



Community Based Planning in the context of the National Development Plan

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Introduction

Urban development has historically been viewed as the responsibility of professional planners and government and was “for a long time [...] considered an inefficient tool unable to address development effectively” (UN-Habitat, 2010: 3). More recently, in line with greater participatory development practises, the role of active citizenship and stakeholder consultation in the process has become increasingly recognised thus ‘positioning urban planning at the cutting edge of the modern notion of good governance.

In 2012, South Africa launched the National Development Plan¹ (NDP) outlining plans to transform human settlements through the development of a national spatial framework to “resolve the current deficiencies with the local system of integrated development planning (IDP) and progressively develop the governance and administrative capability to undertake planning at all scales” (NDP, 2012: 259). To ensure that service delivery is targeted, effective and has an impact on people’s quality of life, it is important to have meaningful engagement between communities and the government. Drawing on the notion of ‘active citizenship’, the Constitution provides a framework for a transformed citizen who will embrace and actively seek to sustain democratic governance (Skenjana and Kimemia, 2011:56).

This notion is expanded upon in the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 which institutionalises community participation as a core function of governance. It places a specific mandate upon local government to determine mechanisms, processes and procedures for interaction between municipal management, councillors, ward committees and the local community. Nonetheless, whilst the idea of supporting locally driven spatial planning through the involvement of local communities is well established in national policy and literature; there is considerable disjuncture between theory and practice. In 2009, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) undertook a national assessment of local government to ascertain barriers to service delivery. Key problems identified through this study include:

- The breakdown of local democracy
- Poor communication and accountability relationships with communities
- Weak community participation

¹ The National Planning Commission in 2012 launched the National Development Plan titled ‘Our Future- make it work’

- Community alienation caused by lack of attention to 'bottom up' planning and consultative processes

Thus, it is evident that the Constitutional mandate that “deliberately provides for public participation in governance and development processes both in invited as well as invented spaces” (Skenjana and Kimemia, 2011: 56) needs further refinement in its application at local level. Indeed, Chapter 13 of the National Development Plan suggests that the state should focus on engaging people in their own forums rather than expecting citizens to engage with state created forums, such as those promoted by the Municipal Systems Act. In light of this, this research paper seeks to examine Community Based Planning (CBP) in the context of the NDP highlight, through this process, instances of local and international best practice. Community based planning is a form of participatory planning which is designed to promote community action. It is a convergence of planning and community participation targeted towards addressing mounting urban and social problems at the local level. The paper will focus on local government participatory processes, exploring CBP as a space for citizen engagement to define and articulate development needs in the context of their own individual and collective aspirations. It will examine CBP processes as a forerunner to the IDP, engaging with the concept of active citizenry as envisaged by the NDP.

The National Development Plan: Contextual analysis

The NDP is set on a vision to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (NDP, 2012) through “hard work, leadership and unity”. Chapter 8, entitled ‘Transforming human settlement and the national space economy’ begins “where people live and work matters” (NDP, 2012: 260). For development that matters to occur (i.e. one which improves the livelihoods of people within their own localities) active citizenship needs to be supported and incentivised. Reoccurring community struggles in the pursuit of development (increasingly taking the form of violent protests in the face of inadequate government service delivery) demonstrate that South Africa, indeed, has an active and vocal citizenry (van Donk, 2013). The NDP recognises the existence of this energy and the need to direct it constructively towards a range of interventions that include citizen led neighbourhood visioning and planning processes (NDP, 2012). Improvements to the livelihoods of poor people are contingent on a greater understanding of ‘community’ and the ways by which communities develop (Theodori, 2009: 6). However, weak linkages between the micro level (community) and the meso level (local government and district service providers) (DPLG², 2004) are an ongoing hindrance. In acknowledging this, the NDP notes that support needs to be provided to the wider community in their engagement with the state on the future of the spaces and settlements in which people live and work, whilst improving processes that enable local governments to implement strategic spatial interventions (NDP, 2012: 260).

