

# Revitalising the “good” in good local governance

## Calling for active participatory citizenship

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### ABSTRACT

*Good governance is a principle and a practice much sought after in the contemporary world, but most countries, including South Africa, struggle to meet the ideals of (the) “good” in “good governance”, despite the fact that the relevant principles have been institutionalised in policy frameworks, and despite the scrutiny of “compliance watchdogs” to safeguard compliance. This article explores the roles that active citizenship and citizen participation should play in holding the State accountable and in instilling a “culture of good governance” in the sphere of local government.*

*Government processes created to ensure good local governance should allow citizen participation spaces through which citizens can experience a sense that they can influence, direct, control and own their own development. Active citizenship, citizen participation and protest action are fundamental instruments to hold local government accountable and to ensure good governance in order to enable social transformation.*

*The article is based on a literature survey, previous research and participatory observation by both authors, as well as the outcomes of participatory workshops with municipal officials during the facilitation of programmes on citizen participation and good governance. Good governance as a concept and universal norm is unpacked, and active citizen participation as a key governance tool is explored. The article makes recommendations on improving good local governance through active citizenship.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, CIVICUS (2013), many governments struggle to facilitate what Cornwall and Coelho (2007) call local spaces that

empower citizens to participate fully in civil society. Despite promises from governments that they will protect civil society, most citizens around the world live in environments in which they do not have the capacity to participate freely in what are regarded as “good governance” activities. Unfortunately, South Africa is no exception, according to the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN 2012, 2013).

In this article, we argue that there is a risk that governments will attempt to solve the challenge of achieving democracy and good governance through “feel-good” conceptualisation and practice. Such a mistaken approach often leads to mere policy-making window-dressing to tick the compliance boxes. Therefore this article asks what (the) “good” in good governance is for the disillusioned citizenry in the local government sphere in South Africa.

At the conceptual level, confusion reigns (Cornwall and Eade 2012). What lies hidden behind the big concepts and policies for the citizens if they are bombarded by the State, as they once again are, by the National Development Plan (NDP) (Presidency 2012) with promises of “transparency”, “openness”, “redress” and “accountability” (in the Batho Pele principles), if these processes do not allow citizens participation *spaces* (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Hickey and Mohan 2004, 2005) through which they feel that they can *influence, direct, control* and *own* their own development (Mchunu and Theron 2013)? What does the State imply when it declares that it will “involve”, “consult”, “participate”, “engage”, “dialogue” or “deliberate” with “its citizens” (and that its citizens will engage in these activities with the State) when the State uses these “principles” and “processes” as if the terms all mean the same?

Furthermore, what have the processes of democracy, good governance and transformation delivered if statistics show that a growing number of disillusioned citizens create their own spaces for “good governance” through protest movements, and through what Van Donk (2013:13) calls horizontal citizenship, through “claim-making” and “becoming” (Mchunu 2012; Mchunu and Theron 2013; Municipal IQ Protest Monitor 2013). What is the “good” in (good) local governance in South Africa? In this regard, social scientists argue the importance of the ability of ordinary people to *realise* and *release* their own ability (Chambers 1997 2005; Gran 1983; Korten 1990) and of “conscientisation” amongst the citizens (the oppressed) (Freire 1972). Both these principles underpin community development (Swanepoel and De Beer 2011).

The conceptual confusion in the South African government’s development lexicon has led several scholars to warn against the limitations of participatory development principles and strategies in the “participation as tyranny” debate for and against participation (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall and Coelho 2007), although these scholars do not undermine the principles themselves. Some scholars also relocate participation within a “radical politics” of development (Hickey and Mohan 2005). The debate has brought into focus the potential of citizen participation to bring about empowerment and social transformation, which should ideally lead to good local governance.

Hickey and Mohan (2005:1) and Leal (2010:89) argue that a possible solution to the stalemate is to practise “participation as citizenship” (also see GGLN 2012, 2013). Such an approach promises to bring about the kind of social transformation that can form the basis for a relocation of participation within a radical politics of development. In this regard, so far, representative democracy has delivered questionable benefits for the poor and the



marginalised in South Africa. What needs to be pursued is the expansion of the incentives for citizens to become and remain active citizens (GGLN 2013:7-9) in their own development and in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Citizenship requires a proactive civil society that reaches beyond the struggle for the acquisition of legal rights, and enables people to define their rights themselves and to claim these rights.

