



Development in Focus

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Empowering communities to effectively participate in local developmental processes



Picture: Michael Walker / Cape Times

Foundation for Contemporary Research

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Vision

Communities in which capable leaders and strong civil society structures co-operate to promote community development and participation in development processes that address priority community needs.

Mission

To build capacity in marginalised communities and civil society by enhancing leadership, strengthening structures and expanding networks that facilitate development and mobilise communities to participate in processes that address priority needs.



Mandisi Majavu

editorial

2011 Local government elections

2011 is the year of local government elections. Hence political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) have already commenced electioneering. As an

organisation based in a politically contested province, we are interested to see how the DA, the ANC, and the Congress of the People (Cope) will perform in the Western Cape.

The Democratic Alliance

The DA in the Western Cape will enter the 2011 local government election fray politically strong. Last year, the DA joined forces with Patricia de Lille's Independent Democrats (ID), and that on its own should give it a competitive edge. Additionally, the DA already controls the provincial and Cape Town city governments. And, according to newspaper reports, "the DA has won 12 new seats in by-elections around South Africa since the 2009 general elections, with nine of those victories occurring in 2010. Eight of those 12 new seats were captured from the ANC..."

The African National Congress

On the other hand, the ANC in the Western Cape is a divided and a weak organisation, riddled with racial tension. The Cape Times recently reported that ANC's Membathisi Mdladlana is "worried sick" at the divisions within the Western Cape ANC before the local government elections. Further, the organisation has not yet nominated their ward candidates in the province. The leadership battle between Marius Fransman and Mcebisi Skwatsha is the source of the problem and at the core of it is the question of how to win over the average 'coloured' voter. It remains to be seen how the ANC resolves this issue.

Cope

As for Cope, perhaps its main challenge is to come up with a strategy to overcome the debilitating power struggle between Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa that has plagued the organisation throughout 2010.

The ANC and Cope have about three months to get their houses in order. Although the government has not announced the election dates, it is expected that they will take place in May or June, according to newspaper reports.

10 Years of Local Government

What makes the upcoming fourth local government elections historically significant is that 2010 marked the anniversary of ten years of local government. Interestingly, in the same year government-sponsored research shows that local government is in shambles; many municipalities are simply unable to deliver services to communities. Three articles explore some of the concerns faced by local government. The first, written by FCR's Mandisi Majavu, puts municipal revolts in context. The second investigates the demolition of shacks by the City of Cape Town in Hangberg, and is co-authored by Development Action Group's Ardiel Soeker and Kailash Bhana. The third article, written by Rhodes' academic Richard Pithouse, interrogates the concept of service delivery.

Monitoring Xenophobia

Also in this issue of Development in Focus is an article that presents an historical analysis of the violent May 2008 xenophobia outbreak. It asks how local government might be empowered to improve accountability as well as monitor and counter xenophobic sentiments and violence. Entitled 'Xenophobia: Looking back, moving forward', the article's author is FCR's Mandisi Majavu.

As simple as ABCD?

The final article is authored by Community Connections and shares their experiences of working with poor communities in the Western Cape. It argues for what it terms an 'Asset Based Community Development' (ABCD) approach because it provides a holistic understanding of community development and its complexities, arguing for community-led development and stimulating an opportunity-seeking mindset.

In conclusion...

I trust that you will find these thought-provoking articles interesting. If you have any comments, ideas or stories you would like read or know more about, kindly direct them to mandisi@fcr.org.za.

Finally, remember that you can register for the upcoming elections at your local voting station between 8am and 5pm on either March, 5 or 6 2011. According to IEC website, the full timetable for the elections will be published once the election date has been proclaimed. Meanwhile, you can access your voter registration details by SMSing your ID number to **32810** (normal rates apply) or by calling the following **toll-free** number (from a landline): **0800 11 8000**.

MAKING SENSE OF MUNICIPAL REVOLT

By Mandisi Majavu



The 'Final Delivery Agreement – Outcome 9' points out that 2010 marked the anniversary of ten years of democratic local government. The document further notes that many municipalities are unable to deliver services to communities and further, the same municipalities fail dismally to engage in empowering public discourse with communities. Hence, communities 'feel alienated and disconnected from decision-making processes and feel disempowered in influencing the affairs of the municipality.'

It is for the same reasons highlighted above that poor communities across South Africa engage in municipal revolts. In 2009, the *Mail & Guardian* reported that 'a wave of protests' have erupted in townships nationwide over the lack of public service delivery¹. On 26 October this year (2010), the *Sowetan* reported that a four-week services delivery protest in Khayelitsha had spread to Philippi, 'with hundreds of residents barricading busy roads with burning tyres'.²

In an attempt to understand why these protests tend to take on a violent character, the government established an Ad Hoc Committee on Co-ordinated Oversight on Service Delivery to 'specifically investigate the underlying reasons for the often violent protests over lack of service delivery.'

The Committee found that local government's challenges vary from service delivery backlogs to capacity constraints and financial mismanagement. According to the Ad Hoc Committee, the Local Government Turnaround Strategy is an appropriate tool

to deal with these challenges. Regarding violence, which the Committee was tasked to investigate among other things, the report simply states that the Cabinet has previously condemned the violent protests 'whilst accepting the right to protest and the reality that some of these concerns are genuine...'