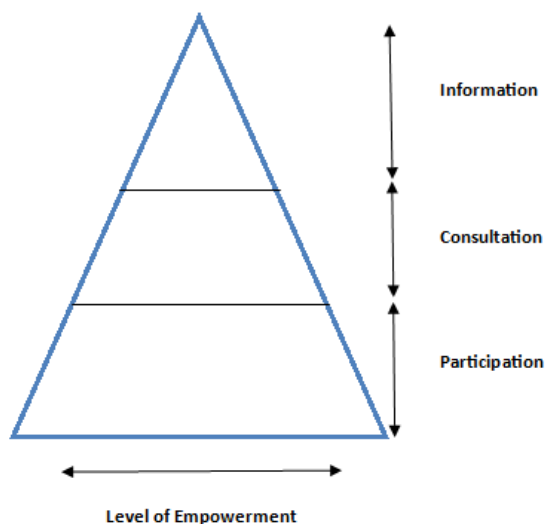
A fundamental reshaping of the colonial and apartheid geography forms part of the core vision of the NDP. To facilitate this, available instruments for local development planning need to be sharpened together with building the required capabilities of the state and enhancing active citizenry (NDP, 2011: 260). Community based planning is one such instruments that can be used to

² Department of Provincial and Local Government now known as Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)

achieve this vision of a spatially and socio-economically integrated and vibrant society. Community based planning directly engages community leaders and the broad-based citizenry in an effort to move their community from today's reality to tomorrow's possibilities (Theodori, 2009: 5). CBP supports the participatory objectives of integrated development planning through giving 'bottom-up' legitimacy to municipal decision making grounded in IDPs, this while empowering communities to take on development responsibility and making local government more accountable (Chimbuya et. al, 2004). The NDP recognises the need to rethink planning if society is to address the current deficiencies within the local system, allowing for the progressive development of sustainable governance and administrative capabilities. 'Top-down' planning, through influence from modernist planning ideas of 'the imagined city' which does not understand 'community', has led to the entrenchment of poverty and the exclusion of many. Theodori (2009:7) defines community as "a place-oriented process of interrelated actions through which members of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life".

Community based planning as a concept

Community based planning is a form of participatory planning that is designed to promote community action. It is a process that builds, strengthens and supports community structures. In the context of this paper, community based refers to "face-face interactions within community working essentially at their own initiative" (Kent, 1981: 74). Planning means "deliberate analytic efforts designed to guide future decisions and actions" (Kent, 1981: 74). The overall intent of CBP is to develop a comprehensive and well managed plan that all stakeholders and actors can utilise to guide local community development initiatives. It has the explicit objective of reversing existing power relations in a manner that creates agency and voice for the poor, while allowing the poor to have more control over development issues (Mansuri and Rao, 2003: 3). However, the distinction



between planning for action and the action itself is important. Within CBP, the focus should be on planning itself; "on the process of reflection that precedes and guides action" (Kent, 1981: 74). This process, in contrast to 'top-down' approaches, allows for the self-mobilisation of communities and citizens.

Cities in the developing world, driven by high rates of urbanisation, continue to face considerable challenges relating to poverty, exclusion, insecurity and environmental degradation. In the local government context, CBP offers an opportunity to align development and planning with community participation through effective

engagement in addressing mounting urban and social problems. It is a tool designed to bring to fruition the deepened democracy that both citizens and government desire (Goldman et. al, 2005). To achieve this requires citizens to be involved in implementing and managing their development by claiming their rights and carrying out their responsibilities. Proper urban planning, built on a strong

Figure 1: Citizen Engagement and Empowerment

foundation of 'meaningful participation', is key to creating 'a city that works for all'³. As illustrated by Figure 1, benefits of CBP include giving tangible effect to the notion of community involvement in local development. By extending participation beyond consultation to empowerment, CBP seeks to release local community energy for action and thereby overcome dependency (Goldman et. al, 2005). Participatory planning, by empowering communities to take charge of their lives, results in better design outcomes that are more responsive to the diverse needs of differing community groups (UN-Habitat, 2010). South Africa, arguably, has some of the most progressive legislation and policy in the world. The challenge is, however, bridging the gap between policy and practice.