Active participatory citizenship is the moral fibre of civil society (GGLN 2013). It is rooted in the principle of participatory democracy, in that it promotes continuous dialogue between civil society and decision-makers (European Union 2012). Active citizenship goes beyond increasing the levels of participation. It is about providing a platform for citizens to plan, implement and monitor the delivery of services and to improve the outcomes. Active citizen participation maximises the scope for the citizens to *influence, direct, control* and *own* their service delivery and decision-making processes, because such participation constructs a bridge between the State and civil society, according to the International Association for Public Participation (2002) and the *Manila Declaration on People's Participation and Sustainable Development* issued by the Asian NGO Coalition (for Agrarian and Rural Development) (ANGOC 1989).

The National Development Plan (NDP) acknowledges that active citizenry and social activism are needed for genuine democracy and development to flourish (Presidency 2012:37). The State cannot merely act on behalf of the people – it has to act *with* the people, working together with other institutions to provide opportunities for the advancement of all. As argued above, it remains to be seen whether these ideals are mere rhetoric or can engender authentic meaning-giving local practice (Kotze and Kotze 2008:76-99). Good local governance will remain only a dream in South Africa, unless a meaning-giving approach to local practice adopts a people-centred development paradigm where the citizens, as Korten (1990:67) explains, increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life that are consistent with their own aspirations.

For citizens to become self-reliant, active citizenship must integrate what has been referred to as “indigenous knowledge systems” (Sillitoe, Dixon and Barr 2005:12-18) and draw on social capital (Emmett 2000:501-518) in local planning regimes such as the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and the ward committee system (Van Donk, Swilling, Pieterse and Parnell 2008). When citizens combine local knowledge with specialist knowledge and mobilise around common issues with other community actors, they can turn into resilient communities (GGLN 2014:14). Theron (2009:112) argues that if citizens participate meaningfully in development interventions and decision-making processes, they stand a better chance of becoming self-reliant, empowered and assertive about their ability to become masters of their own destiny. Active citizenship, good local governance and developmental local government are attainable when those who are marginalised are engaged in their own participation *spaces* (invented) to earn the power to *influence, direct, control* and *own* their development and decision-making processes, and to hold the State accountable (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Theron and Mchunu 2014/in press).

Citizens need to use active citizenship as an instrument to address social problems or provide services that the State fails to provide or cannot provide. The European Union (2012) posits that active citizenship has the potential to strengthen the social capital of individuals and communities by building social networks, contacts and mutual trust, and also by

contributing to economic and social development which could potentially promote local good governance. If the State fails due to a lack of good local governance, the result is often disappointment, frustration and protest among the citizenry. The State is then confronted with a legitimacy crisis (Mchunu 2012:71), and a “good governance deficit” occurs (Van Donk 2012:15).

Brannan, John and Stoker (2006:994) argue that the goal of building social capital and networks is the citizens’ deriving what these authors call “public value” from service delivery and participation in decision-making processes. According to Benington (2011:36), the emergence of networks and their sustenance “reflects and implies a shift in the centre of gravity of governance away from the State and towards civil society, and some consequent loss of control by government policy-makers and managers”. Benington (2011:42) defines public value as “what the public values” and “what adds value to the public sphere”.

What has gone wrong in South Africa with regard to good governance in developmental local governance in terms of the IDPs as envisaged by the *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA1998), the most ambitious structure for citizen engagement? In the light of the above background, the questions that this article seeks to answer are the following: How do we ensure that local government participatory *spaces* such as IDPs and ward committees enable citizens to experience a sense that they can *influence, direct, control* and *own* their own development? How do we instil a culture of active citizenship among South African citizens? How do we ensure that not only elected public representatives are held responsible and accountable for their actions, but administrators too? What needs to be done to improve the delivery of services that will add public value to citizens? How do we capacitate and empower citizens to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives and to become active participants in their own development? Is there a possible model to improve good local governance in the local sphere of government? These issues warrant public debate, research and prioritisation by the State.