Richard Pithouse, an academic at Rhodes University, argues that as long as the state exists to advance the interests and agenda of the elite, the state's legal right to declare popular forms of revolt illegitimate has no moral standing. Pithouse adds that when a social system is not functioning, people have every right to challenge it directly and beyond the parameters that it sets for engagement:

*"If blockading roads with burning tyres can go some way towards turning the hidden crisis of poverty, often experienced as an endless, private and shameful disaster by the poor, into a public and urgent crisis for elites that calls their right to rule as they do into question, then we must recognise the road blockade as a potentially social action and the automatic defence of business as usual as inherently anti-social."*³

People have learnt that the blockading of roads is an effective tactic to get a response from government. For instance, the government has responded to municipal revolts by establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on Co-ordinated Oversight on Service Delivery, as well as achieving a Final Delivery Agreement – Outcome 9, a document which aims to improve service delivery. Additionally, the government has introduced what it terms the 'Local Government Turnaround Strategy' (LGTAS) to deal with factors undermining local government, as well as 'to restore good performance in the country's municipalities.' The LGTAS document further points out that the government's goal is to turn municipalities around from struggling with failure to fully functioning government institutions that effectively execute their service delivery mandates.

Neo-liberalism theory

Academics such as Patrick Bond view neo-liberal policies that the post-apartheid South African government adopted in the early 1990s as the root cause of the socio-economic

1. Brooks 2009
2. Obose 2010

3. Pithouse 2010

problems facing the country. Bond states that the post-apartheid government chose in 1994 to adopt a neo-liberal philosophy, 'with a small reform here and there, while posturing as if social democracy was on the horizon.'

Neo-liberalism is a theory of political economy practice that is based on the view that human wellbeing is best advanced 'by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade'.⁴ The role of a neo-liberal state is to create and maintain an institutional framework that is consistent with neo-liberal policies. For instance, the state has to set up appropriate military structures, police, and legal structures to secure private property rights and to guarantee, 'by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets' (*Ibid*). Harvey explains that under a neo-liberal state markets favour governance by experts and elites. In other words, there is a strong preference for government by executive order and by judicial decision rather than democratic decision-making. Hence institutions such as the central bank tend to be insulated from democratic pressure under a neo-liberal state. Likewise, people are encouraged to seek solutions to their social problems through the legal system.

A case in point...

Mzonke Poni, the Chairperson of the Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shack Dwellers) in the Western Cape, wrote an article in 2009 about how the movement used the courts to advance their struggles. In that article he pointed out that the movement went to court to obtain a court interdict against the City of Cape Town (the City). The movement thought that the court interdict would help protect "the structures that we have to build to shelter ourselves and our belongings and, also, to protect our building materials against theft by the state".

However, the movement was shocked when the City ignored the interdict and just carried on demolishing some of their structures in Macassar Village. "When I tried to stop them from demolishing the structures and tried to show them the interdict so that they could see that their actions were illegal, I was threatened by arrest and rubber bullets and the demolition went ahead without them having a court order and in violation of the court interdict."⁵

The City did not stop there. It went to court to obtain its own court interdict against the movement. Consequently, the movement was interdicted for erecting structures in Macassar Village and the City argued in court that people had invaded private land.

"After their court interdict was served to the people at Macassar Village, everyone was upset because they had undermined our interdict and now they wanted us to be banned by their interdict. As a result of that people started to protest, barricading the New Road with burning tyres and stones. Immediately the guys from law enforcement responded and moved people off the road and cleared the road."

One of the lessons that the movement learnt from this experience is that the judiciary system is not accessible to all, wrote Poni.

"We have questions about the independence of certain judges. For instance, after we got the interdict against the state to force the state to obey the law and then the state went ahead and broke the law and violated the interdict we went back to court to report this. So if the judge was fair he would have ordered the arrest of the officials who ordered these criminal acts. But the judge, Mr. Van Zyl, who is an acting judge and also an SC, dismissed our application. Later, the same judge awarded an interdict to the municipality!"

Conclusion

It is partly because of these experiences with the courts that people resort to barricading roads with burning tyres and stones. Additionally, municipal revolts tend to take on a violent character partly because people feel ignored by the powers that be; people also feel dehumanised and oppressed by the social conditions under which they live.

Perhaps it is also starting to dawn on people that we are not in the midst of an ongoing National Democratic Revolution. Maybe people are beginning to understand that the NDR is nothing but an illusion designed to drive them away from the arena of political debate and action, and to reduce them to apathy and obedience, to borrow a phrase from Chomsky.

It is possible that this is the thinking behind the municipal revolts.

4. Harvey 2005
5. Poni 2009

The Service Delivery Myth

By Richard Pithouse

The service delivery myth was not actually invented in South Africa, but has been embraced with great enthusiasm. Given that one of its key assumptions is that development should be governed by expertise, and that this reinforces the rule of the few in the name of the many, we shouldn't be too surprised. We should also recall that in the 1980s struggles to democratise society from below gathered real force, and that ideas like people's education and practices like land occupations in order to found rent-free shack settlements became commonplace in the anti-apartheid struggle.

How did it evolve?

In the 1990s the idea that development would be put in the hands of ordinary women and men by extending democracy beyond the polling booth was rapidly abandoned. This was one consequence of the unstable truce forged between the ANC and older elites. What had been rendered as political, and therefore as subject to public discussion and action, during the struggle against apartheid was rendered, by mutual agreement, as technical - and therefore a matter for experts - at the dawn of parliamentary democracy in South Africa. "Depoliticisation," Jacques Rancière tells us, "is the oldest task of politics, the one which achieves its fulfilment at the brink of its end, its perfection at the brink of the abyss".

