges that rendered them ineffective as structures of public participation. In this regard, Ward Committees in some municipalities were established late after the IDPs were already drafted. In others, they were either dysfunctional or by-passed as structures of participation. The IDP Representative Forums were used as the main structures for public participation in the IDP process. Like Ward Committees, these structures were faced with challenges, such as lack of decision-making powers by role-players, partial functioning of IDP Representative Forums and capacity problems for some role-players. These structures at times accentuated the socio-economic inequalities inherent in society.

Municipalities in this study established mechanisms to facilitate public participation in the IDP process, such as public meetings/workshops, public hearings, Mayors' Listening Campaigns, road shows and ward-based meetings. While some of these mechanisms yielded benefits for communities, such as promoting access to government, some of these mechanisms were not accommodative of the marginalised groups of society, thus hindering participation of such groups in the IDP process. Municipalities in this study used low levels of participation, with limited power by citizens to influence decisions in the IDP process.

Based on these findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

- Municipalities must clarify their conceptualisation of who the public is to help them identify appropriate mechanisms for public participation.
- Municipalities must find ways of mitigating the challenges inherent in Ward Committees to ensure that they better facilitate public participation in the IDP process.
- IDP Representative Forums must accommodate the less-organised groups of society.
- Municipalities must devise mechanisms for participation that are accommodative of all kinds of people and their realities.
- Lastly, municipal officials are advised to move away from low levels of participation such as consultation and tokenism, to higher levels of participation that will ensure that the public have a real say in decisions that affect their lives.

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have always believed in me and encouraged me, in their own way, to go for it and to my late mother in law, who watched and encouraged me in the midst of her pain.

Declaration

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in the Graduate Programme of Policy and Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations and borrowed ideas have been acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
DFA	Development Facilitation Act
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Co-operation
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
LGTA	Local Government Transition Act
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
RSA	Republic of South Africa
TSET	Training for Socioeconomic Transformation

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study critically analyses public participation in the drafting of Integrated Development Plans (IDP) in a number of municipalities in selected provinces of South Africa. In so doing, it looks at the different views of public participation by municipalities and the organisational structures and mechanisms and institutional processes used in drafting the IDPs. It examines the nature and extent of public participation in the IDP process in these municipalities. Eighteen municipalities were examined. These are located in Gauteng, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces. Already-existing studies and documents on public participation in the IDP were examined, but through the lens of public policy theory and concepts.

This study has been prompted by a perception of a lack of public participation in the drafting of the Integrated Development Plans (Davids 2006 and Mac Kay 2004 cited in Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007:11). General problems experienced in public participation include lack of access to officials (Olver 1998: 4), lack of commitment from government, “insufficient recognition of the value of community participation” and lack of understanding by many people of their “rights to participate in municipalities” (Atkinson et al. 2002: 45).

The broad objectives of this study are to critically analyse:

- a. the various theories and conceptualisations of public participation subscribed to by municipalities.
- b. the structures, mechanisms and processes used by municipalities to promote public participation in policy.
- c. the experiences and challenges of participants in participating in public policy.
- d. the nature of public participation in public policy.

The specific aims of this study are to empirically explore public participation and as it is applied within the IDP process in selected provinces of South Africa. The study seeks to answer the following key questions:

- What are the various theories and conceptualisations of public participation by municipalities in relation to IDPs by local municipalities?
- What are the structures, mechanisms and processes used by municipalities to promote public participation in the IDP process?
- What are the experiences and challenges of participants in participating in the IDP processes in the selected provinces of South Africa?
- What is the nature of public participation in the IDP process?

1.2 Background to the study

Public participation in the IDP process has become essential with the changing role played by local government in South Africa since 1994 (Houston et al. 2001: 2007-208). The new role of local government, called developmental local government, makes local government central to development in South Africa (RSA 1998a). The Local Government White Paper (RSA 1998a) defines developmental local government as

“local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives”.

One of the ways proposed by government in the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) to ensure developmental local government is through the development and implementation of the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) by municipalities. The Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) defines the IDP as

“the principal strategic planning instrument, which guides and informs all planning, and development, and all decisions with regard to planning, management and development in the municipality”.

According to Training for Socioeconomic Transformation (TSET) (2007: 85), the IDP presents a way by which government can attend to the needs of communities. The South

African Constitution provides for three spheres of government (RSA 1996), national, provincial and local. Local government is responsible for the establishment of IDPs (RSA 1996).

At the heart of this developmental local government is the requirement for community participation (RSA 1996) in municipal processes. These are processes such as the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) processes, budgeting processes, performance management system and decisions about the provision of municipal services (RSA 2000). According to the TSET (2007: 94), the importance of public participation in the IDP process is to provide an opportunity for average citizens to have a say in municipal priorities concerning development. It also enables communities to offer information to inform municipal plans (ibid).

The rationale for including public participation in policy is because it is seen as a fundamental element of democratic governance, with public officials in many countries obliged to facilitate participation (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 51). The pressure for public participation has its roots in the advancement of governance globally which directs countries towards “participatory democracy” (Wight 1997: 370). This emphasis is supported by international development institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations and other donor agencies (ibid: 371). They believe that people’s involvement in their development would speed up “attempts to promote economic and social progress”. Public participation would guarantee equitable distribution of development benefits (ibid).

The increased pressure towards public participation does not only come from international agencies, but also from citizens who want to be part of decisions affecting their lives (Smith 2003: 22). Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) are putting pressure on public participation in policy- making (Midgely 1986: 23).

The background to public participation is linked to the decentralization discourse, where the decentralization of government is viewed as a strategy to enhance popular

participation (Midgely 1986: 13-14). According to Smith (1985: 1, Rondinelli 1981: 137 and Kiggundu 2008: 89 cited in Hussein 2004: 108),

“decentralisation involves the transfer of authority and power to plan, make decisions and manage resources, from higher to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy, in order to facilitate efficient and effective service delivery”.

Just as in the case of public participation, many developing countries were pressured around the 1980s by aid agencies to adopt administrative decentralization reforms and programs, (Cohen and Peterson 1999: 2).

There are various motivations for decentralization (Hussein, 2004: 107). The political motivation for decentralisation is that it is seen as a major approach to good governance (ibid). Proponents of decentralisation believe that it will lead to “greater pluralism, accountability, transparency, citizen participation and development” (ibid). It is also believed that it will enhance relations between the state and the public (Beall 2004: 2). According to Beall (2004: 2), the idea of decentralization is seen as a means to enhance democratic participation.

As an administrative rationale, decentralization is seen as a strategy that would transfer decision-making powers from central government to local government and therefore promote “efficiency, coordination and effectiveness in public service delivery” (Hussein 2004: 107). As local government is seen as government closer to people, participation of people at this level is expected to contribute “local knowledge, resources and expertise in the development process” (Ikhide 1999:165, Mutizwa-Mangiza et al., 1996:79 cited in Hussein 2004:107).

Public participation is viewed by Hussein (2004: 112) as a vehicle where citizens are involved in determining their development. He states that decentralisation would bring about “*sustainable development and grassroots commitment to political and development activities*” (ibid). Public participation is seen as deepening democracy (Masango 2002: 54; Lando 1999: 114). In this regard, Sithole (2005: 2) sees participation of communities in matters affecting their lives as the only way to attain

democracy. For this reason, public participation requires the building of public participation mechanisms and processes into government procedures and decentralizing their activities to the level of government closest to the people (Bertucci 1999: 38). Smith (2003: 34) defines public participation

“as a framework of policies, principles, and techniques which ensure that citizens and communities, individuals, groups, and organizations have the opportunity to be involved in a meaningful way in making decisions that will affect them, or in which they have an interest”.

For South Africa, the end of the apartheid system saw a shift away from centralized power of a few people towards a “people-centred democracy”, with a strong emphasis on decentralization (Karlsson, Pampallis and Sithole 1996: 116). This was accompanied by the need for “redress and equity” (Lewis and Motala 2004: 116). Engendering decentralisation is a strong commitment and provision for the continuous participation of “all relevant stakeholders” (Karlsson, Pampallis and Sithole 1996: 116).

1.3 Research design

The present study employs a qualitative research methodology, using qualitative methods of collecting data. According to Durrheim (2006: 47)

“qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language, and analyse the data by identifying and categorizing themes”.

Documents and reports were analysed in this study in order to understand the conceptions, forms and nature of public participation in the IDP process in South Africa. The study mainly relied on written sources of data, such as journal articles, academic books, internet sources and government legislation around public participation and the IDP processes. The study also used other research and theses that have investigated public participation in the IDP process in South Africa and selected IDP documents of municipalities from the selected provinces including their reviews. This

includes studies conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng Provinces.

Municipalities from KwaZulu Natal:

- Msinga and Hibiscus Municipalities in Ugu District,
- Ugu District Municipality,
- eThekweni Metro Municipality
- and Sisonke Municipality.

Municipalities from the Western Cape:

- Stellenbosch Municipality,
- City of Cape Town,
- Breede Valley
- and Boland Municipality.

Municipalities from Gauteng Province:

- the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality,
- Mogale City,
- West Rand District Municipality,
- City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality,
- Midvaal Local Municipality,
- Kungwini Municipality
- and Emfuleni Municipality.

Municipalities from the Eastern Cape Province:

- Amatole District Municipality,
- Buffalo City District Municipality
- and Makana Municipality.

Limitations to the availability of information restricted this study to these municipalities only. These provinces were chosen because two of them are amongst the poorest in South Africa (Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) and the other two have low levels of poverty (Western Cape and Gauteng). The Human Sciences Research Council (2004: 1) rates the income poverty levels in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal at 61% and 72%, respectively, while it rates the Western Cape and Gauteng at 32% and 42%, respectively. Secondary studies have been chosen because there already exist studies conducted on public participation and IDPs, but without a public policy analysis focus.

To analyse data, the study used qualitative data analytical techniques. These are based on statements by Powell (1997: 154) that “the purpose of qualitative research is to understand rather than to predict”. This study seeks to understand public participation in the IDP process. Content analysis, in particular, was used. This is key for “analysing text”, as advocated by Patton (2002: 242). Categorizing themes used to explore the secondary data were:

- Conceptualisations of public participation
- Organisational structures, mechanisms and processes to facilitate public participation in the IDP process. In this regard, the experiences and challenges experienced through public participation were explored.
- Nature of public participation

1.4 Overview of the research report

Chapter 1 of this study covers the introduction and background to the study. Chapter 2 focuses on the legislative framework for public participation in South Africa generally, and the IDP process in particular. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. It looks at the definitions of public policy and public policy processes. It further explores public participation in policy formulation, looking at its conceptualisations; role-players in policy-making; advantages of public participation in policy process; structures, mechanisms and processes used for public participation; nature of public participation and challenges of public participation in the policy

process. Lastly, it looks at the criticisms of public participation in the policy process. Chapter 4 presents the findings and the analysis on public participation and the IDP process. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and it summarises the key findings of the study concerning public participation and policy and on the IDP process, in particular in relation to conceptualisations of public participation; structures, mechanisms and processes used to promote public participation and the opportunities and challenges thereof; and the nature of participation used by municipalities in this study. Chapter 5 presents some recommendations in relation to the findings of the study.

Chapter 2

Legislative framework for public participation and Integrated Development Planning in South Africa

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the legislative framework and guidelines that inform public participation in South Africa, broadly, and specifically in relation to the Integrated Development Plans (IDP). The South African government has, since 1994, instituted policy and legislative frameworks and processes in an attempt to foster “participatory governance” at all levels of government (Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) 2005: 3). This involves legislation for policy-making and planning processes of government at local, provincial and national levels (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996; DPLG 2005: 3). The imperative for public participation is entrenched in the South African Constitution (RSA 1996), with section 152 (1) (a) and (e) (ibid) requiring local government

“to provide a democratic and accountable government for local communities”,
and where municipalities are obliged *“to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government”*.

Section 195(1)(e) of the Constitution (RSA 1996) obliges government to encourage public participation in policy-making.

This shift to locate public participation is central within key planning. Legislative government processes needs to be seen against the history of South Africa, where, before 1994, certain racial groups such as the *“African, Coloured and Indian communities were excluded from decision-making processes through statutory mechanisms...”* (Davids 2005: 18). The structure of government during the apartheid regime consisted of national government, provincial government, which consisted of

four provinces and local government (Tapscott 2006: 2). Local government had “*no constitutional safeguard, as it was perceived as a structural extension of the State and a function of provincial government*” (Williams 2006: 200). In an attempt to further the apartheid agenda of “separation and inequity” (RSA 1998a), the national government of the day “de-concentrated its own authority through regional offices” (Tapscott 2006: 3). Left without power, local municipalities were only allowed to implement initiatives that were provided for national and provincial laws (Tapscott 2006: 2).

The nature of government at the time left no room for community participation (Williams 2006: 200). The majority of the people in South Africa had no “political rights” (Tapscott 2006: 3). As a result, they could not participate in government processes (Williams 2006: 200). Tapscott (2006: 3) stresses that “African, Indian and Coloured” people were not allowed to participate in elections. Public engagement by black people at local government level was limited to their “own management structures” (Tapscott 2006: 3) that were, themselves, organised along racial lines (RSA 1998a). These structures were established to reinforce policies that encouraged the exclusion of black people from the economic and political affairs of the country (ibid).

The apartheid government also established “management committees” for the “Coloured and Indian” communities in the 1960s (RSA 1998a), which limited the engagement of these communities in local government to such committees. These “management committees” served as advisory structures to the white-run municipalities (ibid). In 1971, the responsibility for townships was taken away from white municipalities, followed by the establishment of Community Councils in 1977. The fact that Community Councils had neither real power nor resources, meant that they had no political authority (RSA 1998a). These were later removed when Black Local Authorities were established in the 1980s (ibid). Similar to other bodies of local government at the time, the Black Local Authorities had no credibility politically and were snubbed (RSA 1998a) by black people.

In an attempt to reverse this discrimination and exclusion of the majority of people, the democratic government post-1994 had to find ways of incorporating the previously excluded groups into the decision-making processes and into the economic life of the country (Davids 2005: 18). One of the ways in which this was done, was to put in place legislation that would bring transformation to local government, mandating it with the task of incorporating these groups into decision-making processes (ibid). Local government transformation sought to rebuild local communities as a foundation of “*a democratic, integrated, prosperous and truly non-racial society*” (RSA 1998a). These initiatives were an expression of the ANC government’s direction towards decentralization, which was itself a result of globalisation (ibid). In its new policy direction at local government level, the new government had to heed the pressure mounted by funding institutions internationally and donor countries on governments to “decentralise administrative responsibilities to the local level” (Tapscott 2006: 1).

The transformation of local government subsequently positioned local government as a sphere of government with its own powers, separate from those of national or provincial government (RSA 1996). With this repositioning, local government was given a new role, that of developmental local government (RSA 1996; RSA 1998a). The White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998) sets the vision for the new role of local government, which “*centers on working with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives*” (RSA 1998a). The involvement of local citizens and communities in meeting the needs of communities is thus key for the new developmental local government (ibid). This approach to a developmental local government is indeed a shift from the way the previous government operated, with a top-down approach to policy and development (Karlsson, Pampallis and Sithole 1996: 116).

One of the features of local government, set out by the White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a), to guide municipalities to meet their developmental role, is “democratising development”. For this purpose, the White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a), mandates local government to “play a central role in promoting local

democracy”, by encouraging the participation of “citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programmes”. In particular, it requires municipalities to promote and vigorously encourage the participation of marginalised groups of society in municipal processes. For this purpose, it makes particular reference to women, who are often excluded due to obstacles such as “lack of transport, household responsibilities, personal safety, etc”.

