Housing Shortages in South Africa: A Discussion of the After-Effects of Community Participation in Housing Provision in Diepkloof

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Abstract Community participation is a complex process and its propensity to having unintended negative effects plays a vital role in its outcome. This paper attempts to reconstruct and critique the outcomes of a participatory process that seeks to address housing shortages by using the narratives of local residents in Diepkloof. Heterogeneity of identities tied to "spatiality of power relations" and history have influenced the trajectory of community participation, which were underestimated by drivers of the process. This paper shows that community participation has far-reaching negative effects if not undertaken in the correct manner and, if discontinued, results in sensitive issues concerning housing to be unresolved. It concludes that community participation provides unintended outcomes like social tension, disillusionment, conflict and societal fragmentation. Drivers of a participation process therefore need to acquire adequate socio-cultural and historical knowledge of a community so as to limit unintended negative outcomes.

Keywords Community participation · Heterogeneity · Housing shortages · South Africa

> *"Easy to preach but difficult to practice, effective public participation in planning and public management calls for sensitivity and technique, imagination and guts"* (Forester 2006:447)

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Introduction

South Africa experiences major shortages of low-cost houses to accommodate millions of its poor citizens. This social problem has its roots in the country's pre-1994 apartheid regime and is exacerbated by population growth, migration and slow housing delivery. Today, millions of South Africa's poor black households live in shacks, hostels and crowded houses in marginalised townships and informal settlements awaiting access to government-availed land and houses. The South African government and other stakeholders, since the attainment of democratic governance in 1994, have been creating, embracing and implementing various approaches to housing delivery to speedily meet demand. One such approach adopted institutionally has been community participation. These approaches have had both intended and unintended consequences on housing delivery and on the lives of the targeted population. This paper aims to discuss some of the after-effects of community participation in housing delivery focusing specifically on a particular participatory process that took place in Diepkloof, Soweto between 2005 and 2006. Based on a current broader debate on the ineffectiveness of participation being practised on the ground (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008), this paper further argues that community participation has the potential for negative outcomes such as entrenchment of mistrust for the government, disillusionment, conflict and fragmentation. However, it acknowledges that it potentially promotes inclusion, transparency, accountability and sustainable service delivery. The paper bases its arguments on narratives by respondents drawn from local residents and attempts to reconstruct and critique the Diepkloof participatory process.

The post-apartheid government inherited an urban housing backlog of approximately 1.3 million units at its inception in 1994 (Goebel 2007; Knight 2001). This huge backlog was partially contributed by apartheid discriminatory administrations and laws (such as the Black (Native) Laws Amendment Act, No 46 of 1937 and the Black Communities Development Act, No 4 of 1984) along with rapid urbanisation during the post-apartheid period. In a bid to address past laws, the post-apartheid government enacted policies that supported the institutionalisation of housing provision. These include the Housing Act of 1997, Rental Housing Act of 1999, Housing Consumer Protection Measure of 1998 and Home Loan and Mortgage Disclosure Act of 2000, all drawing from the South African Constitution of 1996. The constitution explicitly states that "everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing" and in so doing treats access to housing as a human right that would be violated through its denial or deferment (Republic of South Africa 1996). The provisions of the constitution were supported by the Housing Act of 1997, which embraced the need to avail access to housing to the needy through housing development. It placed significance on housing development as a means for ensuring the availability of houses for distribution. The Housing Act of 1997 defined housing development as:

> 1(vi) the establishment and maintenance of habitable, stable and sustainable public and private residential environments to ensure viable households and communities in areas allowing convenient access to economic opportunities, and to health, educational and social amenities in which all citizens and

permanent residents of the Republic will, on a progressive basis, have access to:

permanent residential structures with secure tenure, ensuring internal and external privacy and providing adequate protection against the elements

However, the government was aware of the insufficient availability of resources to meet the housing needs of its population. Therefore, it had to adopt approaches that allowed for the mobilising and harnessing of combined resources, efforts and initiatives of communities, the private sector and other stakeholders (Housing Code; Knight 2001). The constitution, the White Paper on Housing (1994), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1996) and the Breaking New Ground (2004) policy all made strong provisions for a multi-stakeholder approach to housing delivery. Local communities were considered as a major stakeholder and the constitution of South Africa made provision for community participation (Williams 2006). Consistent with constitutional provisions, the Municipal Structures Act states (White Paper on Local Government 1998) that:

the executive mayors annually report on the involvement of community organizations in the affairs of the municipality and ensure that due regard is given to public views and report on the effect of consultation on the decisions of council

These policies and structures would support and sustain participation, speed up service delivery and also promote public accountability in as much as they would develop a democratic culture seen as the "backbone of a democratic form of government" (Hemson 2007; Hanyane 2005: 267). They also reflected readiness to value and accept contributions from other stakeholders (Khan and Haupt 2006).