The service delivery myth is now so all-pervading that it is often assumed to be the natural measure for the performance of the state. The result is that justice, dignity, lived experience and the day-to-day practice of democracy fade into the background. The myth is so powerful that it is simply assumed to be the root cause of most protest action. It is a rare journalist who actually asks someone on a road blockade what she is protesting for before writing about the latest service delivery protest. So even when protest is, in fact, rebellion against the way in which services are delivered rather than a demand for them to be speeded up, it is often interpreted as a demand for the state to strengthen itself.

Defining the myth

The service delivery myth tells us that justice and compensation are largely a matter of technical efficiency on the part of the state; that progress is something that can be charted. We don't need to ask, "What is to be done?" because that is obvious and a waste of time; we just need to do what must be done faster. At the heart of the myth is an idea of the people as passive consumers or beneficiaries who just need to be plugged into the grid of serviced life by a benevolent state. The myth assumes that people who aren't yet plugged in are still wallowing in the legacy of apartheid and that, as backlogs are steadily overcome, they'll join the rest of us and enjoy a better life. It makes us assume that patience is a virtue and that objecting to anything other than the pace and efficiency of service delivery is counter-productive and probably the result of malicious conspiracy.

Of course the state does need to be efficient, statistics can give us important information, some things are obvious and do need to be done with urgency and we do all need decent homes, clean water, sanitation, electricity, refuse collection, safe streets and all the rest. But when we start to take the service delivery myth seriously, we can make some ridiculous assumptions.

For instance, the idea that service delivery is steadily chipping away at backlogs inherited from apartheid isn't always true. Our current social arrangements are producing new inequalities with the result that, for instance, the number of people living in shacks is growing despite the two million houses built by the post-apartheid state. The number of electricity and water connections that have been installed tells us nothing about whether people can afford these services. There are plenty of women with an electricity connection that have to get up at four in the morning to chop wood to make a fire to heat water to get their children bathed and fed before school because they cannot afford to pay for electricity. The fact that a

house has been built tells us nothing about its quality, location, size or who actually lives in it and how the decision to allocate that house was made. Moreover, progress is not always delivered by the state. There are times when an unlawful land occupation or connection to water and electricity will do much more for people than the delivery on offer from the state.

When service delivery is presented as the ultimate of what the state can do for the people and all protest is assumed to be a demand for it, commentators are sometimes puzzled by that fact that popular protests often accompany actual service delivery. In some cases this apparent paradox leads people to conclude that these protests are either the work of wicked conspirators or that they are motivated by jealousy as some see delivery arriving for others.

One reason why protest often accompanies the moment of delivery is that it can be a disaster for the very people it intends to benefit. When delivery means an eviction from a shack in a community of which you are a valued member and which is near to your work and your children's schools to a transit camp filled with strangers in the middle of nowhere, it can be a catastrophe. When delivery means the installation of a water or electricity meter to someone who previously, legally or illegally, had unregulated access to water or electricity it can also be more of a curse than a blessing. Delivery, in the form that the state currently offers it to people, is fairly frequently refused and it's not unusual for it to have to be implemented at gunpoint.

Another reason why protest and delivery are often connected is that, at least in some

places, it is routine for delivery to be mediated through local party structures for the benefit of local party leaders and their followers rather than through any kind of rational allocation. This doesn't just produce inefficiency; it also produces active exclusion that is defended by an increasing authoritarianism at the base of society. It is not at all unusual to find that people live in fear of local councillors and their ward committees and the Branch Executive Committees of the local party structures. When the technocrats point to the graphs in their power-point presentations the numbers they quote often chart real progress. But they will sometimes also refer to new forms of exclusion, sometimes backed by state and party violence.

Conclusion

Society is a lot more complicated than the service delivery myth is capable of recognising. The simplicity of the myth is part of its attraction but while it may lead to elegant PowerPoint presentations and snappy newspaper headlines, it doesn't reflect the complex reality on the ground. It actually covers up that complexity and blinds us to the fact that the forms of development that we are pursuing can often produce new forms of oppression.

Statistics can be useful tools, but they will only be able to speak to the lived reality of ordinary people with more fairness if we challenge our thinking about development and make the state - and its experts - accountable to society.

This article first appeared on The South African Civil Society Information Service website.

HANGBERG: A Question of Land Denied



Hangberg residents respond to police with stones and homemade petrol bombs - September 2010

By Ardiel Soeker and Kailash Bhana

Reading about the demolition of shacks by the City of Cape Town (the City) in Hangberg and the comments made by the City on the issue could leave one thinking that newcomers have illegally occupied land. However, this is an uprising by long-standing residents of the community, their children and grandchildren who have grown desperate with an authority that consistently applies temporary solutions to significant problems.

Background

In the 1940s the first state housing was provided for workers near the Hout Bay harbour to ensure a supply of cheap labour for the fishing industry. As the industry expanded and the population grew, a shortage of housing developed. The municipality later allowed residents to occupy land behind the council flats, on condition that they not erect permanent structures. This was an ad-hoc solution applied by the local authority to a growing problem in Hangberg.

This piecemeal approach, whether a result of lack of planning or as part of a deliberate strategy to prevent poor people's access to good land for housing, is the trigger for many informal settlement and backyard dwellers'

struggles, as is illustrated by the case of the Hangberg community.

Excluding the poor

As with most South African cities and towns, there are two worlds operating in Hout Bay; the world of the rich and the world of the poor. Wealthy South Africans have the resources to meet their housing and land needs through participating and transacting in a vigorous property market. This property market, however, excludes the poor by making property prohibitively expensive and beyond the reach of people with lower incomes.