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a) urges municipalities to develop mechanisms to ensure community participation, including:

- Forums to influence policy formulation both from within and outside local government.
- Structured stakeholder involvement in certain council committees. This is particularly for issue-oriented committees that have a short lifespan, rather than for permanent structures.
- Participatory budgeting initiatives to ensure that community priorities are aligned to capital investment programmes.
- Focus group participatory action research to gather information on specific needs and values of communities. The requirement is that this function should be carried out together with NGOs and community-based organizations.
- Providing support to associations to enhance their organisational development. The White Paper (RSA 1998a) suggests that this is particularly important for poor marginalised areas, where there might be lack of skills and resources for participation. Its reasoning for this position is that, in these areas, “citizens tend to participate via associations rather than as individuals”.

Another legislation that concerns public participation at local government is the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) (RSA 1993). This was the first Act that was established to make temporary provisions to reform local government (RSA 1993). In the interest of bringing transformation to local government, some of the provisions made by the Act include the

- *“establishment of forums for negotiating such restructuring of local government”*
- *“establishment of appointed transitional councils in the pre-interim phase”*
(RSA 1993).

The Local Government Transition Act (RSA 1993) prescribes that membership in the forum must promote “the principle of inclusivity and representativity”. In this regard, Schedule 1 of the Local Government Transition Act (RSA 1993) requires representation from the main sectors that exist in the community in the negotiating forums. It suggests that members of institutions such as the “local chamber of commerce and industry” may apply for observer status in these forums (ibid).

Other legislation that sought to promote public participation at local government is the Development Facilitation Act (DFA) (RSA 1995). One of the objectives of this Act (RSA 1995: section 3) is to set *“general principles governing land development throughout the Republic”*. The Act (RSA 1995: section (d)) requires the encouragement of participation of *“all sectors of the economy (government and non-government) to land development so as to maximise the Republic's capacity to undertake land development”*. This Act not only requires the participation and involvement of “members of communities affected by land development”, but also capacity building for the underprivileged members of the community that are affected by land development (RSA 1995: section 3(d) and (e)).

To allow public participation by those involved, section 3(1)(g) of the Development Facilitation Act (RSA 1995) requires access to legislation and procedures by those that may be affected by the development of land. This section also requires that these laws and procedures must be clear and should offer information to those people that land development has an effect upon (ibid).

Section 27 of the Development Facilitation Act (RSA 1995) requires public participation in determining the objectives for land development. When setting these objectives, this

section prescribes that certain procedures set by the Member of the Legislative Council (MEC) in the Provincial Gazette must be followed by municipalities (RSA 1995). While it is not clear what these procedures are, one of the requirements for these procedures is that they should include procedures that relate to

“the manner in which members of the public and interested bodies shall be consulted in the setting of land development objectives” (ibid).

Other legislation that promotes community participation at local government is the Municipal Structures Act (RSA 1998b). One of the key objectives of this Act is to provide a framework to set regulations on “the internal systems, structures and office bearers of municipalities” (ibid). Section 44(3)(g) of this Act (RSA 1998b) requires the involvement of communities and community organisations in the affairs of the local municipality. In this regard, it requires the executive committee of the municipal council to report annually on this involvement and its effect (ibid).

Section 72 of the Municipal Structures Act (RSA 1998b) makes provision for the establishment of Ward Committees as the structures for promoting participatory democracy in local governance. The duties of a ward committee, as set out by the Act, are *“to make recommendations on ... matters affecting the ward to the ward councillor; or through the ward councillor”* to the local Council (RSA 1998b). Other means to promoting public participation, recommended by the Act (RSA 1998b), involve participation through traditional leaders in areas that fall under traditional customary law (ibid).

Section (19)(3) of the Municipal Structures Act (RSA 1998b) requires municipal councils to establish mechanisms that will be used “to consult the community and community organisations in performing its functions and exercising its powers”.

Other key legislation that promotes public participation at local government is the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000). One of the key objectives of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) is to provide a framework for community participation. In this

regard, municipalities are required to “*develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory government*”. The Act (RSA 2000) requires municipalities to actively encourage communities to participate in local government matters, such as “planning, service delivery, and performance management”. This Act (RSA 2000) conceives communities as consisting of residents, ratepayers, civic organisations, NGOs, the business sector and labour. Section 17(3) of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) requires municipalities to consider people with “special needs” when establishing mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation. These are:

- “(a) people who cannot read or write;*
- (b) people with disabilities;*
- (c) women; and*
- (d) other disadvantaged groups” (ibid).*

This would ensure the inclusion of such people in municipal processes.

One of the roles of communities in municipal processes is to “contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality” (RSA 2000: section 5). To carry this role, the Act (RSA 2000) requires transparency from the municipal council, by ensuring that they make communities aware of the municipality’s “state of affairs” and their decisions. Municipalities are required by the same Act (RSA 2000: section 16(1)(b)) to make a contribution towards capacitating local communities, staff and councillors.

This Act (RSA 2000) sets out mechanisms, processes and procedures in which municipalities can allow public participation in local government. These are participation through “political structures”; “councillors”; “mechanisms, processes and procedures”, for participation in municipal governance established in terms of this Act and others “established by the municipality”, such as “petitions”; “notification and public comment procedures when appropriate”; “public meetings and hearings”; consultations with local organisations that have recognition in communities, including traditional leaders where there is need; and “report back to the local community” (RSA 2000).

2.2 Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and public participation

2.2.1 IDPs - What are they?

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a) suggests a change in the way municipalities function, to be able to meet outcomes of developmental local government. IDPs are thus seen as vehicles to meet this mandate (DPLG 2000: 19).

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a) identifies a number of reasons for integrated development planning. These reasons are based on acknowledgement by the White Paper (RSA 1998a) that there are many challenges facing communities and that integrated development planning would help municipalities meet these challenges, by:

- enabling municipalities to better understand the “dynamics” that exist in their development areas, to allow them to meet the needs of communities and improve their quality of life
- helping municipalities develop clear visions and strategies to deal with problems that exist in their development areas
- enabling local municipalities to develop development plans for their areas over a period of time, including “short term, medium and long term”
- ensuring prioritisation and appropriate allocation of resources.

In developing the IDPs, section 24 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) requires co-operation between the different spheres of government. In this regard, it requires the alignment of municipal IDPs across municipalities in a particular district and “other organs of state”. To ensure this alignment, the district municipalities are required to provide a framework for the integrated development planning in their district (RSA 2000: section 27(1)). The MEC for local government is required by the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) to monitor the IDP process, offer support with the planning, where necessary, facilitate the co-ordination and alignment of IDPs and take appropriate

steps to resolve disputes in connection with the planning, drafting, adoption or review of the IDPs between municipalities and the local municipalities and between different municipalities.

Section 35 of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) defines the IDP as the

“principal strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all planning, and development, and all decisions with regard to planning, management and development, in the municipality”.

The IDPs, with a life-span of five years, are legislated as the overall plans of municipalities that take precedence over other sectoral plans (DPLG 2000: 20). They are intended to be the overall plans that should guide all activities of a municipality (ibid). They are required to bring together outcomes of all the different planning processes of a municipality in one document, showing the linkages and intersections between them. They should also indicate the “budgetary implications of the different plans and policies” (ibid).

The DPLG (2001c: 6), through its IDP Guide Pack 111, identifies the following stages of drafting IDPs:

- *“Phase 1 – Analysis”*: This involves analysing the current context of the municipal area and identifying priority issues of the municipality.
- *“Phase 2 – Strategies”*: This is the stage of the IDP where strategies to meet the priority issues identified in Phase 1 are designed. During this stage, objectives and the vision of the municipality are established.
- *“Phase 3 – Projects”*: This stage involves identifying and designing actual projects that will be carried out by municipalities in response to the problems identified (ibid: 19). These projects are accompanied by budget figures and *“business plans”* that explain how they will be done (ibid). Project task teams are key at this stage (ibid: 6). Proposals from experts and *“relevant stakeholders”* are expected at this stage of the IDP process (ibid: 6).
- *“Phase 4 – Integration”*. This involves the consolidation of all *“projects proposals”* by local and district municipalities (DPLG 2001c: 19).

- “Phase 5 – Approval”. During the approval stage of the IDP, the Council takes into account and integrates submissions that have been made concerning the draft IDP. Once the comments are integrated into the draft IDP, the Council endorses the IDP (DPLG 2001c: 6).

2.2.2 Public participation in the IDP process

The South African government associates public participation in the IDP process with democracy (RSA 1998a) and governance (DPLG 2000: 14). It is described by the IDP Guide Pack 1 (DPLG 2001a: 38) as one of the ways of enabling “interaction between local government and citizens”. This Guide Pack 1 (ibid) gives the following reasons for public participation in the IDP process:

- To ensure that development responds to people’s needs and problems.
- To ensure that municipalities come up with appropriate and sustainable solutions to problems of communities in a municipality. The use of local experience and knowledge in this regard is helpful.
- To entrench a sense of ownership to local communities by making use of local resources and initiatives.
- To promote transparency and accountability of local government, by opening a space for all concerned to negotiate different interests (ibid).

2.2.3 Organisational structures and personnel for drafting the IDP

According to the IDP Guide Pack-Guide II (DPLG 2001b:19) “the following structures/ persons are recommended” to drive the process of drafting the IDP:

- *“The Municipal Manager or IDP Manager*
- *The IDP Steering Committee*
- *The IDP Representative Forum*
- *The Project Task Team”.*

Of these, the IDP Manager, IDP Steering Committee and IDP Representative Forum are required throughout the different phases of the IDP process. According to the IDP Guide Pack Guide II (DPLG 2001b: 21), the sole responsibility of driving the entire IDP

process lies with the Municipal Manager or IDP Manager if there is one. This includes organizing the Process Plan, taking responsibility for the running of the planning process on a daily basis and taking responsibility for the consultants who are used in the drafting of the IDP process (DPLG 2001b: 21). The IDP Steering Committees are seen as “technical working team[s]”, consisting of the heads of departments and senior officials and the treasurer (ibid: 22). It is suggested that relevant portfolio councillors who have an interest can also participate in the IDP steering committee (ibid).

Some of the roles of the IDP Steering Committee identified by the DPLG (2001b: 20) in the preparation activities of the IDP process involve:

- Establishing the IDP Representative Forum and identifying its roles and establishing who should be in this forum.
- Making the public aware of their intention to establish and inviting them to participate in the IDP Representative Forum. Once applications are made, it is the role of this group to choose members of the IDP Representative Forum.
- Identification of groups that may require advocacy assistance in the IDP process. Once these groups are identified, they need to identify representatives that may stand on behalf of these marginalised groups in the Forum.
- Identifying other “resource” people and top level officials that should participate in the IDP process.

IDP Representative Forums serve as the main consultative bodies, established by government, for participation in the IDP process (DPLG 2001b: 23). The IDP Representative Forums consist of participants from different stakeholders, including government, the business sector, community organisations and experts. In particular, the DPLG (2001b: 24) suggests the following players in the IDP Representative Forum:

- *“members of the Executive Committee*
- *Councillors (including Councillors who are members of the District Council and relevant portfolio Councillors)*
- *Traditional Leaders*
- *Ward Committee Chairperson*

- *Heads of Departments/Senior officials*
- *Stakeholder representatives of organised groups*
- *Advocates for unorganised groups*
- *Resource persons*
- *Community Representatives (e.g. RDP Forum)*’.

The same Guide Pack-Guide 11 (DPLG 2001b: 23) states that the role of the IDP Representative Forum is to “*institutionalize and guarantee representative participation in the IDP process*”. The significance of this forum is to ensure that interests of various stakeholders are represented in the IDP process. It also facilitates a way in which debates, negotiations and decision-making can take place among the various stakeholders and local government. This Forum allows communication between various stakeholders and local government. It serves to “monitor the performance of the planning and implementation process” of the IDP. Lastly, it helps to establish and monitor the “key performance indicators in line with the Performance Management Manual” (ibid). IDP Representative Forums are expected to participate at least once in each major stage of drafting the IDP (DPLG 2001a: 39).

The IDP Guide Pack-Guide II (DPLG 2001b: 19) points out that the project task teams are “small operational teams” that are crucial during the project planning phase of the IDP process. The stipulation is that these task teams should consist of representatives from “municipal sector departments and technical people”, different players involved in managing the implementation of the IDPs and, where necessary, those community stakeholders directly affected by the project concerned (DPLG 2001b: 19).

The roles of the project task teams include:

- *“Providing inputs related to the various planning steps*
- *Summarising/digesting/processing inputs from the participation process*
- *Discussions/commenting on inputs from consultants or other specialists*
- *Deciding on drafts*” (DPLG 2001a: 32).

With respect to who should participate in the IDP process, the IDP General Overview (DPLG 2001: 7) states that the following are supposed to participate in the drafting of the IDP:

- The officials of involves all departments, including the treasury and human resources. This is important to ensure that management is guided by the IDP.
- The councillors, who are expected to play a leading role in the IDP process. Their participation in the IDP process means that issues from their communities will be reflected and addressed.
- The municipal stakeholders: community and stakeholder participation is necessary to determine their own needs and priorities. To take into account needs of stakeholder groups that are not well organized, the NGOs or other resource persons are recommended to advocate the interest of these groups.
- Provincial and national sector departments: it is important for various departments to participate in the IDP process, as the IDP provides guidance to departments on how they should allocate resources to local government.

With regards to the participation of Ward Committees in the IDP process, the DPLG (2001b: 24) recommends that the chairperson of the ward committee should participate in the IDP Representative Forum. Ward Committees are expected to play a major role in ensuring participation of citizens in the IDP process (SALGA and GTZ 2006: 69). They can do this by organising IDP participation processes at ward level - also called *“community based planning”* (SALGA and GTZ, 2006: 70). This kind of planning *“requires functional Ward Committees who develop plans for their own wards, and link ward priorities to the integrated development planning of the municipality”* (ibid). Together with councillors and officials, Ward Committees have the responsibility of ensuring that plans of a municipality reflect the needs of its citizens (ibid: 63).

2.2.4 Mechanisms and procedures for public participation in the IDP process

There are no clear rules in the legislation on the exact mechanisms that should be used by municipalities on public participation in the IDP process. The IDP Guide Packs (DPLG 2001), developed by the Department of Provincial and Local Government as a result, provide principles and guidelines that should be followed by municipalities in establishing mechanisms they should use to facilitate public participation in the IDP process. These are derived from the legislation, as indicated in the White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a), and the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000). The principles are thus the standards and values that municipalities must comply with in ensuring public participation in the IDP process. Procedures refer to the processes that must be followed by municipalities in the drafting of the IDP process, while mechanisms deal with the exact methods of participation.

One of the principles of public participation in the IDP process is that public participation must be “institutionalised” (DPLG 2001a:37). The IDP Guide Pack, Guide 1, explains that what this means is that government should establish regulations which provide “clear minimum requirements for participation procedures” in the IDP process (ibid). All municipalities should be guided by these requirements, thereby allowing everyone the right to participate in the IDP process (DPLG 2001a:37). Another principle for public participation in the IDP process is “structured participation” (DPLG 2001a:37). Structured participation relies on the existence of organisations with certain rights in the planning process (ibid: 38). To enable this kind of participation, the Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations (DPLG 2001d: section 15(1)(a)), call for “*consultations ...with locally recognized community organizations, and where appropriate with traditional authorities*”. Where there is no “*appropriate municipal wide structure for community participation*”, municipalities are required to “establish a forum” to promote participation of communities in the IDP process.

Another principle for public participation in the IDP process is that when promoting public participation, municipalities must create “conditions for public participation” and encourage the less privileged members of society to participate in the IDP process (DPLG 2001a: 37). Some of the conditions include informing residents on the entire IDP planning process and on essential “public events” within the IDP process, making use of councillors to make communities aware of IDP processes (DPLG 2001a: 39). Other conditions include making use of proper language, venues and times for IDP meetings; availing IDP documentation to all stakeholders involved in the IDP process, giving stakeholders a chance to make comments on the draft documents (DPLG 2001b: 29-30). The Municipalities are expected to make invitations to “all relevant community and stakeholder organisations” to register for participation in the IDP process (ibid: 29). Representatives of different stakeholders are expected to give feedback to their constituencies on the IDP process (ibid).

The Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) requires certain procedures or processes to be followed in the drafting of the IDP process. In this regard, the process to be followed should be

- “(a) in accordance with a predetermined programme specifying timeframes for the different steps;*
- (b) through appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established in terms of Chapter 4, allow for*
 - (i) the local community to be consulted on its development needs and priorities;*
 - (ii) the local community to participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan; and*
 - (iii) organs of state, including traditional authorities and other role-players, to be identified and consulted on the drafting of the integrated development plan;*
- (c) provide for the identification of all plans and planning requirements binding on the municipality in terms of national and provincial legislation; and*
- (d) be consistent with any other matters that may be prescribed by regulation” (RSA 2000).*

With regards to the exact mechanisms for participation in the IDP process, the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) requires municipalities to establish mechanisms in accordance with the stipulations provided in Chapter 4 of the same Act (RSA 2000). Some of the mechanisms stipulated by the IDP Guide Pack- Guide 1 (DPLG 2001a: 40) are “community and stakeholder meeting(s)”, “sample surveys”, “workshops”; “opinion polls”, “dialogues”, “public discussions”; and “comments”.

2.3 Conclusion

Chapter 2 focused on the legislative and policy framework for public participation in IDPs. It provided a description of the policy framework and legislation that informs public participation in governance in South Africa, generally, and in particular, in the IDP process. It described at length the various mechanisms for public participation and how these can be applied in the IDP process. Even though the legislation is not specific on these mechanisms and guidelines, it sets minimum requirements for municipalities. There are also a number of guidelines set by the Department of Provincial and Local Government to complement available legislation. Even though there are stated minimum requirements for public participation that should apply to all municipalities, municipalities are at liberty to use these guidelines in a manner that suits their municipalities. Information was provided on who should participate in the IDP process. These participants include people and structures.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework for the present study. The chapter firstly provides definitions of public policy and the different stages involved in the policy process. The chapter explores the understandings and conceptualisations of public participation in relation to policy formulation. It explores the arguments for different role-players involved in policy processes and the underlying opportunities and challenges for the public in the policy process as well as ways of promoting public participation in the policy process. It examines the organisational structures and institutional mechanisms used for public participation. The chapter explores the nature of public participation used through these mechanisms and in these structures. Lastly, the chapter gives the criticisms of the concept of public participation and then the conclusion.

3.2 Public policy

Anderson (1997: 9) defines policy as “a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”. He defines public policy as actions “developed by governmental bodies and officials” with the aim of meeting specific objectives (ibid: 9-10). This definition limits development of policy to government and government officials only, with seemingly no role played by others outside of government. In contrast to Anderson’s (1997: 10) definition of public policy, other theorists see policy as a complicated “process” (Jenkins 1978, Rose 1976, and Anderson 1978 cited in Osman 2002: 38), which involves players other than the

government (Osman 2002: 38). Its complex nature involves “multiple issues and actors in which different stages tend to overlap and seldom follow a linear path” (Rivera et al. 2006: 5).

While there is recognition that the policy process is far from being orderly (Rivera et al. 2006: 5; Evans et al. 1995: 2 cited in Moja 2003: 174-175; Hogwood and Gunn 1984: 4 cited in McCool 1995: 169), the complex nature of the policy process has led other theorists to identify various stages to policy for simplification purposes (Anderson 1975: 19 cited in Hill and Hupe 2002: 167-168; McCool 1995: 169).

Different theorists have more or fewer stages, but essentially the policy stages widely recognized in the policy process are agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation (Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 11). Howlett and Ramesh (1995:11) define agenda setting as the stage where “problems come to the attention of governments”. They describe the second stage, called policy formulation, as the stage where government formulates policy alternatives to address the identified problems. The third stage, called the decision-making stage, is where government decides on which “course of action or non-action” they will follow (ibid). The fourth stage of the policy process, called policy implementation, involves the actual implementation of policies (ibid). Lastly, policy evaluation involves the monitoring of policy outcomes. This process requires role-players from government and society at large (ibid). Public participation is important in all stages of the policy process to entrench democracy in the policy process (Yengwa 2004: 12). Sejane (2002: 18) adds that involving citizens in all stages of the policy process will enhance the value of public policies. The present study focussed on public participation in relation to policy formulation. The next section briefly explores policy formulation.

3.2.1 Policy formulation

Policy formulation is perceived as one of the key stages of the policy process (Roux 2006: 126). According to Roux (2006: 126), the significance of this stage is that this is

where government makes decisions on what they will do in response to the problem that has been identified (Roux 2006: 126). Rose (1969 cited in Osman 2002: 38) explains that this is a complicated process that involves multiple role-players. This stage involves designing plans around the action that has been decided upon by government (Roux 2006: 126). It involves setting up goals and objectives of the actions to be taken (ibid: 135). Roux (2006: 136) emphasises that identifying goals and objectives is important to simplify actions that will be taken in response to the problem identified (ibid). The process of setting goals and objectives is followed by prioritization of the objectives (ibid).

Once objectives and priorities have been identified, potential policy options to deal with the identified problem are developed (De Coning and Cloete 2006: 40). This process involves “assessing possible solutions to policy problems” (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 143). This means assessing different options of programmes and strategies to choose from (De Coning and Cloete 2006: 40). The costs and benefits of the different options, including “externalities ... associated with each option” are explored (Cochran and Malone 2005:52). The goal is to get the best possible policy option to deal with the problem at hand (Majone 1975, 1989; Huit 1968; Meltsner, 1972; Dror, 1969; Webber, 1986 cited in Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 144). From the discussion, it is clear that policy formulation involves a lot of decisions. In this regard, Brynard (2006: 165) points out that while policy formulation and decision-making are not the same, decision-making plays a significant role in policy formulation. According to him, policy formulation starts “with a decision and it concludes with a final policy decision” (ibid).

Models used in policy analysis

According to Phillips et al. (2002: 19), most governments involve citizens in policy-making. These players come to the policy-making process to pursue their own “interests” (Rose 1969: xi, cited in Osman 2002:38). According to Phillips et al. (2002: 19), the underlying reasons for involving citizens at the policy-making stage, in particular, are that they provide government with “experiential and technical

knowledge” (Phillips et al. 2002:19). Walter, Aydelotte and Miller (2000 cited in Curtain 2003: 8) add that citizen participation in the policy design stage helps policy makers generate alternatives for dealing with the problem. They explain that citizen involvement plays an educative role for participants, thus empowering them to discuss and formulate policy options. They state that involving citizens at this stage contributes to the acceptance by citizens of the policy option eventually decided upon by government (Walter, Aydelotte and Miller 2000 cited in Curtain 2003: 8).

There are different models used in policy analysis. According to De Coning and Cloete. (2006: 38), one of the models, the group model, can be used where “interest group[s]” participate in the policy process to influence and engage policy-makers, so that they can further their own interests (ibid: 38). In this regard, forums are often used to consolidate input from different interest groups (ibid). De Coning and Cloete (2006: 38-39) sees the use of forums to facilitate engagement with different interest groups as a form of “institutionalized arrangement to ensure that interaction on the particular debate does take place”.

Another model that is used in policy analysis is the “policy network and communities models” (De Coning and Cloete, 2006: 43). This model recognizes that government alone cannot make policy decisions (ibid). It acknowledges the role played by various stakeholders in policy-making in the form of networks, both within and outside of government (Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 122; Bogason and Toonen, 1998; Borzel, 1998, cited in De Coning and Cloete 2006: 43). These networks may be formal or informal (ibid). The group models, policy network and communities models suggest the centrality of public participation in policy formulation. The next section deals with public participation in policy formulation.

3.3 Public participation in policy formulation

3.3.1 Conceptualisation of public participation

The World Bank (cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6) distinguishes between popular participation by the poor and marginalized and stakeholder participation. Popular participation, according to this definition, refers to participation that involves people who are directly affected by the development concerned (World Bank cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6). Stakeholder participation involves the participation of those, such as government officials and NGOs, who have an interest in the outcome of their participation and can actually influence the outcome of the participation process (ibid). These are not people who are necessarily affected by the particular problem. Participation requires the inclusion not only of those with an interest in the outcome but also of those affected by the specific problem. This is an important distinction, as it ensures that those affected by development have a say in the decisions that affect them.

Sithole (2005:2) defines public participation

“as a democratic process of engaging people in thinking, deciding, planning and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives”.

The World Bank (1996 cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6) further defines public participation as

“a process in which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and the resources which affect them”.

The significance of the definition by the World Bank is that it highlights the notion of power with regards to participation in developmental processes. This definition suggests that communities should not only have influence over decisions but should also have “control over” their development. De Villiers (2001: 11) said that for communities to be able to influence and share control over their development will depend on whether or not they have access to power and decision- makers. Arnstein (1969: 216) states that

“citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future”.

She also distinguishes between participation that is just a token and meaningful participation that gives participants power to influence results (ibid: 216). Her argument is that participation without power is a useless process that can end up as a frustration to those without power (ibid). This kind of participation suggests that participants’ ideas have been considered, while in reality it does not lead to any changes in the policy (Arnstein 1969 216). Participation that puts influence by participants at the centre of the process is viewed by Sabela and Reddy (1996 cited in Houston et al. 2001: 220) as “effective participation”. This analysis is important to the present study, as access to power and decision-makers have a bearing on whether marginalised communities will participate or not and, if they do, whether they will participate effectively.

The drive towards public participation in policy processes is closely associated with democratic governance (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 51), with the understanding that it will intensify democracy (Buccus et al. 2007: 6). Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 51) point out that

“participation and pluralist consultation are not simply features of effective policy processes, they are integral elements of democracy itself”.

This agrees with the pluralist ideas to policy, which advocate the involvement of different stakeholders in governance processes (Healey 1997: 241 cited in Taylor 2003: 108).

According to Lemieux (2000) and Jenson (2001 cited in Phillips et al. 2002: 4), the shift towards public participation is due to the change of mindset from vertical to “horizontal governance”. According to Phillips et al. (2004: 4), this kind of governance takes into account the place of “public policy networks, including public, private and voluntary sector actors” in governance processes. Agranoff and Mc Guire (1999: 20) define networks as

“structures of interdependence involving multiple organisations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement”.

In horizontal governance, negotiation and consensus are seen as important factors in the policy process (Agranoff and Mc Guire 1999: 25). Beckenstein et al. (1996: 3 cited in van Rooyen 2003: 129) feel that this approach to governance does not amount to the conventional approach to consultation, which only invites people to make comments in the policy process. It instead takes stakeholder inputs seriously, by integrating them into the decisions of government (ibid).

Reiterating the necessity for public participation in policy-making, Masango (2002: 54) thinks that participation should not be limited to general elections, which only determine who should govern. Instead, he proposes that participation should extend to decision-making, thus giving guidance on the manner in which governance should be carried out (ibid). This view is shared by others (Ngwenya 2002: 4; Sithole 2005: 2 and Putu 2006: 8). Ngwenya (2002: 4) clearly equates participation in the process of making policies to governance. Monique (1997 cited in Putu 2006: 9) describes governance as *“a broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent, and more democratic”.*

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 7) recommend full and effective engagement of citizens in politics and policy-making to strengthen civil society. They suggest the following characteristics of democratic governance:

- *“it exhibits high levels of transparencies and accountability; that is, processes are open, and public officials are held to account for the use of resources and the achievement of outcomes. It provides for increased citizen participation, particularly of marginalized groups, and for decision-making by local bodies that is accessible to citizens*

- *its structures and procedures permit incorporation of the views of a range of societal groups in the formulation of policies (policy pluralism) and the equitable delivery of public services...*
- *it operates within an institutional and legal framework that recognizes and respects human rights and the rule of law” (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 7-8).*

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 8) stress that democratic governance is concerned with understanding the manner in which citizens make use of their power to influence and be watchdogs of government. It is also concerned about whether or not government and its leaders are responsible and responsive to community needs in the manner in which they operate and the management of relations between various “classes of society to” ensure “inclusion, fairness, and equity” (ibid: 8). These are important for the present study, as the study sees issues of ability to influence government institutions by community groups as central for effective participation. The next section looks at the role-players that participate in the policy- making process.

3.3.2 Role - players in public participation

Public participation in policy involves various role-players. One group of role-players includes “elected officials” (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 65). This involves both the executive and legislative members of government (ibid). Colebatch (2002: 25) emphasises that this group of people hold the right to participate in the policy process on the basis of their legal position in government. Howlett and Ramesh (2003: 65) feel that the main responsibility for policy-making resides with the executive. These top government officials use their power to set parameters on how those who seek to influence them should do so (Colebatch 2002: 27). They exercise their power in a discriminatory manner, which makes it hard for some to participate, while allowing others to participate freely (ibid). The concern raised by Colebatch (2002: 27) with regards to this approach to participation is “how people with a little standing in the world of authority can challenge the existing order and participate in the policy process”.

Other role-players in the policy process involve “the appointed officials”, also called “the bureaucracy” (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 67). These are government officials that are specifically employed to take responsibility for public policy processes and their management (ibid). The role of these officials is to offer support to the executive as they carry out their mandate of policy-making (ibid). To be effective in their roles, these officials require capacity and expertise to manage policy processes (ibid).

Other role-players involved in the policy process, identified by Howlett and Ramesh (2003: 71), are business and labour. The private sector possesses certain resources such as capital which gives them an added advantage over other groups participating in the policy process (ibid). Their ability to create jobs or move their capital elsewhere if they are not happy with government policies, gives business power to influence government decisions in their favour (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003: 71). Contrary to business, labour uses its “collective organisation” through trade unions to influence policy-making (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 73). According to Taylor (1989: 1 cited in Howlett, and Ramesh 2003: 73), labour, through trade unions, participate in “political activities” to influence policies that affect them. The “voting clout” of trade unions and the ability of a particular trade union to secure a large membership gives them a better chance of influencing such policies (ibid: 73-74).

Colebatch (2002: 28) identifies experts in the form of “issue network(s) or policy communities” as role-players in the policy process. He feels that the expertise of these groups gives them the right to participate in the policy process. Policy communities are groups of role-players who happen to share special principles and positions concerning problems and policies (Taylor 2003: 104). Groups of experts may be found both inside and outside of government. These groups include “universities”, “professional organisations”, “voluntary bodies, companies and international organisations” (Colebatch 2002: 28). The possession of certain key resources is one of the important features that can secure membership by such groups. These features ensure that government takes such groups seriously in the policy process. Issue networks, on the

other hand, are said to be fluid and have more open membership (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 149). As a result, members in issues networks come and go (ibid). Members in this kind of setup also share varying power bases and resources (Taylor 2003: 104). Hill (1997: 72) stresses that, because of the close links between issue networks and policy communities, it is not important to differentiate between these two concepts, in the event that a theory on policy is created using them.

Even though experts may have different standpoints on how to deal with problems, these experts rely on one another, both those within and outside of government, their expertise and privileged knowledge giving them an added advantage to influence policy towards meeting their own concerns (Colebatch 2002: 28-29). Another advantage of issue networks or policy communities in the policy process is that they do not only respond to problems but can also frame the problem, by proposing ways of addressing that problem (ibid: 29).

Other roleplayers in the policy process identified by Cloete and Meyer (2006: 15) are “leaders of legitimate organizations”, “individual opinion leaders in communities” and “ordinary members of the public” (ibid). “Leaders of legitimate organizations” are people who participate on behalf of various “interests and segments in the community” (ibid). They consist of “civic, cultural, religious, welfare, recreational, youth, business and other organizations” (ibid). As with political party representatives, leaders of community interests and organizations are expected to have constant interaction with their constituencies (ibid).