CBP in the context of planning systems in South Africa

One of the major developmental functions of local government provided for in the Constitution is to structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to prioritise the basic needs and socio-economic development of communities (DPLG, 2004). Prioritisation that is structured to the needs of communities can only be achieved through meaningful engagement with communities. Broadly speaking, meaningful engagement happens when communities and government talk and listen to each other and try to understand each other's perspectives in the pursuit of a particular goal (Chenwi and Tissington, 2010: 9). The importance of deepening democracy is recognised both in the Freedom Charter⁴ and in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Community based planning is central to integrated development planning since IDPs were introduced to create a more responsive public administration and to assist with the integration of development at the local level (Chimbuya et. al, 2004). Disaggregated, community based planning can be seen as a convergence between planning and community participation.

Community participation is a requirement in the formulation of municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), as stipulated by two national planning processes - the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (MSA). Section 152 of the Constitution states that "local government must encourage communities and community organisations to be involved in the matters of local government". The White Paper on Local Government (1998) goes on to say that local government must allow consumers of services to have input on the way services are delivered. It adds that developmental municipalities should be positioned and committed to working with citizens to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. The Municipal Systems Act (2000) stipulates that municipalities must develop five-year integrated development plans, integrating planning and delivery, and providing a framework for all development activities in the area of the municipality. The Act makes many references to community participation, with Section 29(b), in particular, stating that the process for developing an IDP must allow for⁵:

- (i) The local community to be consulted on its development needs and priorities
- (ii) The local community to participate in the drafting of the IDP.

³ City of Cape Town mantra

⁴ All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country

⁵ Reference to Municipal Systems Act extracted from Goldman et.al, 2005

Community based planning provides an opportunity to optimise participation beyond the current practice of consultation and, in doing so, formulate IDPs which echo the voice of the people.

Kaufman 1969 (in Kent, 1981: 75) provides that, though participation is not without limits, it does provide intrinsic value through “inducing human dignity and respect and making people responsible by developing their powers of deliberate action”. Development planning cannot be done from a distance since by its very nature it is contextual. Local communities know and understand their development context better and are, hence, more opportunely placed to inform their own development (Kent, 1981). By involving local communities, local government actions gain legitimacy while increasing community ownership, resulting in a more transparent and accountable state of governance. The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 institutionalises citizen participation in local government through making provision for the establishment of ward committees as vehicles for active participation by communities in matters of local government. It states that municipalities must annually report on the involvement of communities in the affairs of the municipality. Transparency and accountability realign reporting lines, shifting away from ‘tick-box exercises’ designed to foster the illusion of shared visioning to a scenario of meaningful engagement.

Though not expressly mentioned in legislation; community based planning, nonetheless, provides an important bridge between planning and participation. CBP processes may have differing objectives (for example some might focus on community mobilisation whilst other concentrate on improving participation in local government planning) but in essence their aim is the same - to improve both governmental and other services as well as to empower communities (Goldman and Abbot, 2004). To conclude this section, according to Chimbuya et. al (2004: 23), the realisation of the participatory aspects of IDPs (as governed by legislation) rests on:

- Representation - through broadening the range of stakeholders that need to be involved in the IDP process
- Responsiveness – through promoting flexible planning practices that respond to community priorities and operate in partnership with communities
- Accountability – IDPs present the opportunity for public assessment and prioritisation of needs within communities.

Experiences in community based planning

Community based planning is firmly founded on the meaningful inclusion of citizens in the planning process. It is meant to support the governance, planning and capacity building efforts of local government (Cook, 2009) through the inclusion of communities in the difficult task of creating diverse, balanced and integrated settlements. Globally, the move to advance community-driven development is now seen as central to creating sustainable livelihoods, good governance and in alleviating poverty (Toner et. al, 2004). Participatory approaches to community development, taking various forms, are implemented by assorted stakeholders such as governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donor organisations (Toner et. al, 2004). Results, however, are usually achieved in the same manner - a participatory, community-driven process that articulates a vision and clear way forward (Cook, 2009: 8). In an effort to decentralise planning, countries the world over

(but particularly in the Global South and Asia) have moved to create autonomous planning structures such as district plans in Uganda, municipal rural development plans in Brazil and integrated development plans in South Africa (Goldman and Abbot, 2004). Yet room still exists for further participation in local government affairs at the community level. This will allow for (Gumbo 2009: 3):

- The creation of spaces for engagement where issues can be raised, listened and responded to by local government and other support organisations
- An improvement in the quality of existing plans in terms of development processes and content of plans
- An improvement of quality in the services offered
- Increased control and feeling of ownership over own development
- An increase in community action and a reduction in dependency.

