



# South African case study

Mid-programme seminar  
5 February 2014



# Context

- Participation meaningful when transferring power from state to citizens (Arnstein)
- South African Constitution envisaged a participatory state, particularly at local level, with transfer of power
- Local government in SA
  - 3 spheres of government, local government comprises two levels (district and local), except in metros where one local government is in place
  - Muni's raise own funds through property taxes and service charges, supplemented by transfers from national (some dependent on national transfers)
  - Munis are responsible for ia electricity and water reticulation, sanitation and storm water systems, refuse removal, urban land-use regulation.
  - Charged by Constitution to give priority to basic needs
- Secondary legislation has established elaborate architecture
  - Ward committees
  - Integrated Development Planning processes
  - Annual planning and budgeting cycle



# Issues

## ○ Ward committees

- Ward committees dysfunctional, undermined by political partisan character (not independent or representative)
- Instruments of patronage
- Lack of clear mechanisms to link ward committees to municipal decision-making processes (do not succeed in providing early involvement, they have limited influence on decisions, do not provide information, are not easily accessible and not structured in their decision-making)

## ○ IDP and annual processes

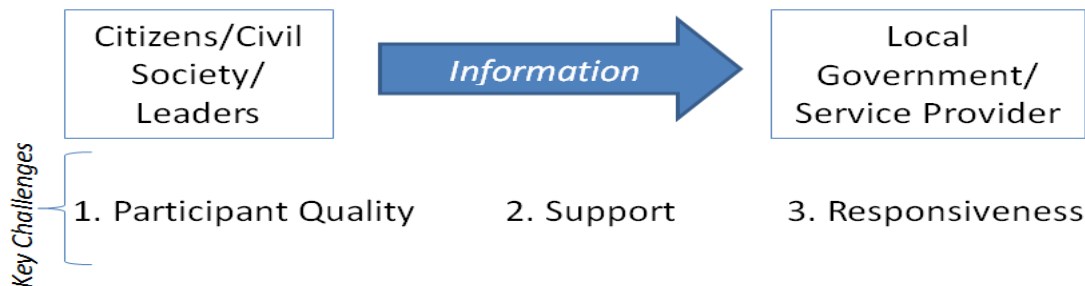
- IDP not bottom up process – technical process outsourced to consultants Requirements not actively pursued or ignored
- Participation at best to legitimise decisions already taken, at worst just compliance

## ○ Overall

- Does containment of participation in formalised spaces within state-technical discourses narrow options for participation?
- Violent service protests

# Case study: making participation work

- Willingness of local structures to develop attitudes and institutions accessible to citizens
- uMgungundlovu District
  - KZN, poor participatory structures, history of violent protests
- District made participation key pillar of turnaround strategy
  - Chose to work with strategic partners already active in the district, eg BESG
  - Mechanisms to overcome strategic challenges in participatory process



Source: J Rose

- Capacity building on both sides;
- Forming CBO clusters; making routine statutory processes accessible, adding quarterly meetings
- Bridged gap between ward committees and communities
- Popularised the IDP and other documentation
- Appointing ward committee administrator



# Lessons

- Risk of creating statutory participation processes without ‘filling the gaps’, eg capacity, behind the scenes processes to link participation to internal decision-making
  - State-centric, technocratic approach to governance not automatically replaced by participatory approach after formalising requirements
- Need for capacity building
- Value of CS as ‘intermediaries’
  - Different roles of NGO and CBOs
- Value of political commitment