## CONCEPTUALISING THE “GOOD” IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

The assertion by the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan, that good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development explains why good governance is part of the development lexicon (De Vries 2013:3; Mercy Corps 2010:2). Du Toit and Van der Walddt (1999:22) argue that the concept of governance owes its existence to a need to provide service delivery to citizens. When people prefer to live close to each other in a particular geographical location, this means that they have to be subjected to a form of governing body (government). Governance was originally seen as an alternative to government (De Vries 2013:4; Rhodes 1996:653). According to Du Toit and Van der Walddt (1999:22) and Moore and Benington (2011:261), this notion arose out of the realisation that “government” is not the only institutional mechanism that can be relied on for “governance”. In view of this realisation, Thornhill and Van Dijk (2010:106) caution that government is not about producing virtuous citizens, but is a means to an end.

Citizens are able to organise themselves to address their local needs by combining their efforts with those of government, non-governmental organisations and voluntary associations



(Moore and Benington 2011:261). The conceptual shift from “government” to “governance” signifies a move away from a hierarchical focus, and steers development to a people-centred approach driven by societal actors, and to a process to be accomplished through networks in which hierarchy hardly plays a role. Therefore, “governance” to the citizens signifies a change in the meaning of “government”, referring to a new process of “governing”, or a changed condition of ordered rule, or a new method by which society is “governed” (Rhodes 1996:653).

Leftwich (1993, cited in Rhodes 1996:656), Thornhill and Van Dijk (2010:105) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2007:2) indicate three strands within which good governance can be conceptualised. The political strand relates to the manner in which citizens view government through participatory democracy. The systemic strand goes beyond government to cover the distribution of both internal and external political and economic power. The administrative strand focuses on institutional processes that are transparent and accountable, and encourages the rule of law.

These strands provide the basis for an assessment of whether a State complies with local good governance principles and practices. Governance is the process of decision-making and how those decisions are implemented. Governance is “good” when the systems and processes are participatory, accountable, transparent, just and responsive (Mercy Corps 2010). Conversely, governance is “bad” when the systems and processes fail to adhere to these criteria. Thus, governance needs to be understood in the context of a government’s capability to deliver public services effectively and carry out its mandate (developmental local governance in South Africa) by *enabling* (not *allowing*) its citizens to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. These goals have to be achieved in order for a government to be regarded as legitimate (political strand).

De Vries (2013:4) and Grindle (2004, 2007) point out that adding the adjective “good” to governance implies that there is a possibility of ineffective use of the concept of governance in terms of outputs and outcomes. It suggests that governance might fail, and has failed; hence, there is a need to strengthen the concept with a “feel good” prefix. The question is whether good governance principles have been able to improve democratic practices to empower citizens to hold government accountable. Speer (2012:2379) claims that good governance is credited with improving service delivery; it is said to empower citizens and deepen democracy. The expectation is therefore that good governance practices make a political system more responsive by strengthening deliberative forms of participation that enable citizens to *influence, direct, control* and *own* decision-making processes. This seldom happens in municipalities in South Africa; instead, we see what has been called a “governance deficit” (Van Donk 2012), a “paradox of democratisation” (Etzo 2010) or the “service delivery paradox” (Benington and Moore 2011:24).

News reports frequently indicate that government departments have failed to comply with the principles of good governance. Moreover, the Auditor-General’s latest audit of municipalities (the government’s official watchdog) paints a grim picture. Should we blame citizens if they invoke their citizenship rights in the form of protests (collective action) to demand good governance (GGLN 2012) – if they invent their own *spaces* for participatory democracy (Mchunu and Theron 2013)?

Grindle (2004, 2007) warns that a good governance agenda may place such a burden on the State that the State loses focus on what is essential and what is not, what should come first and what should follow, what can be achieved in the short term and what can only be

achieved over the longer term, what is feasible and what is not. If more attention is given to addressing these questions, “good enough governance” may become a reality in South Africa.