Cloete and Meyer (2006: 115) suggest that communities can participate in the policy process by making use of “individual opinion leaders in the community” who are said to be respected people in the community. These individuals do not need to hold any position in the community (ibid). According to Cloete and Meyer (2006: 115), individual members of the communities can also participate in the policy process. This can be through attending “public meetings, participation in protest marches, consumer boycotts and other types of direct mass action”.

Other role-players in the policy process, identified by Howlett and Ramesh (2003: 80), are political parties. According to them, even though these role-players may not have direct representation in the “policy subsystems”, they may have an indirect influence in public policy. They can exert their influence in public policy processes through the role they play “in staffing political executives and legislatures” (ibid: 81). They use this role to influence “the decisions taken by these individuals” in the policy process (ibid).

Others who play an important role in the policy process, identified by Colebatch (2002: 33), are what he calls “policy collectivities”. Davids (1964: 3 cited in Colebatch 2002: 22) defines policy collectivities as

“relatively stable aggregations of people from a range of organisations who find themselves thrown together on a continuing basis to address policy questions ‘camped permanently around each source of problems’”.

Some of the attributes of the role-players identified by Colebatch (2002: 34-35) include power, linkages and community. Colebatch (2002: 33) explains that even though these participants may not have recognition through a formal organisation, the linkages between them are recognized in the policy process. The recognition of these linkages may be shown by the formation by government of interdepartmental committees and consultative bodies which encourage support and co-operation between players, both from within and outside of government (ibid). Consultative bodies may consist of participants from the government, the business sector, community organizations and institutions of higher learning such as universities (ibid). These different participants are brought into the policy process to provide space for members from different organizations to engage in the policy process together (ibid). To be effective, Colebatch (2002: 33) recommends formal recognition of such bodies.

One of the attributes of the collectivities identified by Colebatch (2002: 34) is power. In this regard, he is convinced that the policy process is made stronger by the involvement of other participants (ibid: 34). Another attribute of policy collectivities, suggested by Colebatch (2002:35), is ‘community’. His inclination is that this depicts a sign of

reliance and loyalty to one another among those involved in the policy process (Colebatch 2002: 35).

The discussion on the role-players reveals the reality that policy-making is not a level playing field. Colebatch (2002: 36) points at uneven access to the policy process and inequalities amongst those who eventually participate. This process gives some a standing in the policy process, while excluding others. Trotter (2005:6) adds that “political power games are a perpetual feature of the policy-making landscape”. She argues that filters exist to ensure that certain voices are not heard. Stoker (1995 cited in Taylor 2003: 105) concurs with this and states that

“the structure of society still privileges the participation of certain actors who control resources or possess strategic knowledge and the capacity to act on that knowledge”

Stoker (1995 cited in Taylor 2003:105) states that for actors such as business, their “systematic power” ensures that their interests are taken seriously by government without their even trying hard. The next section examines the advantages derived from participating in the policy process.

3.3.3 Advantages of public participation in the policy process

Public participation in the policy process yields benefits for both government and other participants. The following are advantages of public participation:

- Public participation may create an opportunity for policy to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries and ownership of decisions and policies made by government (Glover 2003: 11).
- Public participation can improve effectiveness of policy (Smith 2003: 35), as relevant information is shared in the decision-making process. This can lead to higher quality decisions (ibid).
- Public participation in the policy process can empower and increase the capacity of beneficiaries (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 55) in the policy process. The role of access to information is seen as a key factor favouring this empowerment

(Fischer 1993:168 cited in Sejane 2002:20). Empowered citizens can validate local knowledge and offer alternatives to problems at hand (ibid).

- It can offer citizens opportunities to contribute towards policy- making, (Taylor 2003: 112-113). It is hoped that this will empower them to take charge of development that concerns them (Schurink adapted in Raniga and Simpson, 2002 cited in Marais 2007: 17).
- Marais (2007: 17) is of the opinion that public participation in governance processes will lead to communities that have “an authentic sense of involvement in local government decisions and actions”.
- Taylor and Fransman (2004: 1 cited in Marais 2007: 17) state that public participation would reinforce the “rights and voice” of citizens and their influence in policy-making processes.
- Participation in the policy process can increase “support, legitimacy, transparency, and responsiveness of a particular policy” (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 56). It can promote accountability, “as officials are held to account for the use of resources and the achievement of outcomes” (ibid: 7). In this sense it can promote democratic governance (ibid: 56).
- Public participation can counter public mistrust of the system (Smith 2002: 35).
- Public participation will contribute towards creating opportunities for the formation of new alliances (Taylor 2003: 112).
- Public participation can bring citizens and government closer to one another (Centre for Public Participation, 2007: 5).
- Participation in the policy process will contribute towards conflict resolution in the policy process (Smith 2003: 35). Smith (2003:35) suggests that this would happen as a result of opportunities opened up by this process to “negotiate tradeoffs” and to “reach consensus”.

3.3.4 Structures, mechanisms and processes used for public participation

To put into effect the notion of democratic governance, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 6) advocate that changes be made in the way governments do business, to ensure that contributions by different stakeholders in the policy process are taken into account. Fakir (2006: 4) concurs with this view, suggesting that

“governance is an important feature of local government and therefore, would in its role and function, comprise the complex set of mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise some of their legal rights and obligations” (Fakir, 2006: 4).

The underlying principle of this statement is that citizen participation will not happen by chance. Certain processes and mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure governance in which citizens can express themselves and claim some of their rights. This requires the restructuring of structures and the functioning of government institutions to accommodate public participation.

Masango (2002: 60) suggests a number of ways to promote what he calls “effective public participation” in the policy process. These are

“cultivating a culture of participation, public education, organizing for participation, capacity building for participation, reforming attitudes towards participation, utilizing appropriate methods of participation and publicizing local government affairs” (Masango 2002: 60).

With regards to cultivating the culture of participation, Almond and Verba (1989: 3 cited in Masango 2002: 60-61) recommend enabling legislation to ensure that ordinary people are able to participate in policy-making. Midgely et al. (1986: 9 cited in Masango 2002: 61) felt that legislation can ensure that policy-making is not only in the hands of a few people such as members of political parties and groups of society that have access to resources.

A further way of promoting public participation in the policy process advocated by Masango (2002: 62) is “organising for participation”. According to him, establishing the tradition of participation requires participation of communities in the state processes. For this purpose, community participation must be planned for and thus be done in a “mainly pro-active manner” (ibid). Masango (2002: 62) highlights the need for the establishment of structures and forums around local government matters to ensure that policy- making is brought closer to communities. He feels that these fora should seek to address the challenges facing communities instead of “power struggles” and “political motives” (ibid). While he recommends the establishment of new structures to facilitate interaction between communities and government, he also encourages the use of existing community groups in society (ibid). This idea is supported by Vaughan, Xaba and Associates (2004: 2), who stress that policy makers must capitalize on the strengths of these structures (ibid).

Masango (2002: 3) argues for the use of proper methods of increasing participation that would allow influence by average citizens in the policy process. Atkinson (1992:19-23; Rosener 1978:118-121 cited in Masango 2002: 63) suggests methods such as “radio and television talk shows, charrete, citizen representation in policy-making bodies, referenda, and questionnaire surveys”. Glover (2003: 11) adds other methods of participation such as citizens’ juries, consensus conferences and public enquiries”. She argues that these methods are “inclusive, deliberative and participatory” (ibid).

Masango (2002: 62) points out that the technical language that is often used in local government processes impacts on the ability of marginalised people to participate effectively. In this regard, de Villiers (2001: 39) states

Clearly, the languages in which original documents are generated and the choice of translations impact on the ability of citizens to understand and thereby make use of the political processes available to them. This is compounded by high illiteracy rates and the often extremely complicated language used in government publications, particularly legislation.

Masango (2002: 62) favours capacity building to improve the public's understanding of governance processes and to ensure that they participate effectively in governance processes. According to Cuthill and Fien (2005: 67), capacity building for communities involves "working with communities". This, to them, involves "support, and enhances the existing ability, energy and knowledge of citizens". Arnstein (1969: 220) argues that the ability of citizens to influence decisions depends on the "quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their priorities; and the extent to which the community has been organised to press those priorities". Cuthill and Fien (2005: 63) place the responsibility for capacitating citizens with local government. Their argument is that the position of local government in relation to citizens makes them the right institution to capacitate citizens to ensure that they participate meaningfully in local government processes (Cuthill and Fien 2005: 63). Midgely et al. (1986: 32 cited in Masango 2002: 62), however, felt that both government officials and ordinary citizens need to be capacitated on governance processes.

Lastly, Masango (2002: 63) stresses the importance of public awareness of matters related to local government in promoting public participation in policy-making. Glover (2003: 8) emphasised that information sharing in the policy process is a requirement to ensure "effective and inclusive public participation". She stressed that this is merely one movement amongst other important ones (ibid). She reiterates the importance of the nature and ways in which information is provided (ibid). She also suggests the use of "appropriate and accessible" methods of providing information. This involves information on the contributions made by the public in the policy process (ibid). Below is a brief discussion of the types of participation, using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. This will be used to analyse the nature of participation and quality of participation in the present study.

3.3.5 Nature of participation

It is not enough to examine the mechanisms used for public participation without also examining the nature and quality of their participation by members of the public in the policy process. This is based on recognition that certain mechanisms for public participation may limit the ability of participants to influence decisions (Arnstein 1969). Arnstein recommended “a typology of eight levels of participation” which she arranged in a hierarchy (ibid: 217). Through the ladder of participation, Arnstein (1969: 217) used the different types of participation to illustrate the level of influence citizens have in decision-making. The eight levels of participation - ranging from the bottom are “(1) manipulation”, “(2) therapy”, “(3) informing”, “(4) consultation”, “(5) placation”, “(6) partnership”, “(7) delegated power”, and “(8) citizen control” (ibid).

The first two rungs of the ladder, manipulation and therapy, suggest “levels of non-participation” (ibid: 217). These types of participation fall short of “genuine participation” (Arnstein 1969: 217). According to Arnstein (1969: 217), these levels of participation are not really about enabling people to participate, but about enabling powerholders to “educate” or “cure” the participants.

In the first level of participation, in particular, her argument is that government allows citizens to participate in committees in an advisory role, to endorse government’s decisions (ibid: 218). This suggests that citizens have no power to influence decisions (ibid). Citizens have no say in setting the agenda or in defining their development (ibid). The mechanisms used for participation at this level consist of participatory techniques that are meant to gather information, to promote the public image of the government and garner support from the public on a particular policy or programme (ibid: 218). With regards to “therapy”, government engages participants in participation activities under the charade of participation (ibid: 218). The focus of participation is to “cure” participants (ibid: 218). Sometimes participation can be used by government to promote its own values and agendas (ibid: 219). For this reason, Arnstein (1969: 218) argues that this form of participation is egotistical and is underpinned by deceit.

Above this category are “degrees of tokenism”, with “informing and ... consultation” and “placation” described as types of participation (Arnstein, 1969: 217). During “informing”, government tends to use participation to inform participants, rather than to engage them (ibid: 219). Opportunities for feedback are limited, with participants lacking power to influence negotiations (ibid). Some of the mechanisms used for participation include “news media, pamphlets, posters and responses to enquiries” (ibid). Under “consultation” there is no guarantee that inputs by citizens will yield any outcomes by taking into account their inputs when making decisions (ibid). The methods of participation often used under this type of participation include techniques such as “attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings, and public hearings” (ibid: 219). “Placation” refers to an advanced level of “tokenism” (ibid: 217). It makes room for the less-resourced people to make suggestions, but ensures that the power to make decisions remains with those in power (ibid). This means that participation might not result in any change in the policy. The mechanisms used under this type of participation may allow for representation of different stakeholders and thus access to those in power (Arnstein 1969: 220). Citizens play only an advisory role, with limited power (ibid).

The top rungs of the ladder, partnership, delegated power and citizen control, express “levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout” (ibid:3). Deliberating on this, Arnstein (1969: 217) suggests that at level (6), citizens can “negotiate and engage in trade-offs” with those in power. At rungs (7) and (8), citizens are allowed to make decisions and have “full managerial power” (ibid). However, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 55) caution against the use of the types of participation to judge the genuineness of participation. Their inclination is that the various types of participation may be useful for various purposes.

3.3.6 Challenges of public participation in the policy process

While there are benefits to participation in the policy process, public participation can also bring with it some challenges. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 78) are of the opinion that lack of capacity has an impact on the “quality of participation of a given group”. A

related issue highlighted by Ngwenya (2002: 2), is “uneven distribution of capacity”. This involves “uneven availability of information and means for participation” (ibid). The Centre for Public Participation (CPP) (2007: 6) cautioned that the financial resources and the power of the privileged and influential possessed by some groups may undermine participation by under-resourced participants. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 78) have the same view.

Related to this is lack of understanding by communities of their roles in governance processes (CPP 2007: 6; Ngwenya 2002: 2). This is exacerbated by the complex nature of policy processes (Ngwenya 2002: 2). The CPP (2007:6) is convinced that lack of understanding of governance processes further perpetuates the marginalization of disadvantaged groups as they find it hard to communicate their views. This reduces their chances of being heard (ibid). A related factor that impedes the ability of the public to participate is language (Trotter 2005: 6; Ngwenya 2002: 2).

Another concern with public participation, raised by Rubenstein (1995: 72 cited in Davids 2005: 28), is that structures established for public participation in the policy process may lead to unnecessary competition and conflict between existing local structures and those established for public participation. Further considerations of public participation in policy processes highlighted by Khosa (2000: 229 cited in Davids 2005:28), are:

- *“Participation can be time - consuming and therefore costly;...*
- *Participation can bring latent conflicts to the surface;*
- *Participatory initiatives may not be broad enough and this may fuel existing perceptions that participatory initiatives are elitist in that only a small segment of the community is participating”.*

Trotter (2005: 6) is of the opinion that “political power games”, which ensure that certain people are not heard in policy processes are a challenge to public participation. The CPP (2007: 6) adds corruption as another factor that hinders public participation in

governance processes. The next section discusses the structures, mechanisms and processes used to facilitate and promote public participation in policy formulation.

3.3.7 Criticism of public participation in the policy process

One of the criticisms of participation in the policy is that it can create the opposite of its intention, which is to promote democracy. Instead, it may end up appeasing rather than liberating (Popple 1995 cited in Taylor 2003: 105). This is contrary to the sentiments of “self- government” suggested by Mayekiso (1996: 67 cited in Buhlungu 2004: 6). Buhlungu (2004: 6) stated that this form of government guaranteed the participation of ordinary people in community processes. Lando (1999: 113) raises a related critique of public participation, suggesting that government officials can become “an inhibitor” of public participation. This is when public officials “anticipate problems and formulate policy solutions for the public to rubber stamp”, instead of engaging them. According to him, the perception of these officials is that it is their role to invent “the best solution” (Lando 1999: 113).

Another criticism of public participation in the policy process is that it tends to be organised within the framework and terms of government (Popple 1995, cited in Taylor 2003:105). Pithouse (2006: 24) thinks that this approach to policy formulation tends to be a “technocratic engagement with state power on the terms of state power”. This in essence suggests that the state decides on the kind of participation, how much participation is necessary and how participation is going to happen. Pithouse (2006: 25) stresses that this “technocratic” approach to policy may lead to the marginalisation and demobilisation of ordinary people in policy processes.

Peter (1998: 25) points out that government may impose order in public participation as a way of preventing too much participation. Colebatch (2002: 31) adds that, in such instances, government’s main concern is about “making organized activity stable and predictable”, rather than deepening participation. Peter (1998: 25) calls this phenomenon “gate-keeping”. By limiting the time for participation, Peter (1998: 25) feels that this

would appeal to those involved in the participation process to fast-track the participation process, thus limiting the extent of public participation in decisions.