The South African government also adopted international legislation that supported community participation in housing delivery such as the United Nations Habitat Agenda embraced in 1996 (Huchzermeyer 2003; Goebel 2007). However, despite these efforts, housing delivery remained slow and impacted negatively upon government's legitimacy (Williams 2006). By early 2006, the government had initiated or supported the construction and delivery of approximately 1.9 million housing units but an additional 2 to 3 million were required (Department of Housing[1]; Goebel 2007; Knight 2001). As such, community participation was seen at the policy level as a tool to allow for a collective response to this huge demand for housing (Jenkins in Goebel 2007). The role of community participation became more evident when the poor increasingly became agitated and revealed this through staging nationwide mass protests such as those that began in May 2005 (Johnson 2005).

Within this context, this paper is based on both a literature review and qualitative data collected from two studies carried out in Diepkloof, Soweto in 2006 and 2007. The literature review focuses on government policy documents and academic literature on land management and housing delivery. This assisted in gaining an understanding of policy measures that promoted equity in the spatial structure of the post-apartheid city and those that govern the settlement process. It also allowed for identifying what specific policy documents say about land access, transfer, housing

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[1] http://0-www.housing.gov.za.innopac.up.ac.za:80/

delivery and the role of the citizenry. The literature review also revealed the important discourses on community participation and access to land and housing.

The first qualitative study focused on land management and democratic governance in metropolitan Johannesburg and was carried out in 2006–2007. This study interrogated the factors that shape where and how the urban poor access land, housing and services and how they satisfy their urban economic needs. The study inquired on how from an administrative position, land and housing were acquired, held, regulated and transferred in Johannesburg. Furthermore, it critically interrogated how processes of gaining ownership of houses in cities affected the livelihoods of the poor. This involved looking at how the poor could practically be incorporated into economic life to assuage the negative livelihood consequences of spatial apartheid. Most of the issues relating to this paper were highlighted during in-depth interviews with key informants. In-depth interviews allowed for detailed discussion of both pre-conceived and emerging issues.

The second qualitative study was a shorter follow-up to the first study and focused on understanding community participation and its after-effects as narrated by residents of Diepkloof. These issues had arisen during the first study and were therefore interrogated in detail for this paper. The study confined itself to in-depth discussions with key informants, some of whom had been identified during the first study and some who were identified using the snowballing technique. Narratives of respondents were gathered which covered the total period respondents resided in Diepkloof. This was done to obtain a clear picture of historical factors that formed and shaped present perceptions and views about the self, the other, the community, land and housing access.

The data was therefore unpacked and analysed thematically focusing on understanding the underlying meaning of respondents' statements while also seeking to identify important lessons that could help inform community participatory processes in future. A total of 66 respondents were involved in this study, which may raise questions of representivity. However, this number is sufficient for the qualitative and intensive research style adopted by this research.

Diepkloof Historical Background

Location and Land Shortage

Diepkloof is Soweto's eastern suburb located approximately 15 km southwest of Johannesburg. It comprises of an old township (Diepkloof Zones 1–6), old hostels, a small rich enclave (Diepkloof Extension) and an informal settlement (Elias Motswaledi) all located within a land area of 2.5 km^2. The process of community participation discussed in this paper took place in Diepkloof Zones 1–6, which is generally known as Diepkloof and will be referred to as such for the remainder of the paper.

Diepkloof was established around 1959 as a dormitory resettlement township for black victims of forced state removals mainly from Alexandra (Lebelo 1988). Forced removals and other historical processes politicised the establishment of Diepkloof and the lives of its residents who developed a dislike for the state that has prevailed to this day, although declining.

The Diepkloof zones were segmented into ethnic sections and these sections were and are still defined and referred to by the dominant ethnic group. For instance, areas

set aside for the Shangaan-, Zulu- and Sotho-speaking people were and are known as EmaShangaaneni, EmaZulwini and EbaSuthwini, respectively. "Ema" loosely translates to "where-in" or "for". Therefore, EmaShangaaneni would mean, "where-in the Shangaani live". Social relations in early Diepkloof were characterised by inter-ethnic clashes. Therefore, during the formative years of Diepkloof, identity, geographical and social spaces were ethnicised by the then apartheid administration. Ethnic groups had dominion over ethnic territories and no individual or group had universal Diepkloof community membership. Ethnic clashes only began to wane after close to a decade of continuous interaction amongst members of the community. Over time, residents managed to transcend ethnic animosity so as to achieve a self-definition that had given prominence to non-ethnic identities due to the intermingling of residents across ethnic lines. Therefore, ethnic identities have not been a strong factor in shaping identity groups within the community, which will be discussed further in this paper.

Diepkloof is represented in Fig. 1 by the large area labelled Diepkloof. Diepkloof Extension is visible to the east and Elias Motswaledi to the southwest, with the hostels situated to the south of the Baileyspruit River. The only available spaces for development as shown in Fig. 1 are the few small open spaces, which would not allow for meaningful single structure housing development. There is also no room for outward expansion as shown in Fig. 2 below, due to location. Notably, to the north of Diepkloof are mine dumps; to the east lies a soccer stadium and an exhibition centre and further east, the city of Johannesburg. To the south is a new mall, industrial developments and the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, and to the West and northwest are the suburbs of Orlando East and Noordgesig, respectively. This shows that there is no possibility of developing houses within Diepkloof or in its immediate vicinity as a response to housing shortages in the area.