National and local authorities have done nothing to address this market failure and there is no legal systematic way to, within a reasonable timeframe, obtain land or adequate housing if your council flat becomes too small for your family. Instead, poor people are simply expected to tolerate dismal living conditions and tenure insecurity while they spend decades, often lifetimes on waiting lists. Between 2007 and 2008 the Development Action Group (DAG) provided intensive support to the Hangberg community, building the capacity of community members to form a

project steering committee to lobby the City to upgrade the informal settlement.

Although the City approved an in-situ upgrade project, it has made slow progress. Unlike many other informal settlements where influx from rural areas causes expansion, Hangberg is a cohesive community with the primary reason for expansion being natural population growth. These are families who have always lived in Hangberg and who have, over generations, built the local economy with their skills and labour. Understandably, they want to see a housing development that allows them to remain within the Hout Bay community.

The upgrade project is sowing division among families in the community as the City expects the community to prevent any expansion of the settlement while the project continues experiencing bureaucratic delays. Undoubtedly settlement encroachment onto the firebreak of the slopes of the Sentinel does pose a disaster risk. This aside, the informal structures demolished on September 21, 2010 were the community's attempt to address natural population growth. It is also their response to the authority's failure to implement an acceptable solution to their housing needs.

In taking a 'tough stance' the premier and mayor informed Hangberg residents that the City would withdraw from the project if community members continued to build illegally. The City does not have the option of withdrawing and reneging on the principles of 'developmental local government' - nor can it deal with citizens in a paternalistic manner.

The City has not produced a plan for low-cost housing development in Hout Bay other than the upgrade project, which will meet only a fraction of the housing need. Small-scale projects such as the Hangberg upgrade must be accompanied by an overall plan to address the housing needs in Hout Bay. In the absence of such a comprehensive housing plan, there is little security for the people of Hout Bay, whether rich or poor.

The City's actions beg the question of whether it has the necessary will to address the divides between rich and poor in Hout Bay. At the moment the City is maintaining the status quo by keeping the poor out of certain areas where land is available. The conflict between residents and the police in Hangberg is unsettling for all, rich and poor alike.

Internationally it has been demonstrated that wealthy citizens would gladly subsidise

low-income housing, through taxes, if they are assured that their taxes will deliver decent housing to the poor. The law makes provision for such taxation through declaring special rating areas, but the City has failed to use it in this way, demonstrating a lack of will to solve this problem.

Communities like Hangberg, therefore, have two options. The first option is to settle for living in informal housing in order to be near to work opportunities, their support systems and to public facilities such as schools and hospitals; the second option is to live in an 'RDP house' which is generally only available by relocating to the edge of the city in places like Delft or Happy Valley, far from economic activity, public facilities and amenities.

Instead of developing a comprehensive, long-term plan for housing development for the entire municipality which addresses both current and future housing needs of all Cape Town's citizens, the City's approach to low cost housing continues creating dormitory townships. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drew attention to this trend in its recent regional review of Cape Town, which found that land use and planning regulations hamper housing delivery in Cape Town and that land use planning continues to be shaped by apartheid practices with cheap parcels of land on the urban edge, far from economic opportunities still being used for low-cost housing.

This is a simplistic response to a complex problem and one which creates further problems for the City and Western Cape Province to provide expensive new infrastructure and to make social services available. The City's built environment and land use policies have failed to create accessible and affordable neighbourhoods and resulted in a highly segregated, sprawling city that cuts off economic opportunities from the poor.

Poor families are only able to sustain their livelihoods because of their close proximity to jobs, social networks, transport and other opportunities that a city offers. Location is therefore critical for poor families' survival strategies in cities. Many will even give up access to basic services like water, electricity and sanitation to be closer to jobs and social networks that provide emotional, physical and financial support.

Unfortunately in South Africa well-located land is inaccessible to poor families because of its cost, which is driven up by market forces

and unregulated by the state. To improve their location poor people live in informal settlements, rent rooms or backyards. These are often expensive options but is evidence of poor people making rational choices when faced with the option of living on the city's periphery with no prospect of economic opportunities and where the costs of public transport exceeds income.

Frequently the state sells off well-located land and buildings while it continues to locate poor people in housing on the urban periphery. The gap between rich and poor is exacerbated when existing inner city land is developed for town houses and luxury apartments or yet another mall is built for the rich and the middle class. DAG is concerned with the state's failure to recognise the social value of land, especially scarce urban land as its use can promote either social and economic inclusion or exclusion.

Why do people have to be relocated to the periphery when well-located inner city land lies vacant, unused, underused or misused? The City argues that the land is just too expensive and that they don't have the budget to purchase land but this argument addresses the complex forces of the market place rather simplistically. South Africa is not the first country- and Cape Town is not the first city to be faced with the challenges of gaining access to land and housing for low income earners.

DAG's proposals

Informed by best practice of similar cities internationally, DAG has consistently promoted the following proposals to the City of Cape Town:

- An overall City or Metro wide **settlement plan** encapsulating a medium to long-term vision is required and which is developed with the input of all the City's citizens.
- Immediate action is needed to develop a **local area plan** for the greater Hout Bay area which will encapsulate a medium to long-term vision for the area. The key to this approach is recognition of the high levels of inequality in our city regarding access to opportunities. The Hangberg in situ upgrade should be incorporated in such an overall plan for the greater Hout Bay area.
- Such a plan should take advantage of all that is permissible under the law, such as the **special rating area** as provided for in the Municipal Property Rates Act. For example the City of Cape Town should introduce special rating areas in precincts like Hout Bay to increase revenues for land assembly and housing development for low-income earners in the area.