Another criticism of public participation in the policy process is that it may reinforce the current inequalities in society. Viera da Curna and Valeria Junho Pena (cited in Beyer, Peterson and Sharma 2003: 11), state that this may result where participation instead benefits those who already have power, at the expense of those without, by assigning “costs and benefits in accordance to the pre-existing local distribution of power”. Taylor (2003: 105) adds that even though participation may seek to confront the current trends of domination by some people over others, this process may be used as a way of entrenching these power inequalities. Trotter (2005: 6) wrote that public participation can affect marginalised members of communities. Citing Habib et al. (2005), Trotter (2005: 6) points out that the fact that these groups have few resources means that they are also not likely to be well organised.

3.4 Conclusion

Chapter 3 examined the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. In describing the policy process, it discussed the different stages involved in the policy process. It acknowledged that using stages to describe the policy process has limitations. For one, this approach to policy does not take into account the realities and complexities involved in the policy process, which make it impossible to have the neat and orderly stages suggested by this approach to policy. For simplicity purposes however, the study adopted this approach to policy, paying attention to the formulation stage of policy.

The chapter investigated public participation and theories involved in public participation. In so doing, it focused on the definitions of public participation, highlighting the importance of involving affected parties in the policy process. This was linked to issues of power in the policy process, suggesting that participation without power in the policy process is meaningless. The chapter also discussed public participation and democratic governance, with the view that public participation in

policy processes is about democracy. The chapter then looked at the different role-players that should be involved in the policy process. It concluded that public participation is not a level playing field, as it provides a platform for some role-players to participate while others have to find ways of participating in the policy process. In this regard, policy is seen as a process that is inclusive and exclusive of other groups of people. It tends to be biased towards those with power and resources, while precluding those without resources to trade. It explored advantages and challenges to public participation in the policy process.

Chapter 3 also discussed ways of promoting public participation in the policy process within the context of democratic governance. It postulated that it is not enough to focus only on mechanisms to facilitate public participation, but also on the nature of that participation. In this regard, the theory by Arnstein (1969), on the ladder of participation, was used. In particular, this theory suggests that the lower forms of participation do not provide real influence by the public in the policy process. Lastly, a critical analysis of the concept of public participation was carried out. One of the key critiques of this concept was that it might perpetuate the existing power dynamics in the policy process.

Chapter 4

Findings and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study. The aim of this study was to analyse the concept of public participation and critically examine how it is interpreted by municipalities in the IDP process in selected provinces of South Africa. In presenting the findings and the analysis, the study sought to answer the following key questions:

- What are the various theories and conceptions of public participation in relation to IDPs by local municipalities?
- What are the structures, mechanisms and processes to promote public participation in the IDP process?
- What are the experiences and challenges of public participation in the IDP processes in selected provinces in South Africa?
- What is the nature of public participation in the IDP process?

The study relied mainly on findings of secondary studies conducted in selected municipalities based in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces. In particular, the study made use of written sources of data, such as journals, articles, academic books, internet sources, government legislation around public participation and the IDP processes. It made use of research and theses concerning public participation in the IDP process in South Africa and also IDP documents from selected municipalities.

4.2 Public participation in policy formulation

4.2.1 Conceptualisation of public participation

When defining public participation, the World Bank (cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6) differentiates between participation by those who are affected by development (popular participation) and those with an interest in the outcome of participation (stakeholders). When discussing public participation, municipalities in this study were vague with regards to who exactly is the public. Some of the terms that were used by municipalities include “citizens and communities” (City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 35); “communities and sectors” (Stellenbosch Municipality 2002: 26); “communities and stakeholder organisations” (Buffalo City 2002: 21). An emerging understanding from these terms is that the public consists of communities and other stakeholders. This agrees with the World Bank’s conceptualisation of who the public is, as described above.

The underlying principle of Sithole (2005: 2), when defining public participation, is that people must be involved in defining their development. Very few municipalities in this study gave their definition of what public participation is. Municipalities instead articulated their commitment towards the idea and practice of participation. One of the main themes drawn from these articulations is the commitment towards involving communities in the decision-making processes of their municipalities. In this connection, the eThekweni Metro, in their Purpose Statement, stipulates:

“... the active involvement of citizens is fundamental to achieving our outcome of improving people’s quality of life. For without City Stakeholders themselves taking action in a new enabling environment provided by the Council, the underlying goal of the entire governance project would never be realized” (Moodley 2007: 4).

Speaking about community participation, the Stellenbosch Municipality (2007: 26) states:

“Community participation focuses on sharing responsibility for service delivery with communities, empowering communities and, as required by law, moving government to consult and involve communities in the running of its affairs”.

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 51) associates public participation with democratic governance. The understanding is that public participation will intensify democracy (Buccus et al. 2007: 6). One of the overriding themes that emerged from municipalities in this study associates public participation with democracy and governance. In this regard, the Stellenbosch Municipality (2007: 26) states that the

“Stellenbosch Municipality, in support of the principles of good governance, subscribes to the comprehensive definition of community participation which aims to strengthen democracy through mechanisms such as Ward Committees to inform council decisions”

Along with commitment to democratic governance, public participation is seen by municipalities as key to ensuring that municipalities are responsive to the needs of communities. Integrated Development Plans are perceived as essential to ensure responsiveness by municipalities.

“The purpose of [community involvement in the IDP process] was to ensure that the IDP addresses relevant issues and facilitates the implementation of focussed activities to address real priorities” (Buffalo City 2002: 21).

The City of Johannesburg (2006/11: 35) concurs with this view.

“The City’s commitment is to make public participation an integral part of the planning, budgeting and service delivery processes, and to ensure sensitivity and responsiveness to community needs”.

Municipalities in this study clearly articulated their commitment to public participation. It can be argued that they have captured the mandate from central government to promote democratic governance and are seeking to create an environment that promotes “the culture of participation”, as suggested by Masango (2002: 62).

4.2.2 Organisational structures and mechanisms to facilitate public participation in the IDP process

To put into effect the notion of democratic governance, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 6) recommend that changes be made in the way governments do their business to ensure that contributions by different stakeholders in the policy process are taken into account (ibid). Fakir (2006: 4) adds that citizen participation in governance will not happen by chance. It requires certain structures, processes and mechanisms to be put in place to facilitate public participation in local governance matters.

Some of the ways suggested by Masango (2002: 60), on how to promote what he calls “effective public participation” in the policy process, have been used to discuss the structures, mechanisms and other processes used by the municipalities studied to facilitate public participation. These are

“... organizing for participation, capacity building, ... utilizing appropriate methods of participation, and publicizing local government affairs” (ibid).

The experiences of municipalities, both in terms of the challenges and benefits of public participation, were discussed.

Organisational structures for public participation in the IDP process

One of the ways of promoting public participation in the policy process suggested by Masango (2002: 62) is “organising for participation”. Other ways suggested by Masango (2002: 62) are putting in place structures and forums around local government matters, to ensure that policy- making is brought closer to communities.

To facilitate the drafting of IDPs, the municipalities investigated employed IDP Managers, IDP Steering Committees and Task Teams. For the purpose of public participation in the IDP process, two structures were used by the municipalities. These are Ward Committees and IDP Representative Forums. Ward Committees were mainly used at local community level, while IDP Representative Forums were used as the main structures for public participation throughout the IDP process. This section discusses

public participation in the IDP process through Ward Committees and in the IDP Representative Forums. It also discusses other factors such as political parties that hampered public participation in the IDP process.

- **Ward Committees**

South African legislation requires that Ward Committees should be the main structures for public participation in local government issues (RSA 1998). They have a particular role in the IDP process to enable “communities in geographical areas” to participate in the IDP process (DPLG 2001a: 38). They can do this by organising IDP participation processes at ward level - also called “community - based planning” (SALGA and GTZ 2006: 70). This kind of planning “*requires functional Ward Committees who develop plans for their own wards, and link ward priorities to the integrated development planning of the municipality*” (ibid).

There is, however, little indication in this study that Ward Committees were used extensively as the main structures for public participation at local community level, particularly during the early years of the IDP process. There are a number of reasons for this. Some municipalities established Ward Committees long after the drafting of the initial IDPs. In the Western Cape province, for example, Davids (2005: 71) pointed out that Ward Committees were only established after June 2003. In Buffalo City Municipality, Ward Committees were only established after the IDP process was completed (Niegaardt 2002: 97). This is not an isolated problem with indications that even though a considerable number of municipalities had Ward Committees established by late 2004, there were still some areas which did not have Ward Committees (DPLG 2004 cited in Piper and Chanza 2007: 19).

For some areas, however, Ward Committees and sub-councils were used for public participation at local level. In this regard, van Huyssteen (2005: 22) states that, in the City of Tshwane,

“public participation in the City’s IDP is largely ward-based”.... It “happens through Ward Committees and ward meetings with councillors playing key roles, as well as individuals or other stakeholders in the City”.

In areas that did not use Ward Committees, there were other forums, such as Area Development Forums in Stellenbosch (Stellenbosch Municipality 2007: 26; Davids 2005: 71) and Development Forums in Cape Town (Mac Kay 2004: 81-82). Some municipalities that were initially without Ward Committees, such as the Stellenbosch Municipality (2007: 26) and the City of Tshwane (van Huyssteen 2005: 22), have now started using Ward Committees as forums for participation in the IDP process.

Challenges of public participation through Ward Committees in the IDP process

Public participation through Ward Committees is faced with challenges. For those municipalities that had dysfunctional or no Ward Committees, IDP Representative Forums became the main structures for public participation in the IDP process (Todes 2002: 16; Niegaard 2002: 97). The implication is that communities in those municipalities were not given a fair chance in their geographic areas to engage meaningfully in the drafting of the IDPs, as anticipated by Masango (2002: 62). This made it difficult for ward councillors and members of the Ward Committees to participate meaningfully in IDP and budget processes (Yusuf 2004: 11).

While Ward Committees are designed to be the main structures for public participation areas in local governance (RSA 1998a), in certain areas they were neglected as structures for participation in the IDP process. Instead, municipalities established other structures specifically for public participation in the IDP process. This led to unnecessary tensions and competition between Ward Committees and those established mainly for public participation in the IDP. For example, in Boland District Municipality, the DPLG (2001/2002: 18) revealed that

“...the ward structures were by-passed by forming “Area Forums” which had the negative result of non-cooperation by Ward Councillors who had been denied their role”.

The other threat to public participation with respect to Ward Committees highlighted by Hicks (2003: 5), is that Ward Committees tend to compete with other structures that are already in place, such as Development Committees and Traditional Authorities. The co-existence of these different structures in communities often leads to unnecessary tensions (ibid). In the Ugu District Municipality, it is stated that

“Since the establishment of Ward Committees is often seen as threatening by traditional authorities, only a few such structures had been established and could engage with the IDP processes in rural areas” (Todes 2002: 17).

Rubenstein (1995: 72 cited in Davids 2005: 28), felt that public participation in local government can produce “alternative power bases”.

The success of public participation in any policy process is that participants must have power to influence decisions and be in charge of their development, including decision-making processes about that development (World Bank 1996 cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6). Arnstein (1969: 216) states that participation without power is a useless process that can end up as a frustration to those without power. One major challenge with regards to public participation through Ward Committees is that these committees are only advisory bodies and are designed to support the Ward Councillor and inform the Council of the needs at community level (RSA 1998b). Their participation in local governance thus cannot guarantee that the issues they discuss will be decided upon by municipalities. This resulted in IDPs that did not reflect the outcomes of the discussions that took place in some wards (Buccus et al. 2007: 18).

“... the ward level reflection on the IDP – where it does happen – is not integrated into the IDP at municipal or district level. Hence in Ilembe and Mgungundlovu it was felt that the IDP did not reflect the priorities of the community” (ibid).

Their lack of power to influence decisions in local governance thus undermines their ability to be instruments of effective public participation in the IDP process.

Benefits of Ward Committees and public participation in the IDP process

There is very little evidence revealed by this study that point to the benefits of participation in Ward Committees. Instead, other ward level-based structures seem to

have played a more positive role in municipalities such as the Ugu District Municipality (DPLG 2001/2002: 18), by accommodating various local structures in the IDP process.

“In Ugu District ward-level ‘Development Committees’ were used which allowed Ward Councillors to play their role, while encouraging other groups like Traditional Leaders and civil society to join the process” (ibid).

In Khayelitsha, which is based in the Ucity of Cape Town, the use of local structures that represent communities at ward level seemed to have had a more positive impact on the participation of communities in the IDP process (Mac Kay 2004: 84). In this municipality, meetings that bring together representatives of different stakeholders at local level were held before IDP public meetings (ibid). By creating a platform for community representatives to deliberate on their issues before public meetings, these structures resulted in unity concerning the goals of these community structures (ibid).

Another benefit that was derived in other local structures that were established for participation in the IDP process is that, in some municipalities, these structures (planning zone forums in the City of Tshwane) were open to participation by both individuals and organisations, unlike Ward Committees, which cater for individuals only (Houston 2001: 241). They also did not carry the baggage of political alignment that Ward Committees often carry (ibid). One positive feature of participation in the planning zone forums, highlighted in the study by Houston (2001: 242), is that

“it allowed anybody, not only local government officials, or elected representatives, to express an opinion on any subject, to be heard, and the comments of others to be added to achieve a balanced insight into the real needs of the community”.

This platform thus created a condition for the promotion of democratic governance, as encouraged by the South African government, where people have a say in the decisions that affect them. The findings of the present study suggest that Ward Committees did not really promote public participation in the IDP process. Rather, planning that involved other local structures was more fruitful in enabling public participation and promoting democratic governance in the IDP process.

- **IDP Representative Forums**

IDP Representative Forums were used by the relevant municipalities as the main structures for public participation in the IDP process. To this effect, Achmat (2002: ii) stated, that in the Breede Valley,

“the IDP Representative Forum would then be the main point of contact between the municipality and civil society in the ongoing IDP process. It would be their responsibility to return to the area forums for mandates and approval of plans and with information on how municipal decisions, budgets, policy and programmes”.

In areas where IDP Representative Forums were not established, municipalities made use of other consultative structures. The City of Tshwane, for example, had

“a community participation or consultation structure that is representative of all stakeholders within the constituent communities to serve as a conduit for community input in the formulation of IDPs and the effective execution thereof (City Council of Pretoria 1999: 83-84 cited in Houston et al. 2001: 226).

Representatives from different stakeholders that exist in municipalities participated in IDP Representative Forums. These included people from government, community representatives, businessmen, councillors and traditional leaders. For example, in Makana Municipality, the IDP Representative Forum was composed of

“all government departments in Grahamstown, NGOs, CBOs, the business community, ward/community committees, councillors, senior management of the municipality and the heads of municipal departments” (Nkuhlu, 2005 pers.comm cited in Alebisou 2005: 89).

With regards to the role-players from government, both elected officials and the bureaucracy participated in the IDP Representative Forums. This ranged from top elected officials to members of the top management in municipalities. This point is well illustrated in the case of Ugu District Municipality.

“Local municipal managers, mayors and some councillors were also part of the Ugu’s IDP Representative Forum, and attended several planning events, including the important strategies and alignment workshops, which are seen as key co-ordinating events” (Todes 2002: 16).

The participation of councillors, particularly ward councillors, in the IDP Representative Forums is significant, as these elected officials participate in the IDP process on behalf of their communities (DPLG 2001: 7). Their participation in the IDP Representative Forums ensures that the interests of their communities feature in the IDP of a particular municipality. Their capacity to participate in the IDP process is important, both in terms of understanding the IDP process and in terms of the resources to participate. This study found that, in some municipalities, councillors often lacked capacity to participate in the IDP process, thus limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to the IDP process. In this regard, a number of them did not understand the IDP process and sometimes failed to consult with their communities on the IDP process, as recommended by the DPLG (2001b: 17). An observation made by Mac Kay (2004: 69) in the City of Cape Town was that there was a

“mode of non-consultation or minimum interaction between communities and Council members. Council members, be it the ward or the proportional representative, did not stimulate debate in order to encourage communities to speak or to ask follow-up questions”.