However, Diepkloof is seen as an attractive residential area for many due to its close proximity to the Johannesburg central business district and vibrant industrial sites. As a result, in-migration significantly contributes towards an increasing population size. In 2001, Diepkloof had a population size of 104,098 persons (Census 2001). Figure 2 also represents the population density of Diepkloof. As can
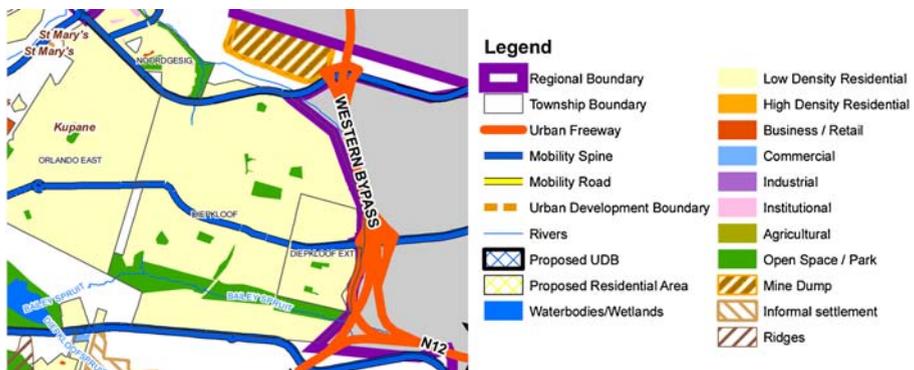

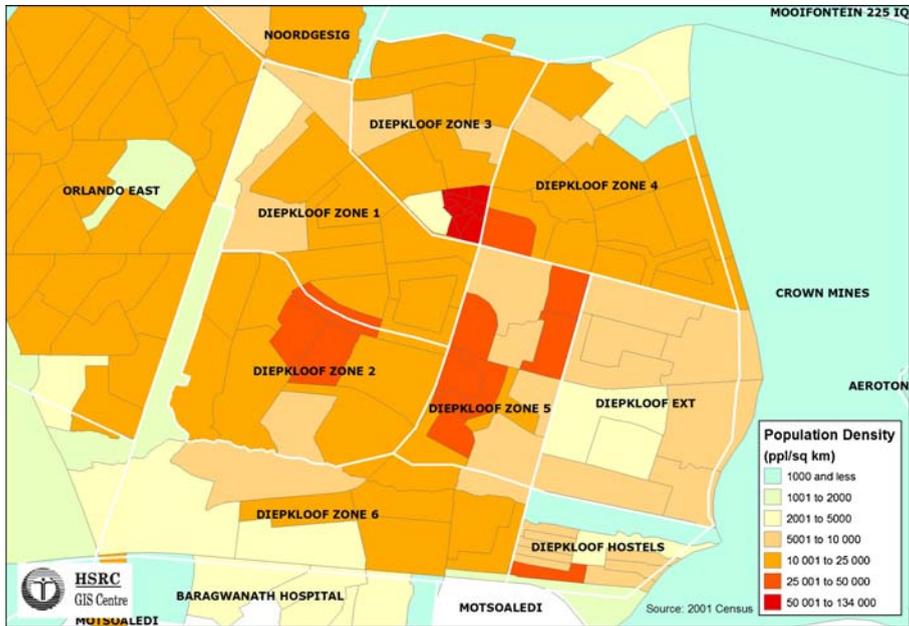Fig. 1 Broad land uses in Diepkloof. Source: Draft RSDF 2008

Fig. 2 Population density of Diepkloof. Source: STATS SA Census 2001

be seen, Zones 1–6 have relatively higher population density levels as compared to Diepkloof Extension and the Hostels.

High population density levels along with a growing population and a lack of space for outward and inward expansion are factors that shape the context of housing shortage in Diepkloof. In response to the housing shortage problem, authorities within the Johannesburg metropolitan municipality mooted the idea of developing high-rise residential flats in open spaces within Diepkloof to alleviate the housing problem. This idea was then taken to the local community for discussion, which resulted in a community participatory process. The after-effects of this process are the focus of discussion in this paper.

Identity Groups Comprising the Community Today

The population of Diepkloof largely falls into two major identity groups. The first group comprises of those individuals who lived in the area from pre-1994. Majority are members of families that were allocated houses by the apartheid government. Members of this group purport to own Diepkloof. The second group consists of individuals who started living in Diepkloof after 1994. These are either tenants or people who bought houses from individual sellers. The two major identity groups are made up of interconnected subgroups. However, group distinction is sometimes not very clear as some subgroup members easily qualify for membership in other subgroups depending on history, circumstances and interests.