- The use of **development levies**, a common international practice, where the City could recoup the cost of infrastructure provision which is then redistributed to finance affordable housing on well located land. The current practice is that the City is giving away public assets in the form of land, infrastructure provision and development rights with very little return for the greater public good. This is all done in the name of development and pursuit of a world class city which benefits only a few.
- The introduction of a **tax on vacant land** as is being applied in Johannesburg and Durban, which will increase much needed revenues for the City and help to curb soaring land prices by bringing more land onto the market.
- **Zoning regulations.** For example, inclusive housing can be used to bring about the best use of urban land and encourage low-income or mixed income housing development. Again this will require political will from the City to get more value from the sale or lease of public land.
- Another strategy for increasing municipal revenue and regulate land-use proactively is through the **lease of public land** instead of selling it off to developers. This allows for far greater negotiations with developers in terms of the best use of land;
- The **densification and optimal use of land** are key principles that must be incorporated into land management practice in Cape Town. This can be realised by the development of housing for people of mixed-incomes on in-fill land and other land parcels where higher densities would be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. This is only implemented to a limited extent in South Africa at present and achieving this at a greater scale will require active engagement by affected citizens.

Conclusion

These proposals should be implemented using a participatory approach to governance where citizens are informed, allowed to share in decision-making and implementation and where the authorities operate with transparency. DAG believes such a democratic, participatory approach to managing urban areas in South Africa will facilitate social inclusion and greater equity amongst all citizens.

Ardiel Soeker is programme director at the Development Action Group and Kailash Bhana is its chief executive officer.

XENOPHOBIA WATCH



**looking back,
moving forward**
By Mandisi Majavu

Picture: Michael Walker / Cape Times

This article interrogates xenophobia from a local government perspective. It investigates institutional attitudes and practices at the local government level that dehumanise foreign nationals⁶. It argues that xenophobia in informal settlements is, *inter alia*, a symptom of broader challenges of legitimate and accountable local governance⁷.

Research shows that the May 2008 xenophobic attacks were orchestrated by individuals and groups who wanted to enhance their economic or political power by reinforcing communities' resentment towards foreign nationals. Xenophobia is also partly rooted in the micro-politics of South African townships - such as a high unemployment rate, lack of access to decent housing, electricity, water and resources.

The xenophobic violence of May 2008 is contextualised within a general history of violence in South African politics. The response

of the City of Cape Town to the May 2008 xenophobia attacks highlights some of the challenges that local government had to deal with when violence broke out.

Citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa has been reduced to indigeneity⁸, meaning that people born in South Africa are entitled to the country's resources first before foreign nationals. Only those who could prove a family connection with the apartheid formation of South Africa could claim citizenship at liberation, writes Neocosmos, while others were excluded and seen as unjustified claimants to national resources. Through defining who is a citizen and who is not, the post-apartheid state plays a central role in this process; hence xenophobia is intimately linked to citizenship. It is therefore argued that, in order to effectively root out xenophobia, the state will have to redefine the concept of citizenship. This article also investigates strategies that local government might use to manage xenophobia.

6. Misago, Loren et al. 2009
7. Polzer 2010

8. Neocosmos 2010

Xenophobic violence in context

A study conducted in 2010 by Tara Polzer of the University of the Witwatersrand's Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) argues that violence against foreign nationals and migrant communities is an ongoing feature of post-apartheid South Africa. The most intense period of xenophobic attacks happened in May 2008, in which foreign nationals and other ethnic minorities were violently attacked in 138 sites nationwide. What some academics call 'pogroms' left 62 people dead – and a third of those killed were South African citizens. Polzer further points out that, in addition to the murders, over 100 000 people were displaced and millions of rands of property were damaged or stolen.

The May 2008 attacks are located within a general history of violence in informal settlements and townships in South Africa. According to Misago et al⁹, the literature on this topic points to a 'culture of violence' in the townships, where violence is endorsed and accepted as a socially legitimate means of solving problems and achieving both 'justice' and material goals. They point out that, during the apartheid era, the security forces and other government agencies encouraged violence in the townships and argue that the concept of 'comrade-tsotsis', who exploited violence for personal gain, talks to the intertwined history of violence and politics in South Africa. The violence in the townships, which sometimes manifests itself through vigilante groups, could be a legacy of South Africa's violent politics.

The fact that South Africans view foreign nationals as criminals compels them to rationalise their attacks against foreign nationals as a form of social-law enforcement. Building on the perception that foreigners are an inherent social and political threat, the most nefarious perspective codes the May attacks as a form of control; a legitimate form of vigilantism designed to protect South African national territory. At a Community Police Forum in Alexandra the residents had, before initiating pogroms against foreign nationals, threatened to take the law into their own hands if the police could not effectively control the rising rates of crime which they claimed foreign nationals were responsible for. At the time, police allegedly promised to deal with the 'migrant problem'. Research further reveals that in areas where the formal local government structures are

weak, they struggle to apply the rule of law and consequently xenophobia tends to be rife. It is observed that, in the absence of institutionalised, legitimate elected leadership, other community structures tend to take over and operate as *de facto* local authority. In areas where this has happened, these structures 'completely appropriate the authority that should belong to local government, or alternatively operate as 'untouchable' parallel leadership structures'.

For example, the violent attacks on foreign national in De Doorns, Western Cape, took place within a context in which the authority of a local government was constantly undermined by commercial farmers in the area. According to Misago there had been long-standing tensions in De Doorns between the municipality and commercial farmers in the area before the May 2008 xenophobic attacks. The municipality lacked effective and legitimate authority over farming areas and was not seen as a neutral arbiter in farm-related matters. Hence it could not resolve the labour-related tension which informed the xenophobic violence in the area.