Good governance definitions seem to follow the three strands of good governance outlined above or to incorporate some of them: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines good governance as “democratic governance” (UNDP 2002:2), meaning respect for human rights, participation in decision-making, accountability, poverty eradication, responsiveness, equal treatment, inclusiveness, fairness, impartiality, the absence of any discriminatory practices, as well as consideration of the needs of future generations. According to Ogundiya (2010), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines the concept in terms of good governance characteristics: it is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. The African Development Bank sees good governance as governance that embodies and promotes effective states, mobilises civil societies and productive private sectors (Ogundiya 2010). The World Bank considers six dimensions, namely voice (participation) and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption (Ogundiya 2010).

The definitions above all include participation or “voice” as one of the dimensions of good governance, and good governance as a universal norm hinges on the participation of the affected parties as one way of achieving accountability and legitimacy of government decisions. In the light of the above, the following working definition of good governance was adopted in this article:

*Good local governance refers to active citizen participation in the affairs of government that affect them as citizens and that build their capacity and empower them to safeguard their interests in the form of holding government accountable for its actions. It is the State's capability to protect the dignity of its citizens and uphold citizens' rights in the provision of public services and decision-making processes for the citizens to be able to influence, direct, control and own their own development.*

In South Africa, the principles of good governance aimed at improving service delivery and government responsiveness have been endorsed, at least on paper. Moreover, the *White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery* (RSA 1997), also known as the *Batho Pele Paper*, sought to instil a new culture of service delivery amongst public servants and the citizens through the *Batho Pele* Principles. However, the dissatisfied voices (in the shape of protest) demanding improved service delivery and accountability from municipalities continue to rise up. These desperate voices are loud despite the safeguards put in place by the State in the constitutional and legislative regulatory frameworks which are supposed to operate under the watchful eye of institutions such as the Office of the Public Protector, the Human Rights Commission, the Auditor-General, the Special Investigating Unit, the Asset Forfeiture Unit, the independent media and active civil society organisations. However, the governance deficit continues in the form of political interference, corruption, political intolerance, poor access by citizens to participation and uneven resource allocation (Van Donk 2012:12-27). Thus the concepts and principles of good governance, although they are explicitly stated and prioritised in law, are neither expressed by the State's *modus operandi*



(if one looks at the level of corruption), nor experienced and practised by the citizens who should be safeguarded by these principles. The question then arises how, in a divided and dislocated State-citizen relationship, both sides can re-engage to prioritise these principles aimed at achieving good governance.

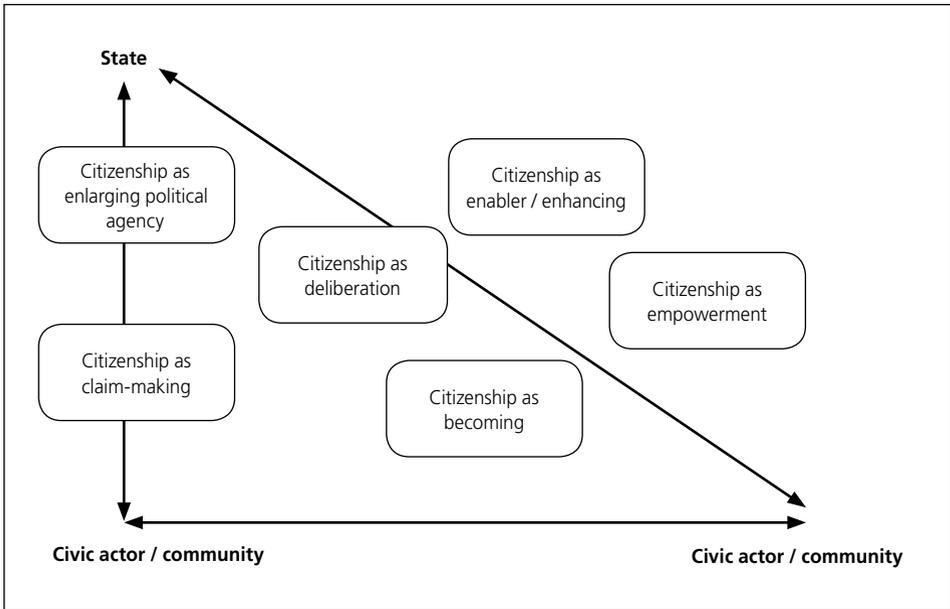
## **ACTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AS A KEY “GOOD” GOVERNANCE TOOL**