A closer look at how groups and subgroups link and break is important here. The pre-1994 group comprises of subgroups such as that of "former Alexander residents" and its

descendants and those who came from elsewhere during the same period. These subgroups are differentiated by places of origin but united by a shared history of forced removals and struggles against the apartheid regime among other factors. Origin is a defining factor that segments original groups while shared history with its universal appeal is a unifying factor that sometimes overshadows concerns with origin. Nearly all individuals and majority of elders recognised and revered for standing against the apartheid regime come from these two subgroups. The post-1994 group comprise of tenants who were raised either in Diepkloof or outside and immigrants who purchased houses in the area. Some tenants are sons and daughters of Diepkloof homeowners and therefore partly belong to the pre-1994 identity group. Their history and attachment to Diepkloof identifies them with the pre-1994 group while their tenancy and migratory character makes them share an identity with the post-1994 group. This emphasises the multiplicity of identities inherent in the Diepkloof community. As it can be seen, ethnicity is not a defining factor of these identity groups.

Community Participation

Community participation could be understood as the direct involvement of the citizenry in the affairs of planning, governance and overall development programmes at local or grassroots level (Williams 2006). It involves how and why members of a community are brought into these affairs (Davidson et al. 2006). The importance of community participation is said to draw from three main factors. Firstly, it is said to allow for cost reduction through the utilisation of local labour and expertise (Davidson et al. 2006). Secondly, it potentially leads to the implementation of appropriate responses through the involvement of locals in collective decision-making (Davidson et al. 2006). Thirdly, it helps in directing scarce resources towards the more needy identified by fellow locals (Mayavo 2002; Davidson et al. 2006). Thus, community participation is projected as an undertaking that results in the empowerment of the local population. However, it also has numerous non-benevolent political significances.

Although, in principle, community participation entails the involvement of local actors in the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects, in practise it sometimes tends to be confined to specific activities. As such, community participation could also be understood as local involvement within a continuum of possibilities where locals may participate only as providers of labour, in decision-making or at all levels (Davidson et al. 2006). The level of local involvement is circumstantial since there are no rules that prescribe levels of involvement (Lizarralde and Massyn 2008). In Diepkloof, for instance, community participation was confined to the discussion of a proposed idea of building high-rise residential flats. Minimal involvement of the local population was undertaken as the participation process was thought to be simply aimed at bringing them together to endorse an idea than to achieve empowerment and capacity building (Hemson 2007; Khan and Haupt 2006; Mathekga and Buccus 2006; Williams 2006).

Stressing the importance of community participation, Hauptmann argues that involvement, "gives people a better understanding of their own interests and the interests of others, and, in some cases, brings them to see what would be best for the entire group" (2001: 398). However, this depends on the level at which locals are involved (Moote et al. 1997: 877). It is added that participation facilitates "decision

implementation by resolving conflicts during the planning process, rather than delaying implementation of completed plans while decisions are reviewed through appeals and adjudication" (Moote et al. 1997: 877). It could also be noted that failure to resolve conflicts during the planning process also delays implementation.

Community participation in housing delivery therefore could be understood as a localised collective learning process where all stakeholders acquire and share information and learn to accept responsibility for decisions while working towards achieving the shared objective of improving delivery (Moote et al. 1997). Therefore, it can be seen that acknowledgement and tolerance of different interests and knowledge, pursuit of cooperation and deliberate minimisation of clashes along interest, knowledge and power lines reinforce community participation.

Even though community participation is understood as above, current debates (Ballard 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou 2008) on participation have highlighted that participation as formally outlined in policy is not working in practise especially institutional participatory mechanisms currently in place (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008). Furthermore, Ballard (2008) goes on to argue that 'invited' spaces of participation result in deligitimising existing 'invented' spaces of participation. This should be kept in mind when unpacking the outcomes of the community participation process in Diepkloof, which can be seen as an 'invited' space of participation.

Community Participation in Diepkloof

Community participation in Diepkloof attempted to involve the local population in discussing the idea of constructing residential flats on a few open spaces within the township. This was seen by local authorities as the best solution for a context that had a huge land and housing shortage while faced with a large population that was averse to relocation. Residents are said to have expressed aversion towards being allocated houses outside Diepkloof because, on the one hand, they enjoyed a strong sense of attachment to place and on the other, had established livelihood strategies supported by local structures and relations, which would be disrupted by relocation. Any form of relocation was therefore seen to be akin to and reminiscent of the 1950s forced removals. The idea of belonging to a community, cooperation and harmonious association with others, the sharing of common interests and identities seemingly constituted what it meant to be a person living in Diepkloof (Alperson 2003).

Public discussions were organised and publicised by administrative officials. They were held in open spaces and on a rotational basis across zones. Participation was said to be voluntary and individuals were encouraged to express their thoughts without reservation. Community leaders, the elderly, youth, tenants and landlords all openly expressed their opinions, agreed and disagreed with one another as individuals or members of specific identity groups during the participatory process.