An example of the lack of municipal control and authority was the establishment of a temporary Department of Home Affairs satellite office on private farming land without the knowledge of the local authority, which labour brokers in the area and farmers used to issue asylum papers to foreign nationals. These are the same asylum papers that migrant workers used to work on farms. The prevailing sentiment among some labour brokers and community leaders in the area was that the Home Affairs satellite was attracting too many foreigners and Misago cites competition between groups of labour brokers in De Doorns as being conducive to xenophobic sentiments in the area. According to some of the participants in Misago's study, '...dissatisfied labour brokers pressured local leaders and incited local residents to attack and chase Zimbabweans away. Such mobilisation was facilitated by the fact that some contractors are also ward committee members.'

Research¹⁰ further demonstrates that when xenophobic violence did break out, local leaders and police – nationwide - were initially reluctant to intervene on behalf of victims. In some cases this was because they supported the community's xenophobic attitudes, whereas local leaders feared losing political legitimacy if they were seen as defending unpopular social groups.

9. Misago et al. (2009)

This is the context in which the tragic events in May 2008 unfolded. At this juncture, the discussion turns to assess specifically how the City of Cape Town responded.

The City of Cape Town's response

Although foreign nationals were also subjected to violence in the Western Cape, most foreign nationals either fled the Cape Town townships to escape imminent danger or ran away as a pre-emptive strategy. In many instances foreign nationals were directly threatened and told to leave the communities in which they were living.¹¹

The humanitarian response to the violence and the displacement caused by the May 2008 pogroms against foreign nationals can be divided into three phases: an initial phase of **emergency assistance**, a second phase of providing structured shelter and **welfare assistance** to the displaced, and a closing down phase aimed at '**reintegrating**' the displaced. Igglesden et al show that despite the fact that government authorities had the luxury of forewarning through preceding events in Gauteng, the first 48 hours of the response to violence and displacement in the Western Cape was largely driven by civil society actors.

In the initial stages, faith based organisations played a key role in providing shelter for foreign nationals fleeing xenophobes from the townships. Cape Town's Disaster Risk Management Centre activated their Operations Centre on May 22, 2008 and the City of Cape Town (the City) further prepared six Centres of Safe Shelter (CoSS) at Harmony Park, Soetwater, Silverstroom, Blue Waters, Strand, and Youngsfield Military Base.¹² About 20 000 internally displaced people were being accommodated in the Western Cape in over 80 locations – and 10 000 of these people sought shelter at CoSS facilities. The rest sought sanctuary in community halls, churches, mosques, and private accommodation across the city.

The provincial government declared the Western Cape a disaster area on June 4, 2008, and that led to the Province assuming overall responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the response to xenophobic attacks. The City continued playing a supporting role by providing the day-to-day management of the CoSS and 14 community halls sheltering internally displaced people. Accommodation at the CoSS was either all

tents, which were provided by the City, or mixed tents and chalets. Foreign nationals complained that most of the camps were located close to the ocean and so exposed to the Cape's winter winds; also the tents provided were not equipped for the cold, wet weather. Parents complained that their children's schooling suffered because they were often without transport and far from their original schools. Some parents requested an on-site school, but the government did not endorse such a proposal.

It was against this background that Ebrahim Rasool, then Provincial Premier, argued that 'large camps were inhumane and the size of their populations made them both difficult to manage logistically and prone to tensions.' The Province further pointed out that re-integration of foreign nationals into local communities was difficult to achieve when lastmentioned were located far from their original communities. Thus, the Province requested an interdict from the High Court to direct the City to close the CoSS and make available 18 community halls under the control of the City to accommodate internally displaced people. The City's answering papers advised that 15 of the 18 listed halls were already occupied by internally displaced persons and suggested the Province should make available its own facilities. The Province then retracted its application.

The lack of co-operation between the City and the provincial government continued until mid-June 2008. According to Igglesden et al., the 'stand-off' between Rasool and Helen Zille, then Mayor of Cape Town, continued until the two leaders were forced by civil society to form a Joint Task Team. However, even with the Joint Task Team in place, foreign nationals continued to complain about the living conditions at the CoSS. For instance, on 24 November 2008, the *Cape Argus* reported that volunteer paediatricians had been refused entry into Blue Waters, upsetting women at the site, which housed 60 malnourished children - some with ringworm, one with anaemia and four hungry newborns.

According to the Western Cape Civil Society Task Team's September 18 report, the supply of food (particularly for children) and toiletries to people living in CoSS were inadequate. Additionally, government and city officials made off-the-record admissions that there was a deliberate cut-back on services to encourage internally displaced people to leave the sites. On 29 October 2008, Zille gave a speech at

10. Igglesden et al. (2009)

11. According to Igglesden, Monson et al (2009)

a Council Meeting in which she said that “we are reaching the end of our programme to address the aftermath of May’s outbreaks of xenophobic violence, a programme which we have implemented in partnership with the National and Provincial governments, the United Nations and NGOs.” She said that four of the five CoSS were closed, making it clear that the City had to close them because there were no resources nor capacity to keep them open.