Williams (2006: 210) revealed that

“... councillors and officials failed to explain: the current state of service delivery to communities; the purpose of the IDP; how the IDP would evolve; the benefits of the IDP to communities and the consequences if they did not participate in statutory planning process”.

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 78) conclude that lack of capacity has an impact on the quality of participation of a given group”.

Theory on policy-making suggests that negotiations are an integral part of policy formulation (Colebatch 2002: 25). IDP Representative Forums are means of negotiating the plans of municipalities (DPLG 2001b: 23). The present study revealed that some ward councillors lacked the capacity to negotiate and failed to represent the interests of their constituencies in the IDP process. In a study conducted by Davids (2005: 83) in Stellenbosch, members of one ward committee raised concerns about their ward councillor, suggesting that she lacked capacity to participate effectively in the IDP process.

“We get along with our councillor very well, but it seems that she needs some more training in matters such as negotiation. Better capacity training will enable her to stand her ground in council meetings, thus she would be able to voice our needs” (ibid).

The statement by the Ward Committee members quoted by Davids (2005: 83) suggests that without capacity to negotiate by community representatives, communities may never be able to influence the IDP process to their advantage.

Over and above ward councillors, communities were represented in the IDP Representative Forums by other representatives from community groups. This study has however shown that the experience of community representatives in these forums was negative, with a number of challenges. One of the challenges is associated with the nature of these structures, which requires the participation of “recognised structures” (Hicks, 2003: 5). In essence, this requirement excludes community groups that are less organised and individuals who might have an interest in participating (ibid). This notion has been criticised by writers such as Habib et al. (2002 cited in Trotter 2005: 6), who point out that it is not likely that community groups with fewer resources will be well organised.

The findings of this study concur with Habib’s view (2002 cited in Trotter 2005: 6) which highlights a number of problems with the level of organising among community structures. Some municipalities had no community structures (Todes 2002: 38), while others had structures that were not organized (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 14), and

this limited their participation in the IDP Representative Forums. Concurring with this view, Williams (2006: 210), writing about the Unicity of Cape Town, states that

“Other factors detracting from effective community participation in Cape Town relate to the fact that local communities are not well organised or are simply non-existent and, as a consequence, are often represented by so-called leaders without community consent”.

The finding by Williams (2006: 210) reveals lack of voice by communities and exclusion in the IDP process, as community representatives participated without a mandate and hence could not account to communities. This practice undermines the principles of democratic governance, which promote “accountability” and “inclusion” in the policy process (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 8). Lack of well-functioning or total absence of community structures resulted in further challenges such as the weakening of the credibility of participation in municipalities such as Gauteng (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 14).

It can be argued that the insistence on participation through “recognized groups” in the IDP Representative Forums hindered participation, particularly of marginalised groups. This study has found that municipalities failed to put in place deliberate measures that would ensure the participation in the IDP process of marginalised groups that were less organised.

“Disadvantaged groups were only represented to the extent that they were organized (e.g. women, youth, disabled, but not unemployed or specific poverty groups, aged, etc.). No special efforts seem to have been made to ensure that other, non-organised groups would be represented by competent advocates” (DPLG 2001/2002: 19).

This is in violation of the legislative requirements of participation in South Africa, which urges municipalities to encourage the participation of marginalised groups in local government processes (RSA 2000). This violates the principles of democratic governance promoted by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 7), which suggest that

democratic governance will “provide for increased participation, particularly of marginalised groups”.

As for the business sector, Howlett and Ramesh (2003: 71), was of the opinion that these role-players use resources such as capital to influence the policy- making process (ibid). While there are indications that, in some municipalities, the business sector participated in the IDP process, it is clear that their attendance in the IDP Representative Forums was very limited. In the Ugu District Municipality, for example, it is suggested that representatives from the business sector frequently absented themselves from IDP Representative Forum meetings (Todes 2002: 19). This is evidenced elsewhere, with the DPLG (2001/2002: 19) pointing out that

“representation of civil society organisations and socioeconomic strata has been reasonably representative in most municipalities, with the exception of the business sector (including mining, farming etc... It is assumed that the IDP representative structures are not the appropriate participation mechanisms for business (too time-consuming and non-specific)”.

However, even with poor attendance at the IDP meetings, suggestions are that this group of people was able to use their power to influence decisions favouring their interests. In the Ugu District Municipality, for example, it is suggested that some of the projects that were identified showed a strong bias towards big business (Todes 2002: 30).

“The plan includes a few large - scale tourism projects (e.g. a game reserve, theme park, small craft harbour/beach resort) which are supported by the KZN Tourism authority, and which would inevitably be developed on a partnership basis with the private sector” (ibid).

More evidence from this municipality shows that

“Stronger links were forged with business, who appear to be satisfied with the outcome of the process, which they see as consistent with their own interests in maintaining infrastructure, in expanding market, and a more skilled population (Todes 2002: 33)

In the eThekweni Municipality the one group that had much influence in the IDP process was a coalition of big business and key ANC people (Ballard et al. 2007: 281-282).

“A coalition of senior officials and councillors committed to the value of big projects for the city and with close informal ties to big business, had preemptively secured a developmental path for the city” (ibid).

Over and above the actual experiences of the role-players that participated in the IDP Representative Forums, the IDP Representative Forums, as structures of participation, presented challenges and benefits for public participation in this study. The next section discusses these challenges and benefits.

Challenges of the IDP Representative Forums

A problem is that IDP Representative Forums lacked decision-making powers which lie with the Council. This matter is clearly illustrated in the study by Todes (2002: 19) in the Ugu District Municipality. Todes (2002:19) revealed that “... ultimately the participatory process was a consultative one, with final decisions made by the council itself”. Arnstein (1969: 216) calls this kind of participation a token, as opposed to real engagement that gives participants power to influence results.

A related matter to lack of decision-making powers in the IDP Representative Forums is the nature of the meetings. These meetings often failed to deliver on expectations of participants as they were conducted in a manner that would not encourage debate and discussion. In this respect, Todes (2002: 19) states that

“It is useful to note that for the most part, aside from the prioritisation meeting, the representative forum was not well attended, particularly by business and NGOs. It tended to function more as a space for dissemination of information, and reactions to presentations, rather than an interactive arena”.

The DPLG (2001/2002: 19) agreed that *“the way the Representative Forum meetings were organised and facilitated did not lend itself to active participation”.*

According to Arnstein (1969: 216), public participation is about influence by those who were previously excluded from the governance processes. Looking at the challenges associated with IDP Representative Forums, it can be concluded that meaningful participation in the IDP Representative Forums, where citizens can influence decisions, was hindered.

Benefits of the IDP Representative Forums

While public participation in the policy process had challenges, there were also benefits, one of the benefits being that it promoted democratic governance in the IDP process. According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 56), some of the principles of democratic governance include “support, legitimacy, transparency, and responsiveness of a particular policy”. In this regard, the DPLG (2001/2002: 19) stated that, despite the fact that IDP Representative Forums did not encourage “active participation, they helped to ensure transparency and accountability”.

Smith (2003: 35) felt that public participation will contribute to conflict resolution and consensus in the policy process. The IDP Representative Forum is a space for debate and dialogue, bringing together different stakeholders from different contexts (DPLG 2001/2002: 17). Conflict in such spaces is therefore inevitable. Further, Glover (2003: 11) thought that public participation in policy processes can lead to ownership of policy. This study showed that, in some municipalities, IDP Representative Forums managed to bring some agreement amongst stakeholders participating in the IDP process. In the study by Niegaard (2002: 98) in Buffalo City Municipality, it is pointed out that participation by the different stakeholders in the IDP Representative Forums led to

“new ideas, built consensus and support for the planning process itself, and ensured broader ownership of the tangible outcomes of the planning process”.

From this statement, it is clear that public participation through these structures also led to ownership of the outcomes of the IDP process.

Another benefit of public participation in the policy process, identified by Taylor (2003: 112), is that it would create opportunities for the formation of new alliances. In Breede

Valley, participation in the IDP Representative Forum brought together groups of communities that would otherwise not work together, farmers and farm workers (Achmat 2002: 6), thus promoting unity in the community. This is shared in the Ugu District Municipality.

“The IDP has managed to incorporate potentially conflicting parties, such as traditional authorities, and competing political parties, and to bring them together towards a common end” (Todes 2002: 35).

It is also thought that public participation can offer citizens opportunities to input into policy-making, thus giving them a voice in the policy process (Taylor 2003: 112). In the Breede Valley Municipality, for example, participants were able to articulate on who should represent them in the IDP Representative Forum. This came to be as a result of *“area forum workshops [that] were held for the stakeholders to identify their needs and to elect representatives for the IDP Representative Forum”*. In other words, it can be argued that public participation gave communities an opportunity to determine for themselves who should represent them in the IDP Representative Forum.

The next section looks at role-players that participated in the IDP process other than the structures that were designed specifically for IDPs.

- **Factors hampering public participation in the IDP process**

Over and above their participation through formal structures of public participation, other role-players participated in the IDP process. The participation of these players highlights valuable but at times contentious dynamics in the IDP process. Role-players that participated in the IDP processes in this study includes representatives from political parties. The role played by these actors is not always seen in a positive light, as they tend to influence the participation of actors from their own parties (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 81). Trotter (2005: 6) agrees that *“political power games are a perpetual feature of the policy-making landscape”*. She argues that *“filters exist to ensure certain voices are not heard”*.

The participation space of political parties in the IDP processes seems to have undermined public participation in the IDP process, rather than promoted it. The influence of the ANC in eThekweni Municipality, for example, was largely felt in the IDP process, with suggestions that they used the process to influence decisions towards their own interests (Ballard et al. 2007: 279). The position given to an ANC member, Mike Sutcliffe, as a Municipal Manager (thus having a significant role of driving the IDP process) of the eThekweni Municipality was seen as a clear strategy by the ANC to drive development in this municipality towards their own interests (ibid: 283).

The influence by political parties in the IDP process thus created a wrong perception about the IDP process as a whole. To illustrate this, Buccus et al. (2007: 18) stated that the perceptions by some members of the ward committee belonging to an IFP stronghold area in Sisonke Municipality, were that the ANC was disregarding their priorities and undermining public participation in the IDP process. This sentiment made civil society organisations in KwaZulu-Natal see little value in the IDP participation process as a whole (Buccus et al. 2007: 18).

“As noted, on the whole, perceptions of public participation were quite negative, with respondents feeling that, even when it did occur, public participation tended to make little or no difference to local governance” (Buccus et al. 2007: 18).

They considered IDP processes irrelevant as they felt that decisions were made along political lines (Williamson, Sithole and Todes 2006: 7).

“Civil society organisations have commented on the apparent irrelevance of the consultation process in the face of excessive politicisation of development processes” (ibid).

This perception led to lack of trust between the different entities, on the one hand between councillors and communities and on the other between councillors and officials (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 26) and between civil society and local government (Williamson, Sithole and Todes 2006 : 9).

There are suggestions that political parties negatively affected the participation of both councillors and traditional leaders in the IDP process. This resulted in these groups of people participating in the IDP process along political lines, instead of representing the interests of their communities. This led to lack of co-operation from some councillors belonging to opposition parties.

“A lack of co-operation from councillors is, of course, closely related to party affiliation and becomes an opportunity for opposition councillors to criticise the ANC-led council, or undermine the participatory process by refusing to co-operate” (Ballard et al. 2007: 276).

Some traditional leaders regrettably found themselves torn between the interests of their communities and those of the political parties they are aligned to.

“IFP leaders, though, are caught between their party directives and the demands of their communities for service delivery. ANC aligned traditional leaders are more able to participate, although tensions around the potential of loss of influence, standing, income and land which follow on from housing oriented service delivery, which removes land from the traditional leaders’ control is a concern (Ballard et al. 2007: 278).

It can thus be postulated that political parties did not contribute positively to entrenching the tradition of participation in the IDP process. This is against the views advocated by Masango (2002: 62), who felt that “community organisations and fora should be organised on the basis of aspects of local governance rather than political motives”.

Based on the discussion in this section, it can be concluded that public participation through the structures established for the IDP process was not a level playing field. The next section looks at the mechanisms and processes used for public participation in the IDP process. It also makes an analysis of these mechanisms, exploring the nature of participation used.

Mechanisms and processes of public participation and the IDP process

The Municipal Systems Act (RSA 2000) requires municipalities to establish “appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures, established in terms of Chapter 4” of the same Act, to ensure public participation in the IDP process. Other than establishing mechanisms for public participation, municipalities are required to create conditions that would promote public participation in the IDP process (DPLG 2001a: 37). In particular, they are required to encourage the participation of less privileged members of society (ibid). Some conditions suggested to promote public participation in the IDP process include, informing residents about the IDP process (ibid: 39) and making use of proper language, venues and times for IDP meetings (DPLG 2001b: 29-30).

In examining mechanisms that were used for public participation in the IDP process, this study observed that municipalities use similar mechanisms. The Buffalo City Municipality, for example, made use of mechanisms such as

“... the BCM Representative Forum; Budget Road Shows; the Mayoral Listening Campaign; and informal mechanisms such as notices in the press, at schools and at churches; information dissemination through the Buffalo City newsletter; publishing details of proposed policies in newspapers and in submitting copies to libraries and relevant interest groups; and publishing information on the municipal website, with contact details for councillors and officials” (Yusuf 2004: 6).

Other mechanisms that were used in this study include “community participation within wards, Ward Committees and through regular public meetings” (The City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 35). Sectoral meetings were used to facilitate public participation in the IDP process (Alebisou 2005: 179). Sectoral meetings are meetings that are organised specifically for sectors such as business and labour, (City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 137). The mechanisms that were used by the Stellenbosch Municipality include:

“Direct participation: meetings, (public hearings and sectoral engagements) Ward Committees, imbizos, public hearings and workshops. Indirect participation: Media communications and research (surveys)” (Stellenbosch Municipality 2007:26)

The present study revealed that other mechanisms for participation in the IDP process which appeared to be gaining momentum amongst municipalities are campaigns, public meetings/workshops (including sectoral workshops), ward-based meetings, road shows and public hearings. Deliberating on this matter, Mac Kay (2004: 61) states that

“the [IDP] approach followed by the City of Cape Town has been by means of workshops, public hearings and the Mayor’s Listening Campaign (MLC)”.

Submissions, which have been largely used as part of the public hearings, were also used as a means of participation (Mac Kay 2004: 65). The study by Marais (2007: 19) in Gauteng collaborates this finding.

“Municipalities generally have been using similar instruments to enable participation at the local level, with regular public meetings (including on the IDP process), Ward Committees, mayoral “road shows” and “listening campaigns” among the most-common” (ibid).

Depending on the purpose of the meeting, IDP meetings were often attended by different stakeholders, from business, government and communities. In eThekweni Metro Municipality, for example, some of the stakeholders that attended the community workshops consisted of “civic and taxpayers’ associations, Community Policing Forums, local sports bodies, ward development forums, etc” (Moodley 2007: 6).

In the City of Johannesburg the sectoral meetings were aimed at sectors such as “business, labour, women and youth” (City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 37). Other meetings, such as the listening campaigns, tended to bring all these sectors together. In the eThekweni Metro Municipality, Van Huyssteen (2005: 20) pointed out that the

“Big Mama” workshops are attended by up to 600 representatives, parastatals, political representatives, senior management and officials”

IDP processes were used for different purposes such as gathering information and getting input from communities and stakeholders concerning their needs (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 21; City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 35). Participation mechanisms were also used to give feedback to communities on the progress made with respect to previous commitments.

“The objective of these meetings [ward committee meetings and public meetings] was to ensure that councillors had the opportunity to report back on decisions with respect to the 2005/06 IDP; to review service delivery issues previously raised, and to develop a draft programme of priorities for the 2006/11 IDP” (City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 36).