It is noted that discussions sometimes degenerated into heated arguments mainly between older residents of Diepkloof, especially those with a history of political activism, landlords and other respected vocal persons who saw themselves as authentic authoritative voices of the community and other members. They attempted to intimidate and silence weaker others although they sometimes confronted one another. In some instances, disagreements tended to degenerate into confrontation

and antagonism. The administration is said to have unceremoniously withdrawn from Diepkloof. The reasons for the termination were not communicated to the Diepkloof public either upon withdrawal or afterwards. Therefore, community members could only speculate on what caused the withdrawal and what the way forward shall be. These issues are discussed in detail below.

Heterogeneity and Fragmentation

Heterogeneity of identities played a part in influencing the trajectory and effect of public discussions in Diepkloof. It is noted that members of identity groups defend ideas that supported and reflected their group interests, history and worldviews during the public discussions. Therefore, disagreements, consensus and conflicts were largely between identity groups.

It is also noted that, in many instances, views were tied to history and were defended by those who either shared or revered that history. For instance, many of those who opposed the construction of flats in open spaces attached specific historical significance to these spaces. Those within this identity group argued that they needed these open spaces for interactive purposes such as for meetings, social functions and for recreational purposes. A 59-year-old female resident of Zone 1 stated that:

> We confronted agents of apartheid in those small spaces. Children and youths play in them. We produced legendary footballers such as Lucas Radebe because we had those spaces for soccer and other games. We therefore do not want flats to take-up that space.

The older generation of residents argued that Diepkloof managed to transcend ethnic divisions and antagonism partly through close interaction that took place in these open spaces. This would not have been possible if there were no open spaces wherein residents could interact from time to time. Therefore, open spaces were seen by this group to have assisted to overcome administratively intended containerisation within ethnic space. Interaction is also seen to have helped in the construction of a shared history, cemented and given impetus by the need to resist oppressive activities of the apartheid state. This history recognised the residents' collective victim hood, the need for solidarity in dealing with adversity and the importance of defending and celebrating residence in a well-located place. A shared appreciation of residence in Diepkloof, which occurred regardless of the history that punctuated Diepkloof's establishment, largely drew from its convenient location. This assisted in the development of a universal Diepkloof identity, which eroded fragmentary ethnic identities. Therefore, to older residents of Diepkloof, the open spaces embody fundamental historical meaning that transformed these spaces from being idle desolate pieces of land to important sites upon which transformative and enriching social and political activities took place and continue to take place.

Age difference, social capital and status were also important factors that affected the progress of discussions. For instance, some older people who commanded respect due to their accomplishments during the struggle against apartheid were displeased by the fact that young people and later-day migrants publicly challenged their views. These older people have found it difficult to understand why permanent "owners" of a residential

area would be publicly embarrassed by tenants who were simply passing-by. A female resident of Zone 4 argued that Diepkloof belongs to the elders, and they should have been consulted first before these public processes began. She argued:

> How do we, owners of Diepkloof, discuss matters that concern us at the same gathering with tenants and children who can move to another area tomorrow? Who owns Diepkloof after all?

Therefore, the question of who belongs to Diepkloof and who does not featured prominently in the public discussions. Members of some identity groups such as elders and house owners claimed to belong to Diepkloof more than members of other identity groups and in so doing allowed the insider/outsider division to disturb relations between those who had co-existed as members of the Diepkloof community for many years.

Tenants, for obvious reasons, supported the idea of the construction of flats. Some of them were children of landlords of Diepkloof, who later left their parents' homes to seek accommodation elsewhere while others were migrants. Tenants are known to have argued that the construction of flats would allow them to continue living in Diepkloof, a township they felt attached to. Tenants accused those who opposed the idea of being too comfortable and insensitive to the plight of the marginalised younger "other". These younger people argued that elders were nostalgic of the past and wanted to preserve the open spaces to keep the past alive instead of continuing to work for a better life for all as they had done in the past. Furthermore, they argued that there is a need for the preservation of memory, norms and values that drove struggles against apartheid and united people of diverse ethnicities and not the preservation of physical sites. A Zone 3 migrant tenant argued:

> These old people are cruel and insensitive to the housing needs of the young. We pay them rent every month and they continue to argue that we are crowding them and when the opportunity comes for us to get our own places, they fight it.

Some amongst the children of land owners, who continued to reside in their parents' or grandparents' houses but without ownership status, also provided their perspective. They argued that it was important to preserve the open spaces not for nostalgic purposes but for economic reasons. To them, the open spaces were not really 'open' since they were used by the community for various social and political activities over the years and more importantly for economic purposes since 1994. As emphasised by a 34-year-old male resident of Zone 5:

> By regarding these spaces as open, they mean they are not being used but look at all of them except one, at any given time of the day and tell me if they are vacant. I suggest that space be found near Diepkloof for the development of Diepkloof Extension 2. We cannot develop Diepkloof into the sky.