Active community involvement is necessary, particularly in low-income and minority areas, as it empowers communities towards a position of influence in decision making. Community power manifests itself through active citizenry embodied in the competence of its citizens to deal with their developmental issues through effort, energy and resources rather than dependency. According to Kent (1981: 75), “it is the empowerment of people out of their own resources that constitutes the fundamental value of community based development”. Building capacity at the community level encourages people to engage in development issues more fully beyond focusing on ‘greener pastures’. Its worth lies in the importance of recognising that local communities understand their environment best and fully know what plagues it.

When communities participate meaningfully in their own development, they become an effective force of change. In Zimbabwe, CBP is viewed by communities and support organisations as a process which empowers local leaders and vulnerable socio-economic groups to demand development interventions that are relevant to them (Gumbo, 2009: 4). A significant barrier to development and service delivery at local level is the misalignment of resource allocations at the meso and micro levels⁶ due to limited deliberative dialogue between development partners (Gumbo, 2004). People’s lack of motivation to participate, for various reasons, can make achieving this type of deliberative dialogue challenging. Decentralising planning and decision making facilitates project implementation, provides ownership to communities and stakeholders involved, and motivation to see their plans come to bear. The most valuable asset in community based planning is the trust between local government,

A four country CBP project was funded by the DFID covering South Africa, Uganda, Ghana and Zimbabwe. It explored how an empowering participatory planning process can be integrated with the local government planning system. It focused on three main themes; (i) the promotion of decentralised approaches to planning and service delivery (ii) the promotion of empowerment involving the use of participatory methodologies (iii) the promotion of sustainable livelihoods approaches. The project was run in partnership with local government and therefore integrated into existing funding streams. CBP funds were used to effect this integration through study visits, testing and developing improved CBP methodologies and learning exchanges. (Toner et. al, 2004: 2).

⁶ Local government and community level respectively

community and other relevant stakeholders it engenders. Participatory methodologies treat communities as non-homogenous, allowing for settlement-specific learning and more engaged 'bottom-up' prioritisation. Community based planning, in the search for a solution towards inclusive development, encourages stakeholders to look beyond surface conditions to the deeper substrate of under-development not always visible to the 'outsider' (Karimi, 2012). As the case-study highlights, the building of equal partnerships is critical to a successful process. Issues brought to the table by the community must be included in the formal process of prioritisation and resource allocation. The intention of community specific strategies is to provide individual, tailored and asset based responses that create minimum disruption but maximises benefit (Karimi, 2012:13).

With the evolution of developmental local government in South Africa, municipalities have become drivers of growth and kingpins for socio-economic development. It is, therefore, important that local leadership expand its view to "think globally, but act locally" in the development of plans (Maserumule, 2008 in Koma, 2012: 57). Koma (2012: 58) argues that local authorities can provide for favourable and inclusive local development by promoting political leadership able to bring together coalitions and networks of local interests towards a shared vision. Understanding what CBP means to all parties involved, clarifying expectations and talking about how community inclusive planning has worked in other communities is one of the first steps to success. It will shape the vision and outcomes of the process (Cook, 2009). An engagement and communications strategy is recommended to define how best to involve all stakeholders in achieving the long-term, sustainable implementation of a shared vision of development (Cook, 2009).

Per example, in the Tanzakesho project (Tanzania) various environmental education and awareness measures were tailor-made to the needs of the respective districts (Toner et.al 2004: 4) through a structured agreement between all stakeholders. Facilitation towards integrating the joint vision from the ward planning programme, with district level development plans and the Tanzanian Development Vision 2025, was important to ensure integration of planning across the different levels of governance. Local governments, as the main development partner at community level, can play a facilitating role, contributing towards the formation of stakeholder and sector networks and linkages (Koma, 2012). Moreover, community based planning simplifies the often sophisticated methodologies of comprehensive planning, oft-disconnected with local priorities by their technical nature. In most instances 'top-down' planning instruments expand the influence of outside planners while shrinking the influence of the intended beneficiaries (Kent, 1981: 78).