The construct of active citizenship has become prominent as a strategy in the struggle against inequality and economic exclusions (Dagnino 2010:101; Stokes 2004). There is no universally accepted definition of the concept of “citizenship”, but the concept is generally held to be characterised by three dimensions: legal status, administrative category (the allocation of certain rights, entitlements and responsibilities), and ethical vision (civic identity and political practice) (Stokes 2004). Citizenship is about what it means to be a member of a community, the rights one is entitled to, and one’s duties and obligation as a citizen. Building citizenship should also be understood as a struggle for the expansion of the rights whose achievement will further deepen democracy, such as the right to clean water and sanitation (Dagnino 2010:103; GGLN 2013).

Active citizenship is a contested terrain, subject to different meanings (Brannan *et al.* 2006:993; European Union 2012:6; Van Donk 2013:10). Van Donk (2013:12) lists three central conceptualisations of active citizenship. The first is an individualistic conception (a liberal notion). The second is the communitarian conception, which focuses on group identity and the common good. The third is the civic republican conception, which emphasises civic morality and participation. According to Stokes (2004:2) and Brannan *et al.* (2006:993), active citizenship extends beyond mere citizen participation; it demands participation with a purpose, namely making communities better places. From a civil society perspective, active citizenship is an active process associated with holding rights (Van Donk 2013:12). Like good governance, active citizenship is underpinned by a set of values, such as respect for the rule of law, democracy, justice, tolerance and open-mindedness and due regard for the rights and freedoms of others (European Union 2012). These values tie in with the principles of developmental local government (Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling and Wooldridge 2002; RSA 1998; Van Donk *et al.* 2008).

Similarly, the NDP’s conception of active citizenship relates to rights, equal opportunities, the enhancement of human capabilities, government accountability and civic duty (Presidency 2012). However, the NDP’s conception does not seem to offer new insights, except in that it acknowledges a need for citizens to be engaged in their own *spaces* during the IDP processes. Van Donk (2012:12) notes that such broad approaches to citizenship and participation often work with a “feel good factor” to placate the community. This raises questions of the NDP’s ability to, firstly, actually comprehend local meaning-giving contexts and, secondly, to allow the citizenry an active *stake* to define their own development and the role they can and want to play in this regard by constructing Public Participation Planning Partnerships (known as P4s) as local compacts or contracts (municipal-community partnerships) (Theron and Mchunu 2014/in press). The authorities need to realise that unless these processes created for good local governance do in fact allow participation *spaces* for citizens by means of which citizens

**Figure 1: Active citizenship as a horizontal and vertical relationship**



Source: Adapted from Van Donk (2013:13).

can actually get a sense that they can *influence, direct, control* and *own* their development, the State will continue to face a crisis of legitimacy (GGLN 2012).

When we turn to the dislocated State-citizen relationship dilemma, Van Donk’s (2013:13) conception of active citizenship as a vertical and horizontal relationship provides some useful insights that can be used to address this dislocated relationship. The vertical relationship refers to citizens’ engagement with the State; the horizontal relationship denotes citizens’ engagement with and among themselves. These relationships are depicted in Figure 1.

According to Van Donk (2013:12), “citizenship as claim-making” relates to citizens’ use of collective action to claim their rights, while the notion of “citizenship as enlarging political agency” refers to their ability to claim their rights and hold the State accountable. “Citizenship as becoming” represents citizenship as a process where actors learn by doing, while “citizenship as deliberation” emphasises negotiation.

In this article it is argued that Van Donk’s conception of active citizenship assumes that citizens are well educated and sufficiently enlightened to make informed decisions. However, in reality, in most cases, citizens, particularly the poor and the marginalised, come to the negotiating table with limited knowledge of the issues at stake, particularly if the issues involve specialised and technical aspects. These citizens may lack inside knowledge of how bureaucracies work, which means that they come to deliberation sessions with only a general understanding of how the State functions. Hence, citizens tend to suffer from what Kalu (2006:84) refers to as an “information asymmetry”. As a result, participation would be superficial and decision-making haphazard.