Therefore, to the business minded, especially those in the informal sector, open spaces were an important asset. To them, the argument that in Diepkloof there were open unutilised spaces that awaited exploitation was inaccurate and misleading. If anything, there was a need for more space for economic activities as evidenced by the fact that many residents who ran small businesses did so within their residential stands because they could not access space elsewhere. These economic activities were important since they contributed to transforming Diepkloof from being a mere dormitory township to a

vibrant residential place wherein livelihood sustaining economic activities took place. Incidentally, this would turn Diepkloof into a "habitable, stable and sustainable … residential" environment that "ensures viable households and communities" that the government's housing efforts seek to achieve (Housing Act 1997).

However, intolerance to diversity and multiplicity of opinions negatively affected the progress of community participation. Group members not only defended their views but attacked the opinions and personalities of others. This continued well after the participatory process and sustained social tension, which threatened social cohesion. Tension and animosity prevailed and were slowly causing societal fragmentation since it was not diffused due to the abrupt ending of the participatory process. Insiders had begun to express disagreement not only with the ideas of "outsiders" but also with their physical presence in the township.

It is evident that the Diepkloof society comprised of nuanced, complex and interweaving multiple communities. The existence of these smaller communities proved problematic for interventionists, as they were a source of divergent and sometimes conflictual interests and views. However, there was nothing extraordinary about this heterogeneity as it is a characteristic of every community. But the existence of multiple ideas creates problems when there is need to arrive at one acceptable idea and decision when those guiding the process do not have the skills to drive it toward such an objective. Problems such as whose idea should be embraced and whose should be discarded usually arise. This results in a knowledge battle with groups wanting to legitimate their own knowledge and to dismiss or trivialise that of the other and usually weaker groups. This confirms Knorr-Certina's (1983) affirmation that knowledge is not interest and value free and, more importantly, that its production responds to power dynamics. Under such circumstance, difference has to be properly handled for consensus to be reached. Poor handling allows multiplicity of identities to be fault lines along which the larger community fragments.

In Diepkloof, the impact that multiple identities would have on participation was underestimated from the onset and this affected the process. The community, which appeared as a homogenous entity from the outside, proved to constitute of vibrant identity groups that had varied conflicting interests and opinions. The tension that arose between identity groups could not abate due to lack of deployment of appropriate conciliatory measures. Drivers of the participatory process appear to have overlooked the fact that communities are characterised and affected by "spatiality of power relations" that position some individuals and groups as weaker or stronger than others and therefore locates them in a potential state of conflict producing competition (Fontein 2007: 3). These power relations within a social space not only affect the way individuals and groups engage but also define who should oppose whose opinion in public without upsetting amicable co-existence.

Expectations and Disillusionment

Community participation in Diepkloof raised community members' hopes and expectations of accessing houses. Many residents assumed that the public participation process indicated that the municipality was on the verge of beginning to develop the contentious flats. As such, the process of public engagement was seen as a precursor to the commencement of the construction process and some

community members did not take the participatory process as simply an opinion-sharing engagement as aimed by the administration. For them, it was about endorsing the idea of developing flats to allow for the beginning of housing development. This reflects that stakeholders in a participatory process have a different understanding of the meaning and the essence of their involvement in the process and expect different outcomes unless this is made clear at the outset.

Many amongst those who expected housing development to follow soon after the discussions became despondent when the process abruptly ended. Despondence metamorphosed into disillusionment as time passed with no feedback from the authorities. Disillusionment revitalised mistrust for the government that dates back to the days of apartheid and was fuelled by 13 years of unfulfilled post-apartheid service delivery promises. The participatory process as noted below had appeared to mark the beginning of government's gravitation away from political rhetoric towards implementation, but this proved to be just an illusion. One senior resident of Zone 6 argued:

> When they called us for a meeting and told us they wanted us to discuss the housing shortage problem in our area, some of us were ecstatic. We had waited for long to dialogue. We hoped that a lasting solution would be found and implementation would follow. But before we knew it, they disappeared.

The 'disappearance' or withdrawal of the authorities was a big blow to those who envisaged themselves being allocated houses in the near future. A young male tenant from Thohoyandou who was renting a shack in front of a main house in Zone 4, said:

> Those meetings raised our hopes as tenants. We thought the administration was serious. We thought that we were engaging in dialogues that would positively transform lives. But now where does this leave us?

Some members of the community have dismissed the notion that implementation failed to take place due to other members expressing objection to the idea. A 66-year-old female house owner from Zone 3 argued:

> Yes we differed in our views as residents on whether to build flats or not, but that is always expected when such meetings take place. Is it why they disappeared?

> Who will take the administrators seriously next time? My hope is that they return soon to conclude what they started before we begin to wonder why they came in the first place.

The disagreement that transpired was therefore seen by some residents as typical of what happens when an important issue is publicly discussed in any community. They therefore saw disagreement as an integral aspect of the community participatory process. Some amongst the despondent had concluded that they were taken through a process whose aim was not to find a solution to the housing problem but to give a glimmer of hope that would pacify those who awaited housing delivery.