In line with the requirements (DPLG 2001a: 37) to create conditions that would promote public participation in the IDP process, the municipalities in this study created various platforms to provide information related to the IDPs. The common methods of sharing information on the IDP that were used by municipalities in this study include advertising IDP events through print media and radio stations. In this regard, Nkuhlu (2005 pers.comm. cited in Alebisou 2005: 128), revealed that in the Makana Municipality, for example, “the municipality ... places adverts in the newspapers” to encourage communities to participate in the IDP processes. Other common measures that were used by municipalities in this study to inform communities of the IDP processes were the use of call centres and posting the documents in “public libraries, local council offices and town halls”, to enable the public to study the documents before the IDP meetings (Mac Kay 2004: 77). Electronic devices such as websites, emails, faxes and telephones were also used by some municipalities to share information and communicate with the public on the IDP processes. In the City of Johannesburg, “direct email shots were sent out to key stakeholders with electronic links to the web site” (City of Johannesburg 2006/11: 38). In some cases, other isolated but creative ways of sharing

information were used. For example, the eThekweni Municipality used “Council buses” to publicise the IDP processes (Moodley 2007: 3).

Over and above sharing information and publicising IDP events, a few municipalities such as the Breede Valley Municipality, embarked on initiatives such as training for the disadvantaged groups so that they can participate meaningfully in the IDP process (Achmat 2002: 4).

“The emphasis was also on building the capacity of marginalised groups such as women’s groups and farm-workers’ groups through information and through facilitating processes in ways that ensured that these groups could have a say and would be empowered to participate in later processes” (ibid).

Language is another factor that has a bearing on the capacity of the public to participate in the policy process and government’s decision-making processes (de Villiers 2001: 39). The present study found that some municipalities tried to use accommodative languages, both in public meetings and documentation. In particular, local languages together with English, were often used to encourage accessibility of the IDP process. In Amathole District Municipality, Mkebe (2008: 10) said that “the draft IDP/Budgets are presented in a language that the community will understand”.

Challenges of participatory mechanisms

One of the challenges of the mechanisms used in the IDP process is that while they opened access to government officials, these mechanisms reinforced socio-economic inequalities that exist amongst communities. According to Ngwenya (2002: 2), “uneven distribution of capacity” tends to hinder participation of marginalised groups of society in policy processes. Platforms for participation in the IDP process brought together participants with differing skills and capacity to participate in the drafting of the IDPs, thus advantaging the privileged members of society in the IDP process. A study by Mac Kay (2004: 69) in Cape Town alludes to this concern.

“The Public Hearing of Sub-Council Three, held in Durbanville, highlighted the different level of skills levels amongst the population of South Africa, for example,

the two White participants asked pertinent questions relating to issues that inform the IDP whilst people from disadvantaged communities focussed on issues of social responsibility such as health, housing, roads, infrastructural development and electricity” (Mac Kay 2004:69).

A critique of public participation by Taylor (2003: 105) is that it may reinforce the power inequalities that already exist in society. An observation made in the present study is that public participation in the IDP process highlighted the socio-economic inequalities that exist amongst members of communities. While citizens participated in the IDP processes, there was limited participation by the privileged members of the society in the IDP meetings (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 25; Houston et al. 2001: 253). Instead, these influential people used other means of participation by speaking directly to officials about issues of interest to them.

“the privileged residents tend to shun public meetings (except when they address safety and security issues), and prefer to raise matters directly with council and local officials via telephone calls or personal visits” (Marais, Everatt and Dube, 2007: 25)

Marais, Everatt and Dube (2007: 25) in their study in Gauteng, associate this practice with unequal access to officials. The use of telephones to address concerns with officials is a luxury that can only be made by those with access to resources. The less privileged members of the community tend to be hindered from directly accessing government officials on their own. Marais, Everatt and Dube (2007: 25) attest to this, stating that these people feel intimidated by the formality in council offices, thus limiting access to the marginalised.

A further complication with public hearings as a mechanism for public participation is that they largely relied on submissions (Mac Kay 2004: 65). Asking communities from disadvantaged communities, with fewer skills, capacity and resources, to comment and make submissions on draft documents that are described as being cumbersome (Marais,

Everatt and Dube 2007: 36) is unreasonable. It benefits the more privileged, particularly when they have to participate in the same premises.

Khosa (2000: 229 cited in Davids 2005: 28), criticises such mechanisms, calling them “elitist” in nature. They allow “only a small segment of the community” to participate meaningfully (ibid). The critique that can be made, therefore, is that while the government is opening up opportunities for participation, some of these reinforced the power relations that exist as stated by Taylor (2003: 105). They assign costs and benefits in accordance to the pre-existing local distribution of power” as stated by da Curna and Junho Pena (cited in Beyer, Peterson and Sharma 2003: 11).

A further criticism of public participation, highlighted by Peter (1998: 25), is that government tends to employ mechanisms for participation that minimize public participation by limiting the time given for consultation processes. Peter (1998: 25) felt that these techniques are used by government officials to prevent too much participation. Likewise, the mechanisms used for public participation in the IDP process were largely public events that prevented excessive participation. With respect to this, Williamson, Sithole and Todes (2006: 7) point out that

“Interactive and in-depth discussions have often been replaced by more easily organised public events, and they tend to be dominated by presentations of technocratic information, and allow little opportunity for meaningful discussion”.

While the municipalities in this study established mechanisms that would provide information to the public on the IDP processes, some of the techniques used presented obstacles, particularly for people that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Achmat (2005: 7), for example, stressed that the use of libraries to disseminate information was not accessible to everybody, as many people from rural areas and the elderly do not normally visit libraries or municipal offices. The same can be said about the electronic techniques such as websites that were used by municipalities in this study.

While it was revealed earlier in this study that some municipalities used accommodative languages in the IDP meetings, this study, found that the language mostly used in IDP processes and documents was one of the major hindrances to public participation in the IDP process in some of the other municipalities. Illiterate people often struggled to understand English, which was mostly used in IDP processes. In the Cape Town study by Gutas (2005: 91), for example, it is reported that

“In terms of the researcher’s observation, the presentations at the meetings were technical and full of jargon. This was not conducive to the relaying of information to the public. This exercise also excluded many ordinary citizens who may not have a certain level of education. Some of them felt intimidated by this style of presentation”.

Arnstein (1969: 216) felt that citizen participation constitutes the exchange of power, where means are established to include those that do not participate in the public processes. It can be said that the use of technical language in the IDP processes and budgets of the IDPs excluded people that are illiterate, thus placing power in a few privileged hands.

While challenges in the IDP processes were associated with mechanisms used for participation in the IDP process, others had to deal with the logistics of ensuring that participants could actually get to the venues. This study found that many municipalities failed to create conditions that would encourage the participation of marginalised groups in the IDP process. Mac Kay (2004: 82) pointed out that the venues used for meetings were sometimes not accessible.

“Also, if the meetings were held nearby, it would attract attendance by individuals from all sectors of society” (ibid).

Failure to make arrangements, such as transport and using proper meeting times, that would encourage participation in the IDP process, affected the participation of disadvantaged groups such as women, farm-workers and people with disabilities, in the IDP process. The study by Marais, Everatt and Dube (2007: 37) in Gauteng alludes to this.

“Especially in large areas with dispersed residents, meeting attendance can be difficult and involve significant financial and opportunity costs. Getting to meetings is practically impossible for workers on farms and plots outside the local CBD, unless special transport is provided” (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 37).

Lack of transport denied some disadvantaged groups of people access to those in power. The study by Gutas (2005) in Cape Town is revealing.

“We as disabled persons are left behind and cannot talk to the Mayor because there is no transport that can take us to meetings” (City of Cape Town 2003a: 60 cited in Gutas 2005: 94).

Participation of women in IDP processes was also affected by the failure of municipalities to create conditions that would encourage their participation. A paper by Williamson, Sithole and Todes (2006: 5) attest to this view.

“For its large-scale events, the eThekweni municipality extended invitations to umbrella non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and relied on them to select appropriate organisations to attend the public meetings. This technique attracted several welfare organisations, but generally most women’s NGOs did not attend”.

These findings point at the failure of municipalities to ensure that ordinary people are able to access the spaces they have availed for participation, leading to a failure to provide what Buhlungu (2004: 6) wants, a guarantee for the participation of the “people at the lowest level of social organization, namely the street”.

Benefits of participatory mechanisms

While the present study has not analysed the specific methods, it is clear that some of the mechanisms used for participation in the IDP process, particularly at local level, benefitted communities. The study found that one of the biggest benefits of community participation, particularly through meetings that took place at ward level, has been the ability for ordinary citizens to access government they could not otherwise access. Lando (1999: 113) felt that the “impersonal” nature of government inhibits citizens from participating in policy processes. However, the Centre for Public Participation

(2007: 5) were of the opinion that public participation can counter this, by bringing citizens and government closer to one another. In this regard, the study by Ballard et al. (2007: 275), in eThekweni Metro Municipality, is instructive.

“A recent innovation, in the IDP feedback round of November 2003, involved the attendance by senior line-function managers at ward- level meetings. This step enabled communities to hear first hand from major decision-makers and, conversely, decision-makers were able to get a sense of the sentiment at community level. In other words, concrete personal (as opposed to abstract impersonal) relationships were being formed between communities and officials through the participatory process” (ibid).

Moodley (2007: 5), speaking of the eThekweni municipality, concurs with this observation.

“... active citizen participation allows communities to access the once ‘faceless bureaucracy’. As stakeholders engage with city officials, artificial barriers are broken down” (ibid).

Community participation also worked towards strengthening relationships between officials and communities, by developing a “shared understanding between citizens and officials” (van Huyssteen 2005: 21) and mutual respect (Moodley 2007: 5).

The next section discusses on mechanisms for participation which are used in shaping the content of the IDPs. This study found that some of the techniques that were used to inform the public about the IDP processes yielded benefits as they attracted the attention of people.

“Council buses carrying the bold message of ‘a new way of doing business’ caused people to stop, take a look and question what was going on in the City”
(Moodley 2007: 3).

Indications are that, in certain municipalities, where accommodative languages were used in the IDP processes, it improved public participation in the IDP process. The study conducted by Marais, Everatt and Dube (2007: 26), in Gauteng suggests that

“Efforts at simultaneous translation during meetings have been well received and were said to boost active participation at those gatherings”.

4.2.3 Nature of participation used in the IDP process

It has been stressed in this study that it is important not only to focus on mechanisms that have been used by municipalities in the IDP process, but also on the nature of that participation. Using Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, the assumption made in this study is that the mechanisms used for participation can also determine the nature of participation. Arnstein (1969: 217) used her ladder of participation to depict the degree of power that citizens have in participation processes. She thought that the lower levels of participation depicted low influence by communities in the participation processes.

Having looked at the mechanisms used for public participation in the IDP process in this study, it is clear that, by and large “non-participation” and “degrees of tokenism”, which are at the lower levels of Arnstein’s (1969: 217) ladder of participation, were used for participation in the IDP Process. Under non-participation, both mechanisms for manipulation and therapy were used. With mechanisms for “manipulation”, this study showed that public participation, particularly around the budgets of IDPs, largely became a legitimating exercise, as communities were only expected to contribute and make comments on draft budgets that were already prepared elsewhere. Arnstein (1969: 218) emphasised that under this type of participation, participants are allowed to participate in policy processes mainly to endorse government’s decisions. This manner of manipulation is clearly illustrated in the study by Gutas (2005) in the Unicity of Cape Town. In this municipality, municipal officials informed participants that the intention of the IDP meetings was to get the views of communities concerning their needs (Gutas, 2005: 90-91). Once these had been identified, the municipality would draw up the budget without the involvement of communities (ibid). This budget would then later be presented to communities for their comments.

This was the second round of the MLC, which had the purpose to give feedback to the public on how the issues they have raised in the first round of meetings, have

been incorporated into the budget. The report-back meetings started after the annual budget has been finalised for the financial year 2003/4. In short, the public had to give input on the new budget. In a meeting held in Hanover Park on 10 June 2003, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor P Uys, mentioned that the City had drawn up a pro-poor budget and has structured service delivery according to community's needs (Gutas 2005: 92).

Arnstein (1969: 218) added that “manipulation” relies on mechanisms for public participation that are meant to gather information; promote the public image of government; garner support for government’s programmes and policies; and “educate” citizens. The present study showed that public participation in the IDP process was largely applied in the needs analysis and the prioritization phase of the IDP process. The focus of public participation at this stage was on acquiring information from participants concerning their needs and priorities. The City of Johannesburg (2006/11: 37) states

“Regional meetings remain a unique opportunity to sensitise participating senior staff at both a regional and citywide level on the needs of communities”.

What is more of concern is that sometimes the wider public only participated in the identification of problems and priorities, but not in the development of the strategies and budgets to deal with these problems. Moodley (2007: 7), referring to the eThekweni Metro Municipality, with respect to the strategies phase of the IDP, states that

“the nature of stakeholder engagement is then to interrogate the proposals and attempt to develop more complete solutions to the key issues raised” (ibid).

The eThekweni Municipality shows another form of manipulation used in this study, where IDP meetings were used to teach and educate communities on what they can and cannot ask.

“While it is seen as the job of the communities to identify their need, it is the job of officials to identify the ways in which these needs can be met. ... This is, therefore not a one-way flow of information but rather a complex exchange in which the city also instructs its citizens about what they might expect from the city and how they might participate in governance” (Ballard et al. 2007: 273)

Young (2000: 189 cited in Ballard 2007: 273) feels that this practice is not democratic and that it undermines the specific interests of local communities. This finding also concurs with Lando's (1999: 113) critique of public participation, where he states that sometimes public officials perceive it as their role to arrive with solutions to the problems at hand. This kind of participation however, hinders real public engagement on policy issues (ibid).

Attributes of therapy also featured in the present study, with indications that in the eThekweni Municipality, for example, officials imposed their own agenda at meetings, by allowing for participation, while taking the opportunity to interpret participants' input in a manner that reveals government's agenda (Ballard et al. 2007: 285). The underlying agenda of government the officials wanted to promote was the role of citizens in service delivery (ibid). The officials in this municipality not only re-interpreted community inputs, but attempted to "*temper expectations so that projects which the city defines as unfeasible are not lodged as realistic demands by the community*".

Clearly, as Arnstein (1969: 217) stated, the types of participation suggested above lacked authenticity.

Many other exercises used by municipalities in this study were meant to share information and bring awareness to the public of the IDP process. To illustrate this point, Houston et al. (2001: 224), in the study done in the City of Tshwane, concluded that, among the workshops that were held in this municipality concerning the IDP were

"workshops [that] were used to inform the community about the IDP process, and to elicit their co-operation for the various other phases of the IDP process".

While a necessary step in policy-making, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 65) emphasise that this is "*the most basic level of participation and the one that offers the least active involvement for external stakeholders*". Arnstein (1969: 219) shared this view and stated that under this type of participation, there are few prospects for attendees to have an influence on the agenda of the programmes developed. The drawback to this type of involvement is when participation processes are only limited to informing, as found in the study by the DPLG (2001/2002: 17), where it is indicated

that the IDP Representative Forums became a forum for information-sharing, as opposed to debates.

“Rather than being used as a forum for debate and workshop-style decision-making as envisaged in the GUIDES, their actual function has been to provide an opportunity for representatives to be informed about, and to comment on, drafts and proposals presented by technical teams” (ibid).

This sharing of information is despite the fact that there was overwhelming lack of understanding of the IDP processes reported in the present study.

“Consultation” and “placation” types of participation are also evident in this study. Arnstein (1969: 219) pointed out that, under this type of participation, there is no guarantee that inputs by citizens will yield any outcomes by taking into account their inputs when making decisions. Despite the fact that communities participated in the IDP processes, such as public hearings and IDP Representative Forums, and therefore had access to those in authority, they often lacked the power to influence decisions. While some of their inputs reflected in some of the IDPs and in budget estimates (Houston et al. 2001: 225), by and large community inputs were not heeded by the officials (Ballard et al. 2007: 274).