When the City wanted to close down the last remaining site, Blue Waters, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and AIDS Law Project threatened to interdict both the City and the Province for ‘violating the constitutional rights of displaced people to dignity, security, food, health care, and shelter’ according to a report in the *Sowetan*. Although the Blue Waters site was officially closed in October 2008, the City evicted the people who had decided to remain there in April 2010. During the eviction, a group of 39 refugees who refused to leave Blue Waters were arrested and dumped at the Old Customs House building on the foreshore, according to *The Cape Argus*. To be precise, the group was dropped off after a court appearance, having spent two days in holding cells on a trespassing charge.

The majority of the refugees in the group were 18 Somalis who demanded to be repatriated. The reason that they demanded to be sent back to a war-torn country is partly because Somali businesspeople in the City are routinely intimidated by xenophobes in the townships. Sometimes they are robbed and killed, and in some cases, their shops are bombed by xenophobes. Cape Town newspapers often report that xenophobic traders in the townships deliver letters to Somali shopkeepers telling them they have to leave the area. The City has conducted research on this issue too, and found that there are indeed tensions between local and foreign spaza shop traders in certain parts of the City.¹³

This is consistent with previous research findings on this topic, which show that the key trigger of violence against foreign nationals in some areas is localised competition for economic power.

Lessons learned

The City spent at least R108 million on relief to victims of xenophobia.¹⁴ Compare and contrast that amount with the estimated R500 million that the City of Cape Town contributed to the construction of the Cape Town Stadium which cost R4, 45 billion (City

of Cape Town website 2010). The figures reveal where the City’s priorities lie.

Further, it is also important to note that despite spending this amount, it appears that the City of Cape Town did not deem it important or necessary to implement a compelling programme to prepare xenophobes in townships for the re-integration of foreign nationals who had fled due to xenophobic violence. Misago *et al* found no local or national government initiative dedicated to preparing potentially hostile communities for the return or re-integration of displaced foreign nationals to the townships.

The manner in which the city managed the ‘closing down phase’ of the CoSS and the ‘reintegration process’ compelled civil society organisations such as the TAC to threaten to indict the City for violating the constitutional rights of displaced people to dignity, food and shelter. Throughout the aftermath of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, the City and the Province squabbled instead of working together towards a common goal, fighting over the merits and viability of providing accommodation for displaced people in community halls or in specifically constructed camps – as mentioned, at one point the Province even took the City to court over this issue. They had to be forced by civil society organisations to work together through a Joint Task Team; after the establishment of which there was tacit accommodation of the necessity for the two spheres of government to co-ordinate their respective contributions to the humanitarian relief effort. This points to the need for the development of generally accepted norms and standards for humanitarian service provision that different levels of government can use in a similar crisis.

There was no document outlining South Africa’s own levels of service provision standards, nor were widely accepted international standards, such as the *Sphere Handbook*, known or used. Even most permanent disaster management staff lacked knowledge of international standards, and there had been no regular training or even emergency training of other governmental officials or civil society actors in common standards. The lack of common standards led to: inadequate levels of basic service provision and protection of the displaced in some places; different levels of service provision in different locations; difficulties in effectively monitoring and co-ordination service

13. According to *The Cape Times* (Dolley 2009).

14. According to *The Cape Times* (Powell 2008)

provision; and difficulties in communicating and justifying levels of service provision for the displaced to the general population. Furthermore Igglesden *et al* claim the South African Disaster Management Framework does not clarify how government departments ought to respond to violent displacement and which government department should lead in such cases. They add that the fact that most of the displaced were foreign nationals complicated the adoption of overall responsibility and political dedication.

While it is obviously important to develop a disaster management manual that could assist local government to respond efficiently in similar situation, the urgent task for local government is actually to deal effectively with xenophobia. Intervention to improve the accountability and oversight of local government structures to monitor and counter xenophobic sentiments and violence needs to take place. Moreover, local government ought to conduct ongoing systematic research on anti-immigrant sentiments and violence, as well as on the political economy of township life.

Conclusion

While the most intense period of xenophobic attacks took place in May 2008, similar patterns of violence began long before and have yet to stop. Polzer's research shows that, since 2008, organisations that work with migrant communities regularly report threats of xenophobic attacks. For instance, in July 2010 the Mail & Guardian newspaper reported that "families of Zimbabwean migrants have been fleeing South Africa because they fear xenophobic attacks now that the World Cup is over." In areas where the formal local government structures are considered weak, xenophobia

tends to be rife. Thus to counter xenophobic sentiments, it is crucial that local government be capacitated to monitor xenophobia and other political tensions that may escalate into widespread violence. Misago *et al* add that it is the responsibility of the local government to promote community leadership structures that do not reinforce resentment towards migrant and refugee communities. They suggest that criminal charges should be laid against any community leader who uses their authority to promote violence against foreign nationals. Additionally, they are of the view that election-monitoring mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that councillors are not elected on an anti-foreigner platform.

Most importantly, this article shows is that xenophobia is a very complex phenomenon - due to space constraints not all aspects have been explored. For instance, South African xenophobia has a white supremacist logic built into it. In South Africa, xenophobia does not only mean a fear of foreigners, but a fear of certain 'black foreigners'. 'White foreigners' are generally seen as tourists, whereas black foreigners are viewed as criminals and drug dealers who ought to be violently expelled from the country. Thus blacks from outside of South Africa are regarded as being 'too black' - a physical marker of shame in the minds of many xenophobes.

Although we argue that the key trigger of violence against foreign nationals in some areas is localised competition for economic and political power, we do recognise the fact that even in those areas South African xenophobia is rooted *inter alia* in white supremacist logic and a distorted conception of what citizenship actually means.