Citizens can learn “through practice” as Van Donk (2013:13) suggests, but they also need to be exposed to appropriate education and capacity-building, and need to be provided with relevant information to empower them to become “masters of their own development”.

The GGLN (2013:92) states that “effective citizenship” requires educational preparation. Therefore, for the purposes of this article, Van Donk’s figure was modified by adding the notions of “citizenship as enabler/enhancing” and “citizenship as empowerment” above the horizontal dimension to highlight the importance of creating an enabling environment for capacity-building to encourage authentic and empowering participation in line with the principles of developmental local government.

As outlined, if these same processes created for good local governance do not allow participation *spaces* in and through which citizens can actually experience a sense that they can *influence, direct, control* and *own* their own development, then the ideal of good local governance will remain elusive and the State will suffer a crisis of legitimacy. Furthermore, tackling a dislocated State-citizen relationship requires a continuous search for solutions that will bring about social transformation and strengthen good governance.

What has been called “citizenship academies” can provide a platform which can enhance citizens’ capabilities to contribute meaningfully to their own development and to decision-making processes. Gorgens, Masiko-Kambala and Van Donk (2013:35) assert that citizenship academies will also enable the emergence of what they term “communities of practice” between community groups and officials to generate sustainable solutions to address social problems. We would like to argue that participatory *spaces* (invited and invented) should be used as conduits to strengthen active citizenship that can help address the dilemma of a governance “deficit” and a dislocated State/citizen relationship.

Whether the governance deficit can be addressed depends on the State’s ability to accommodate both *invited* and *invented* spaces for active citizen participation. Ngamlana and Mathoho (2012:34) and Mchunu and Theron (2013) suggest that State-provided invited spaces have failed the intended beneficiaries. We therefore call for an integration of the two types of *spaces*. We argue that it is not a question of the one *versus* the other (invited *or* invented), but that there needs to be a P4 to allow for active citizen engagement. Following feedback from the Good Governance Surveys, Ngamlana and Mathoho (2012:33) claim that it is indeed “possible for state-legislated ‘invited’ spaces for participation to co-exist with citizen-initiated ‘invented’ spaces”. This is a reasonable argument that needs to be exploited as a tool to address poor governance in the local government sphere.

The GGLN (2013) argues throughout (and indicates in its case studies) that, when the ideals of good (local) governance in line with the principles of Developmental Local Government set out in the *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA 1998) fail, those who are disillusioned and/or frustrated are increasingly turning to horizontal capacity-building partnerships to extend their own networks (thus they draw on their social capital and indigenous knowledge). As Figure 1 shows, “citizenship as deliberation and as becoming” is not sufficient to enable, enhance and empower citizens to be able to *influence, direct, control* and *own* decision-making processes. If vertical participation fails, good governance fails, because citizens have no incentive to participate.

If frustrated and disillusioned communities have to create good (local) government themselves, because the State fails due to poor service delivery, then good governance and civic participation becomes a right and an obligation which citizens claim for themselves, a process of local *release* (without the State), and a process of *community-building* among the citizenry themselves (without the State) (Swanepoel and De Beer 2011:45-46). When we reflect on the ideals so idealistically stated in the NDP of good (local) government, it

seems that the State wants to be everything to everybody – the result is that the State does not fully understand the local meaning-giving development context, and then often behaves in a manner that is perceived to be aloof, indifferent, rigid, prescriptive, out of touch and without political imagination (Pieterse 2013:19). In this context, Van Donk (2013:16) calls for a mind shift towards different values and attitudes and a new political culture. Theron (2008:231), like Chambers (2005:199), calls for *congruence*, in other words, consistency in the behaviour and relationships among stakeholders, by moving away from hierarchy, control and standardisation.