Some residents argued that the housing authorities were not well prepared to drive the participatory process forward and were therefore overwhelmed by its complexity and retreated. One naturalised South African of Angolan descent who has lived in Diepkloof for 28 years argued that the authorities withdrew because it was the only choice they had since they were ill prepared for the job. He noted that the

authorities' major handicap was that they did not know how to resolve major contestations, how to cool tempers down and how to make all contributors remain focused on pertinent issues. He further argued:

> A lot of time was spent on unnecessary confrontation between residents. My suggestion, which nobody took seriously, was that we split into groups, deliberate on important issues, come back so that representatives from each group reported back and then continue that way. I wonder why the government was represented by people who did not know how to do their job.

Therefore, what the participatory process needed, if one could infer from these contributions, was well-informed tactical drivers with skills to minimise personalisation of opinions and direct confrontation between contributors. This would have curtailed the personality clashes and conflicts that resulted. A little innovation during the process and an explained withdrawal at the end would have galvanised some remnants of trust in the government.

Other residents, as noted below, argued that the participation process proceeded in a chaotic manner and its subsequent collapse was consistent with and reflective of the government's lack of commitment towards the resolution of challenges that face ordinary poor black communities. Instead, the government was thought to be inclined more towards dividing than uniting the poor. Therefore, the government was accused of having sent "operatives" to Diepkloof to divide the residents in the guise of seeking a solution to a pertinent and crucial social problem. This point was argued by a 63-year-old man known for his heroic confrontation with the apartheid state:

> The government thrives on dividing and ruling people. Look at apartheid. It put us in ethnic zones and told each ethnic group that it was the best and that the "other" was inferior and dangerous. Neighbours of a different ethnicity were given negative labels. And we fought until when we came to realize that we were the losers. You see, it wanted us to go on killing one another while it controlled us.

He went on to say:

> Look at what is happening now. The landowner is saying to the tenant you publicly disrespected me, the same is happening between youths and elders, between migrants and senior residents. Yet they were supposed to have been led towards finding a solution in a manner that would leave them more united in celebration of their continuous successes in diversity. But what happened is what governments do, they divide and rule us. We need to unite once again and to fight for what is ours.

Community participation in Diepkloof for some therefore resembled a growing distrust of government, which stemmed from the past divisive and somewhat manipulative behaviour of government. The community therefore used these past actions of government as a reason for why the community emerged from the participatory process worse than they had been before it took place. However, regardless of what government's motives were, it is clear that community participation in Diepkloof raised hopes of the community members who were left disappointed and disillusioned.

It is important, however, to note that the problem of identifying proper approaches of implementing community participation as faced in Diepkloof is fundamentally a universal one. As noted by Emmett (2000), community participation as a process still

lacks a clear methodology hence it remains unsystematic. As such, guiding or sharing knowledge about how best to conduct community participation in different contexts is inherently difficult (Emmett 2000). Furthermore, community participation demands contextually appropriate application, which makes it difficult to develop a singular standardised methodology (Emmett 2000). In concurrence, Webler et al. (2001) argue that community participation is a multidimensional process that unfolds differently in different contexts and therefore cannot possibly have a singular standardised way of being implemented. However, it thrives on a strict observance of fairness and competence (Webler et al. 2001). Webler's views therefore give impetus to the assertion that lack of competence rather than methodological inadequacies appeared to have been the major weakness that crippled the community participatory process in Diepkloof. As also highlighted by Forester (2006), skilful mediation is needed to prevent debate and unintended outcomes.

Lessons Learnt: Discussion

The Diepkloof experience reveals the complexities and difficulties involved with promoting participatory democracy through facilitating public participation and debate within the public sphere (Kellner 2000).[2] It is evident that democratic processes cannot easily be promoted by people who are not enthusiastic about democracy and within a context in which democratic tendencies are almost subdued by authoritarian inclinations. For instance, concerns with age, property ownership and social capital among other concerns created issues of power and identity interests that impeded democratic debates. It also became evident that open access to involvement that the participatory process seeks to promote through public discussions was threatened by power contestations (Fraser 1990). Therefore, difference and inequality remained central defining characteristics influencing debate and this clearly reinforces the idea that a community constitutes of many publics, many identity groups with different interests and power bases that affect articulation of issues and individual and group relations. Yes, participation is central to the creation of a democratic society but to have genuine participation; citizens should be informed, active, organised and should be capable of making an argument (Kellner 2000). It is then that citizens become a significant transformative democratic political force (Kellner 2000).

   Lack of information creates suspicion while lack of knowledge of how the state functions, also raises expectations at wrong times and this as already indicated negatively impacts on both the participatory process and its after-effects. Diepkloof therefore revealed the difficulties involved with making state involvement work towards driving democratic processes within arenas of public discourse (Fraser 1990). State involvement appeared to have segmented citizens into groups that competed in drawing the state to their side instead of promoting social transformation through participation. However, this does not challenge or invalidate the importance of structural provision of social justice toward democratic stability and the realisation of citizenship but reflects the need for paying attention to and guarding against negative potential of state centrality in community participation (Kymlicka and Norman 1994).