In such circumstances, government opened up spaces for participation, but retained the power to make decisions, as pointed out by Arnstein (1969: 217). Therefore communities might have participated in the drafting of the IDPs, but lacked the power to influence decisions. The study by Houston et al. (2001: 245), in the City of Tshwane, is instructive.

“One respondent pointed out that the executive committee of the City Council took many important decisions without considering civil society inputs” (ibid).

This observation is shared in other areas. In some municipalities such as the City of Tshwane, stakeholders participated during the projects phase of the IDP. However, some of the projects identified by participants appeared in the IDP report but did not make it to the list of priorities (Houston et al. 2001: 240).

“In most cases these projects were mentioned in the IDP report on the forum, but were not priority projects”

Ballard et al. (2007: 274), studying the eThekweni Metro Municipality, agreed with this view.

“One official conceded that none of the projects approved in the municipal budget 2002-2003 were developed in reference to priority lists generated by communities in the IDP process” (Interview, Jaqui Subban, 4 November 2003 cited in Ballard et al. 2007: 274).

In concluding this discussion, lower rungs of participation in the IDP process were used, with limited power and influence by communities to make any changes in the IDP. The nature of participation used also signifies that decision-making in the IDP process remains with those in power. It can be argued, therefore, that community participation in the IDP process has been used to legitimise government decisions and plans. Lastly, the inputs made through community participation at the different stages of the IDP process failed to guarantee participation that can yield results, thus acting as a deterrent to meaningful participation. In this sense, it can be concluded that mechanisms used did not meet the views of Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 7), which suggests that effective engagement allows the “incorporation of the views of a range of societal groups in the formulation of policies”.

4.3 Conclusion

While municipalities in this study did not provide their definitions of the idea of public participation, their articulations, indicate a genuine desire to foster public participation in the IDP processes. The municipalities regarded communities and stakeholders as the key participants in the IDP process. The involvement of communities in decision-making processes and the association of public participation in democracy are the key themes that emerged under the conceptualisation of public participation by municipalities in this study.

Ward Committees were used by municipalities in this study as structures for public participation at local community level in the IDP process. IDP Representative Forums were the main structures for public participation in the IDP process. While IDP Representative Forums provided a space for different stakeholders to participate in the IDP process, these structures fell short of their intended design. Instead of providing a space for debate and negotiation, they were mainly used as a space for information purposes. Decisions made in these forums were also biased towards business interests, at the expense of other concerned parties.

Municipalities in this study established various mechanisms for communities to participate in the IDP process. While some of these mechanisms enhanced public participation and democratic governance, by promoting opportunities for communities to hold government accountable, communities by and large lacked power to influence decisions in the IDP process. The only groups that had more influence in the IDP process were business executives and the ruling party, the ANC. Only a few municipalities in this study created conditions that would encourage participation by marginalised groups of society. As a result, the participation of such groups in the IDP process was hindered.

Even though there were many challenges identified in this study, there were benefits that emerged because of public participation in the IDP process. These benefits include access to government; the ability to hold government accountable on promises made and some level of influence by stakeholders in some municipalities. One important benefit for communities was having a say in decisions that affect them, despite the fact that their inputs did not always yield results.

The nature of participation used in the IDP process in this study showed low levels of public involvement and showed that the public lacked power to influence decisions. The conclusion that can be drawn is that, public participation in this study is a legitimating exercise for many municipalities. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and also recommendations to improve the IDP process.

Chapter 5

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the conclusion of this study. It does this by summarising the main findings and makes recommendations on how to improve public participation in the IDP process. The study analysed the structures and mechanisms that were used by municipalities to promote public participation in the IDP process. It also explored the nature of participation used in the IDP process.

5.2 Conceptualisation of public participation

While municipalities in this study did not clearly conceptualise who the public is in relation to public participation, they used certain terms that depict their understanding of who should be included in public participation in the IDP process. The key participants that emerged are “communities” (Stellenbosch Municipality 2007: 26) and “stakeholders” (Buffalo City 2002: 14). These terms are similar to the conceptualisation of public participation by the World Bank (cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6), which differentiates between popular participation and stakeholder participation.

Whereas municipalities in this study did not give their definitions of public participation, their utterances saw public participation in the IDP as a process where people that are affected by development are involved in framing their development. This reflects Sithole’s (2005: 2) view. The municipalities in the present study associated public participation in the IDP process with notions of democracy and governance. This is similar to the understanding of public participation by theorists such as Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 51), which links citizen participation in policy processes to democratic

governance. These conceptualisations present a good environment to cultivate the culture of public participation in policy processes, as suggested by Masango (2002: 60).

More than just involving public participation in their development, theory links public participation to control and influence by those affected in decisions affecting them (The World Bank 1996 cited in Buccus et al. 2007: 6). However, none of the municipalities in this study related public participation in governance and the IDP processes to the issue of control by communities of their own development. This may suggest that, while municipalities embrace the concept of public participation, there is still reluctance by these municipalities to ensure that public participation leads to shifts in power towards the communities.

5.3 Organisational structures and mechanisms to facilitate public participation in the IDP process

5.3.1 Organisational structures for public participation in the IDP process

Municipal Managers, IDP Steering Committees and Task Teams were established by the municipalities concerned to manage the drafting of the IDP process. This involves ensuring that the public participates in the IDP process. The structures that were used by municipalities as spaces to facilitate public participation in the IDP process at local community level were Ward Committees, while IDP Representative Forums were used as the main structures for public participation in the IDP process.

This study found that Ward Committees were not effective as mechanisms for public participation in the IDP process. This is because these structures were either established after the IDP process (Niegaardt 2002: 97), or did not function well (Todes 2002: 16) and were sometimes by-passed by municipalities (DPLG 2001/2002: 18). Where they were used, they caused tensions with other existing structures in the communities, such as Traditional Leaders (Todes 2002: 17). This is similar to Rubenstein's (1995: 72 cited in Davids 2005: 28) opinion, that structures established for public participation may cause conflict with the already existing local structures. The advisory nature of Ward

Committees sometimes resulted in situations where discussions that took place at ward level were not reflected in IDPs (Buccus et al. 2007: 18). This observation is against Arnstein's (1969: 216) view of public participation, which concerns having an influence in policy processes.

IDP Representative Forums, which were used as the main structures for public participation in the IDP process, brought together role-players from business, government, civil society and communities. IDP Representative Forums were used as vehicles for debate and negotiation in the IDP process (Achmat 2002: ii). This arrangement permits "horizontal governance", where different players from both government, business and communities participate in the policy process (Phillips and Orsini 2004: 40).

Public participation through the IDP Representative Forums benefitted participants. Some of the benefits of public participation in the IDP Representative Forums include entrenching ownership of government plans (Niegaardt 2002: 98). This agrees with the view of Glover (2003: 11), who suggests that public participation in policy process will encourage ownership of policies. IDP Representative Forums brought together groups of communities that would not otherwise work together (Achmat 2002: 6). This agrees with Taylor's (2003: 112) opinion, that public participation in policy processes can lead to the creation of new alliances. IDP Representative Forums also offered different stakeholders an opportunity to contribute and have a voice in the IDP process. Taylor (2002: 112) pointed out that public participation in the policy process can offer citizens opportunities to contribute to policy-making. The important matter, however, is not just about having a say in policy processes, but more about having an influence on the outcomes of the policy process as advocated by Arnstein (1969: 216).

While there were benefits to public participation in the IDP Representative Forums, many problems of public participation were experienced in these structures. Legislation requires public participation in the IDP process to happen through "locally recognised community organisations" (RSA 2001: section 15(1)(a)). This requirement presented

challenges for disadvantaged groups of society, where some municipalities had poorly organised structures (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 14), or no community structures at all (Todes 2002: 38). Habib et al. (2005 cited in Trotter 2005: 6) alludes to this, suggesting that community groups with fewer resources are not likely to be well organised, thus impacting on their participation in governance processes. This created a situation where some members of the IDP Representative Forums could not account to anybody, as they lacked a mandate (Williams 2006: 210). This practice further undermined the principles of “accountability” suggested by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:8), which is at the core of democratic governance.

Most decisions in the IDP Representatives Forums were biased towards the business sector, to the dismay of other groups such as civil society representatives. Therefore those who had access to resources had more control and influence in the IDP Representative Forums. This concurs with White’s (1996:14 cited in Taylor 2003:105) view, which suggests that public participation in policy processes can reinforce the current associations of power inherent in society.

Political parties in this study undermined public participation in the IDP processes, particularly of councillors and traditional parties. These groups of actors often neglected their role of representing their communities and instead represented the interests of their political parties. The ruling party, the ANC, was often blamed for failing to take into account the priorities raised through platforms for participation in the IDP process (Buccus et al. 2007: 18). This partisan representation undermined the value of public participation in the IDP process (Williamson, Sithole and Todes 2006: 7). This observation with the view of Howlett and Ramesh’s (2003: 80), which is that political parties may influence the participation of their representatives “in the policy subsystem”.

The vast challenges concerning public participation in the structures established for public participation in the IDP process raise questions on the effectiveness of decentralisation of decision-making to promote democratic governance, as anticipated by its proponents, such as Hussein (2004: 107) and Beall (2004: 2). Instead of “greater

pluralism, accountability, transparency, citizen participation and development” (Hussein, 2004:107), participation through these structures, particularly IDP Representative Forums, became a space to advance interests of certain groups, such as certain political parties and businesses.

5.3.2 Mechanisms and processes for public participation in the IDP process

Some of the popular mechanisms that were used by municipalities in this study to facilitate public participation in the IDP process were public meetings/workshops (including sectoral workshops), ward-based meetings, road shows and public hearings. Other than these mechanisms, this study found that mayoral listening campaigns are gaining momentum. The use of these mechanisms is in line with the views of Masango (2002: 63), who suggests the establishment of proper methods of participation to allow influence by average citizens in the policy processes. Depending on the purpose of the meeting, IDP meetings brought together stakeholders from business, government and communities. Municipalities in this study used various techniques, including media, electronic techniques and ward councillors, to advertise IDP processes. Masango (2002: 62) advocated the use of “proper and accessible” methods to provide information on policy- making.

Some of the mechanisms for participation that were used at local level yielded benefits for communities, such as increasing access by communities to government officials and opportunities for communities to call government to account. Some of these benefits depict notions of democratic governance (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002: 7), that public participation in policy processes can promote “accountability”, as citizens hold government accountable for their actions..

Some of the mechanisms used by municipalities in this study presented challenges, particularly for marginalised groups of society. Some of these mechanisms failed to appreciate the disparities that exist amongst communities. This was the same with

mechanisms such as the internet, that were used to publicise the IDP processes. Municipalities in this study failed to create conditions that would encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups such as women (Williamson, Sithole and Todes 2006: 5), people with disabilities (City of Cape Town 2003a: 60 cited in Gutas 2005: 94), farm workers (Marais, Everatt and Dube 2007: 37). While some municipalities used accommodative language to enable meaningful participation in the IDP processes, this study found that some stakeholders and their representatives particularly struggled with the technical language used in the IDP processes, both in the documents and in meetings. These militate against the aspiration by Buhlungu (2004: 6), who campaigns for the participation of “people at the lowest level of social organisation, namely the street”. Like the structures that were used for public participation in the IDP process, most mechanisms used by municipalities to promote public participation in the IDP process favoured already well-off people and communities. This implied that public participation can reinforce the already existing power relations (White 1996:14 cited in Taylor 2003: 105; da Cunha et al. cited in Beyer, Peterson and Sharma 2003: 11.)

5.4 Nature of participation

Municipalities in this study used mechanisms that limited power and influence by communities to make any changes in the IDP. A number of municipalities used participatory techniques that were intended to gather information from the public on their priorities and needs. This information would then be used to inform the IDPs of municipalities. Over and above gathering information, some municipalities used public participation in the IDP process to impose government’s own agenda (Ballard et al. 2007: 285). The nature of participation used by municipalities is similar to what Arnstein (1969: 218) calls “non-participation”. According to her, citizen participation under these circumstances is meant to “cure” and “educate” participants rather than address their problems (ibid). She felt that these types of participation lack authenticity (Arnstein 1969: 217).

Municipalities participating in this study focussed their efforts on sharing information with the public on the IDP process, rather than real debate and engagement. Sharing of information is a requirement for meaningful participation in policy- making (Glover 2003: 8). In this study, public participation spaces were largely limited to information sharing, rather than negotiations and debate (Todes 2002: 19) and therefore limited influence by participants. The nature of participation used by municipalities in this instance is similar to the type of participation called “informing” by Arnstein (1969: 219). She stressed that, under this type of participation, government does not engage participants and therefore citizens lack the power to influence debates.

Lack of power and influence by the public in the IDP process was apparent in the decisions made by the municipalities, where municipal officials often made decisions that did not take into account inputs by the public (Ballard 2007: 274; Houston 2001: 240). This concurs with the “degrees of tokenism” described by Arnstein (1969: 217). According to her, in this category of participation, public participation does not guarantee outcomes and those in power retain for themselves power to make decisions (ibid: 217-219).

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Conceptualisation of public participation

It is important that municipalities clarify their conceptualisation of who the public is. This will contribute towards finding appropriate mechanisms for involving the public in the governance processes.

5.5.2 Organisational structures and mechanisms to facilitate public participation in the IDP process

Organisational structures for public participation in the IDP process

Municipalities must find ways of mitigating the challenges that are inherent in Ward Committees as structures of participation at local community level. This might involve complementing Ward Committees, with other existing structures, as these seem to be more accommodative of the realities of communities. Government needs to rethink the advisory nature of Ward Committees as community inputs through these structures tend to be undermined in the IDP process. To counter the challenges and the critiques against the IDP Representatives Forums, government must find ways of accommodating marginalised groups that are less organized, rather than working with only “recognised structures” in the IDP process. These marginalised groups must be capacitated to ensure that they participate meaningfully in the structures of public participation. Partnerships with NGOs and other community structures must be explored by municipalities. Empowerment for marginalised groups can also work to counter the bias towards business interests in the IDP Representative Forums.

While it may be difficult to change the influence of political parties in the IDP processes, traditional leaders and councillors need capacity building, to clarify their role of representing communities in the public participation processes of local government.

Mechanisms and processes of public participation and the IDP process

Municipalities must establish participation mechanisms that are accommodative of all kinds of people in their areas. These mechanisms must take into account the realities and disparities that exist amongst the people of South Africa. This includes communication

mechanisms. Special measures, in particular, must be taken to accommodate marginalised groups of society such as women, people with disabilities and people from farms. This involves measures such as providing simplified information, accommodative languages, both spoken and written, and providing transport to meetings.

5.5.3 Nature of public participation used in the IDP process

The commitment by municipalities towards public participation must be seen in the nature and quality of participation by the public. This requires change of attitude by government officials, away from “non-participation” and tokenism types of participation towards higher levels of participation, where public participation will yield results. This will ensure that citizens are engaged in policy- making not just to meet the legal requirements, but to ensure that they have a real say in decisions that affect their lives.

While acknowledging the reality of the complexity of policy- making and public participation, it should not be acceptable to involve communities only when they identify their problems, while excluding them in areas that seek priorities and solutions to their problems. The Municipal Council must show more commitment towards public participation, by showing respect for community inputs to encourage public participation and to redeem the image of public participation in the IDP process.

5.5.4 Recommendations for further research

An area that needs further research is how government can make use of existing social networks that exist in communities and how these can be used to strengthen public participation in the IDP process. For this purpose, the notion of “mediating institutions” suggested by Lando (1999: 112), which seek to mediate between “private world of individuals and the large structures of modern society”, is one of the angles that may be used to explore this. The salient feature about such structures is that they allow ordinary people to participate in policy processes through their common interaction in society, such as serving poor people through their churches and participating in policy processes through the same structures (ibid).

More research can be done on IDP Representative Forums as conduits for public participation, to explore whether or not these can be used for other local government processes, rather than merely participation in the IDP process.

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Appendix

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