Theron and Mchunu (2014/in press) call for a State-citizenry participation partnership (P4) principle. The P4 principle emphasises the need for local meaning-giving contexts which places citizens in a position to *influence, direct, control* and *own* their own participatory spaces for development (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Gwala and Theron 2012). In this regard, citizen participation holds promise for improved service delivery, accountability and a deepening of democracy. For this to be achieved, citizens need to use the available participatory spaces effectively. The irony is that this collective activism takes place outside the ambit of State-sponsored participatory spaces (Gaventa 2006), and occurs instead in spaces that the citizens invent and claim for themselves, in the form of protests and collective action (Mchunu 2012; Mchunu and Theron 2013). When the citizenry shun invited spaces and resort to inventing their own spaces, this indicates that State-sponsored participatory mechanisms do not instil a sense of hope for the participating citizenry, mainly because these mechanisms are not neutral, but are actually meant to control, dominate and exert power over the citizenry, all the more because the invented spaces are created at the State's behest to serve its purposes.

Gaventa (2006:26) maintains that participatory spaces should provide opportunities where citizens can influence policies that affect their lives. Not surprisingly, invited spaces fall short of this ideal, leaving a “space” for *poor* governance. The question then arises how the interests of a host of claims by different stakeholders can be accommodated in this local government space. Van Donk (2012:12) calls for what she calls “participatory local government” to be reinvigorated.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

To move beyond local government in deficit to *empowered* local governance, municipalities need to consider the Good Governance Surveys (GGSs) developed by the non-governmental organisation Afesis-corporplan. As a perception-based performance feedback tool, GGSs are effective conduits for citizens to engage with the State about its performance. Adopting an open-minded approach to GGSs can result, as Ngamlana and Mathoho (2012:36) indicate, in consensus-building and dialogue between citizens and municipalities to move towards a P4 with the municipalities, as this article advocates.

Representative democracy has not been effective enough to enable citizens to hold politicians and administrators accountable for their actions. Innovative approaches need to be explored, such as the use of suitable information technology (IT). Public officials may be required to post quarterly reports of their legislative and policy actions. This would enable citizens to have more reliable information for the sake of transparency and for evaluation.



Once public officials subject themselves to public scrutiny, they are likely to behave in a manner which serves the best interests of the citizens. A more progressive P4 take on empowering citizen participation strategies, in a carefully considered way appropriate to the local context mix, will also go a long way towards achieving better good local governance in South Africa (Theron and Mchunu 2014/in press; International Association for Public Participation 2002; World Bank 1996).

Ensuring that the “good” in good governance is achieved will require radical renewal and innovative thinking from policy-makers and officials in the developmental local government sphere. If good governance prioritises a citizen agenda which revitalises the *stake* of citizens in their own governance, then authentic and empowering participation of citizens should be strengthened through citizen academies in the municipal sphere (GGLN 2013:40-43). Such partnerships between external or elite knowledge systems and local or learning elites (GGLN 2013:38) towards establishing P4s, calls for horizontal and vertical relationships (as depicted in Figure 1 above), alliances, networks, partnerships and an integrated approach to community development. Capturing the “good” in good (local) governance that has been lost calls for a revitalisation of civil society’s contribution in its own development, in partnership with the State.

The underperformance of participatory democracy is the key to the failure of good local governance in South Africa, as the literature on citizen protests indicates. To ensure good local governance, the developmental locus of local government needs to be re-assessed to make local government truly developmental (GGLN 2012, 2013; Parnell *et al.* 2002; Van Donk *et al.* 2008).

The GGLN (2012:123) argues that the problems that hinder good governance in municipalities need attention. They warn that

*...the mind-sets and attitudes of public officials leave much to be desired and there is little routinized public accountability in the system. The solution to a local government system that is in distress lies in a combination of institutional, political and community-focused interventions, primarily aimed at addressing the underlying governance challenges. Thus, tackling the ‘governance-deficit’ head-on is critical to reinvigorate participatory local governance.*

The challenge in most municipalities lies in the manner in which citizen participation is institutionalised: “...both in design and in administrative practices, a blanket approach to citizen engagement in municipalities does not encourage citizens to exercise their civic duty and actively engage with the State” (GGLN 2012:123). The authorities need to be reminded that participation is not just something that they should pay lip-service to for compliance purposes, and that “participation in local governance is a human right and its realisation lies in the creation of meaningful spaces for citizen engagement and expression of voice, beyond those provided for by current legislation” (GGLN 2012:123).

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