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[2] http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm

Adequate knowledge of multiple identities existing in a community is also important for intervention. For instance, such binaries as landlord and tenant, original residents and migrants tend to negatively influence attitudes toward one another during public discussions. Without proper handling, they tend to stall progress as they situate actors in fixed group interests. These binaries are realistic but are only few of many which can be identified especially considering that many members of these identity groups share a specific identity within other identity groups at a higher or lower level. With regard to this, community participation requires skilful management to minimise and diffuse tension and antagonism that arise. The contestations that arise should be understood as significant struggles for representation and should not be allowed to dehumanise or negatively portray others (Childs 1997). Struggle for self-representation are important as they promote equality, participation, acknowledgement of difference, multiplicity, and recognition and open avenues for advancing inclusion in a democracy (Taylor 1995; Young 1995). Different individuals and groups in a society become full members of a community if they are visible and heard, that is, if they define their problem and identify solutions. This view gains support as Hanyane outlines that every society, is made up of different communities and each community has its own unique needs, demands, expectations and, most essentially, interests to protect and to advance and this may give rise to conflictual opinions during public discussions (Hanyane 2005). However, at the end of such a process, there should be ways of encouraging all contesting voices to reach a compromise (Forester 2006).

Poor communication also creates problems for a participatory process. For instance, in Diepkloof, authorities were accused of reducing a critical issue such as housing delivery to an academic matter that required consensus or majority appreciation to be taken forward because their intention was not clear from the beginning. In the absence of accurate information, those facing an information vacuum tend to embrace anything sensible that comes their way. For instance, some residents of Diepkloof were convinced that the unconcluded participatory process was undertaken as a mere formality to fulfil ritualistic democratic requirements than to solicit citizen contributions towards policy formulation. This adds to the debate that current institutional participatory mechanisms are not working properly in practise (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008). Furthermore, the process of community participation in Diepkloof can be seen as an example of what Ballard (2008) outlines as an 'invited' space of participation and is seen as an institutional (municipal) participatory mechanism. This 'invited' participatory space has deligitimised existing 'invented' spaces of participation within the Diepkloof community and can be seen through the discontent and disillusionment expressed by community members.

Therefore, drivers of community participation should prevent this by always considering engaging with local leadership and influential members of a community, as they could assist in managing the post-consultation healing process using their locally accepted leadership and guidance. This also emphasises the idea that drivers of the participatory process ought to have prior knowledge of the identity composition of the community in question, its leadership and predominant ideas constituting its socio-cultural milieu. This knowledge would provide a measure of preparedness in dealing with local knowledge and perceptions. For instance, in the Diepkloof experience, adequate prior historical knowledge could have assisted interventionists understand the political, economic and socio-cultural value of land

for the insider although it might have looked desolate and 'open' to an outsider. This knowledge would have been taken into consideration by interventionists as the participatory process unfolded.

Furthermore, history is also vital to communities that see themselves as past victims of power. Such communities may want to preserve sites and spaces that carry historical significance, such as those reminiscent of their moments of victim hood or reflective of their heroics. Therefore, a blind effort toward transformation of such a geographical space would be seen as inconsiderate and contemptuous. In actual fact, intervention needs to show recognition of a targeted groups achievements, values and aspirations in order to gain acceptance. This is important for countries whose negative colonial history influences acceptance by those it seeks to serve, like South Africa and other African countries.

Unintended consequences of community participation have far-reaching effects. As noted, in Diepkloof, the process robbed some residents of a sense of equality and identity as well as a sense of self-worth, which are supposed to emanate from inclusion and belonging (Hanyane 2005). Therefore, the process was not beneficial to the residents of Diepkloof as their housing shortage problem remained unresolved, their trust in government eroded as their society faced fragmentation.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that community participation has far-reaching negative effects if not undertaken in the correct manner and, if discontinued, results in sensitive issues (in this case housing) to be unresolved. The Diepkloof experience, which neither resulted in collective decision-making nor in solving the housing shortage problem, shows that there are instances where community participation tends to yield negative instead of positive results. This further provides evidence to support the current debate that institutional participatory mechanisms are not working in practise (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008; Ballard 2008) and sometimes provide unintended outcomes like social tension, disillusionment, conflict and societal fragmentation as shown in this case.

Therefore, the positive attributes of community participation are sometimes adversely affected by the unintended and usually unknown negative effects. Recognition of the complexity of the participatory process, and its propensity to having unintended negative effects, is a very important aspect as highlighted in this paper. Adequate knowledge of the negative effects of community participation would help planners, implementers and other stakeholders such as community leaders and ordinary beneficiaries to guard against and put in place mechanisms that thwart or assuage the ramifications of unintended consequences.

This article has also shown that community participation is a complex process that is difficult to drive forward without adequate knowledge and conflict resolution skills. Therefore, implementers require proper training on how to handle and conclude community deliberations and this should be grounded in substantial knowledge of the relevant community's socio-cultural and historical realities. Adequate knowledge helps drivers of community participation in shaping intended outcomes of a process that is inherently characterised by conflict, consensus, contradictions and contestations.

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