NGOs & poor communities: An opinion



Asset Based Community Development (ABCD): An Overview

By Community Connections

'Using what you have to ensure what you have not'

Asset-based community development has been going on since the beginning of mankind and has been taking place all over the globe, often out of necessity but also out of a natural inclination to collaborate and utilise what is readily available.

Recently, the principles of ABCD have been formulated into an approach to development, pioneered by the ABCD-institute (U.S.) and the Coady Institute (Canada). ABCD builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development. It is a response to the needs and problem-based approaches to development, which assess communities in terms of what is lacking and is often conducted by outside agencies.

ABCD core principles:

Community-led development is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development - development processes driven by people who are directly affected by the challenges they seek to address.

Success stories: the starting point is the shared history of success stories in bringing about change in the community.

Acknowledging the power of collaboration and social capital: the main resource in communities is the strong social ties that exist between community members and the different types of organisations that are formed.

Appreciation and mobilisation of existing assets in the community: every community, no matter how poor, has access to different physical, social, financial, human and natural assets, which can be mobilised for community action.

Stimulating an opportunity-seeking mindset: ABCD is about changing mindsets towards a 'glass-half-full' approach to life.

Social entrepreneurship is about creating social and economic value with available assets.

Crucial to the ABCD approach is that the power over development processes is held by the communities themselves. This is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development. Through an ABCD process, communities become empowered from the inside out, which is crucial in active citizenship and ensuring government accountability. Also, communities become better positioned to claim their rights.

NGOs' role

The role of NGOs within this approach is one of facilitating and connecting to other stakeholders. The ABCD methodology supports the ABCD process by providing tools to community members to map out all the existing assets in a community:

Appreciative inquiry: to draw out strengths and successes in a community's shared history as its starting point for change.

Organising & mapping: identification of the human, social, natural, physical and social assets in the community.

Community economic analysis (by means of the Leaky Bucket): helps a community to examine its local economy and assists in identifying ways to increase and strengthen it.

Linking & mobilising: after all the assets are identified, exploring what opportunities are available for the community to start or strengthen new initiatives in support of the community.

Monitoring and evaluation (significant change technique): a qualitative method that allows the community to share stories of the most significant changes that have taken place.

Implications

ABCD consolidates the complexities of community development into a comprehensive, holistic and yet simplistic concept. As a framework, it encompasses many core principles crucial for sustainable social development in an integrated manner.

Community Connections' perspectives of the main contributions that ABCD can provide to the sector are:

ABCD provides a comprehensive and holistic understanding of community development and its complexities. Yet its simplicity (in understanding its principles and methods) allows grassroots community members to grasp the framework that guides their development processes, thus ensuring more effective participation in decision-making and implementation (community-driven development approach).

- It proposes a flexible framework, methodology and tools, which makes it easy to implement its theoretical underpinnings. The tools ensure that all existing assets in the community are assessed by the community and that plans are developed and implemented to maximise those assets (social and economic entrepreneurship approach).
- NGOs and other intermediary agencies become facilitators in the process and the community becomes the driver. This is key to ensure sustainable development, as it affirms the power community members have in determining their development.
- The community empowers itself from the inside out and mobilises itself into a comprehensive network, which generates a strong collaborative energy and voice to keep government accountable (multi stake-holder approach).
- ABCD is a 'breath of fresh air' compared to the needs-based approach whereby community members are reduced to being 'problematic creatures' that need to be rescued and built up to become esteemed community members who have the capacity to translate their political rights into future realities (rights-based approach).

Thus ABCD brings together a variety of different development approaches, which further attests to the thinking that one does not have to 'reinvent - the - wheel' but rather take elements of what is good to come up with more effective mechanisms.

Challenges

The following are some of the challenges that could be encountered in ABCD processes:

- The foundation of ABCD is community-driven development. This threatens and challenges NGOs who are used to driving development. As such, it could complicate project planning, funder commitments and project time frames.

- NGOs need to be comfortable with playing increasingly smaller roles than they have been used to, and be more conscious of working toward their own redundancy - as this is ultimately necessary for community-driven development.
- The shift from a needs-based to an asset-based approach doesn't happen overnight. It is a process. This understanding presents a challenge for community members who have been inundated with images of dependency and now have to make the shift toward realising that they have the potential to co-create the future they espouse.
- The whole development industry is based on the notion that there is a sector of the world population that is deprived of basic human needs. Donors predominantly give money where there is more of a proven need (prevalently desperate areas) and less to those that seem to be prospering. This means the shift toward asset-based thinking needs to spread throughout the major players in the development sector to avoid being 'punished' (by not being funded) for addressing needs.

Conclusion

Our organisation, Community Connections, has from its inception made use of ABCD principles. The opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of this approach has been immensely fruitful, as if the final pieces of the puzzle have been put in place. To engage with a development approach at such depth has allowed our organisation to get out of our daily routines and observe the bigger context in which we work with a 'bird's eye view'. This understanding of the bigger picture and its dynamics has given added meaning to our work and our existence as an organisation.

ABCD asks for a shift in mental models - not only for NGOs and CBOs, but also at the level of international donor agencies, government, and other key development bodies like the UN. The wonder of it all is that ABCD presents the opportunity to shift this mental model from the 'bottom-up'. It has the potential to position ordinary people as 'trail blazers' when it comes to sowing the seeds for a new, more just world order!





The Foundation for Contemporary Research (FCR) is a non-profit development NGO, based in the Western Cape Province (South Africa), focusing on development and empowerment at the interface between local government, communities, the broader civil society and the private sector.

FCR believes in a future where all South Africans are able to contribute to and benefit from the democratic culture and prosperity of our country through economic activity and social action.

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