To date, planning has tended towards concentrating on needs and 'wish lists', neglecting communities' willingness to use their assets, skills and resources for their own development (DPLG,

A participatory planning programme for district development termed Tanzakesho programmes was implemented in Tanzania as part of a commitment by the UNDP towards meeting Agenda 21. The main component of Tanzakesho was the advocacy of participatory planning as a means of effecting sustainable development. It was meant to improve the existing ward planning programme which was largely implemented 'top-down' through making it more participatory and reflective of local needs. Planning activities were followed by the implementation of micro-projects as prioritised during village planning processes and their subsequent monitoring by the villagers. (Toner et. al, 2004: 2).

2004). Involving individuals and community in development allows for a grassroots orientation of planning that relies on local residents who network with other concerned citizens to bring about a direction (Kelsey, 2011). Training and capacity building give communities a more productive role in planning. The Mvuyane case study from South Africa provides an example of this concept, with project funds held locally and the community making major decisions involving prioritisation.

One of the principle objectives of CBP is to improve the community's control over development. Harnessing the strengths of a community channels its combined positive attributes and uses this energy to give capacity to the process (Kelsey, 2011: 2). For CBP to be successful, it must rely on partners to find and make use of resources efficiently (financial, human and other community assets). Methodology should focus on the process which, through 'putting participation at the heart of development',⁷ would allow for up-scaling and replication of the intervention. The case studies elaborated above all have different starting points but converge in their pursuit of community owned goals (Toner et. al, 2004: 4) and the firm placement of the primary responsibility for development with the community.

The Mvuyane Water and Sanitation Project is located south of Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal. The first phase involved community mobilisation including the formation of a Committee. A community profile, training needs assessment and training plan were undertaken, plus a feasibility study. A detailed design and training plan were then developed. The community drove project prioritisation and made decisions about resource allocations. It was a labour intensive project and operations and maintenance were done by trained community members. (DPLG, 2004)

International and local good practice shows that CBP principles, though not intended to replace the existing systems of planning, present a more interactive method of community development. Effective community based planning will improve local governance and accountability in the allocation and use of resources while empowering communities to participate and claim ownership of the process and subsequent results. According to Gumbo (2009: 3), the benefits of CBP that emerge from best practice include:

- A reliable method for obtaining realistic and focused plans
- Potential for integrating ward (micro), local authority (meso) and national (macro) plans
- Efficient resource allocation for implementing of plans
- Transparency in the selection and prioritisation of projects at all levels
- Opportunities for improved accountability during project and programme implementation.

Though service provision is undeniably a function of local government, the failure of most local municipalities to facilitate participatory governance adequately (Pieterse, 2013) results in some communities being left with services that are dysfunctional, inadequate and do not address their community priorities. The NDP (2012:474) echoes the need to involve communities in local development, not just in any forum, but in their own spaces.

⁷ State of Local Governance Report, 2012

Integrating planning with meaningful dialogue

Effective inter-stakeholder coordination, communication and partnership-building, premised on 'bottom-up' dialogue, is integral to achieving CBP objectives. Government and external stakeholders alike need to 'jettison their silo and narrowed planning processes' (Koma, 2012: 65) in order to facilitate meaningful dialogue. In other words, to achieve integrated, sustainable and working environments society needs to discard fragmented planning approaches in favour of inclusive approaches based on meaningful participation. According to Paul (1987: 2), "participation has no meaning unless the people involved have significant control over the decisions concerning the community to which they belong". Authors such as Max Millikan (cited in Kent, 1981: 82) see planning as "a permanent dialogue among political leaders, technical elite and populace over goals, targets, costs and programmes". The Objects of Local Government contained in section 152 of the Constitution, note that local government should encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government. Beneficiary communities are the object of development and it is through their engaging in meaningful dialogue with local government (Paul, 1987) that effective governance in service delivery can be achieved. Kent (1981: 82), cites Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) which takes a different view of dialogue as something that should take place amongst communities themselves, allowing for them to self-reflect on their development needs and act towards transformation. Be that as it may, it is evident that a common thread occurs in all approaches, that of the critical role of meaningful dialogue in planning.

Policy frameworks which affect local development view public participation as the process that allows for citizens to play an effective part in their development. In the South African context, ward committees are viewed as the platform from which citizens can participate in their development affairs. However, research has shown that this structure is inadequate, poorly managed and under-resourced to play its intended role (Idasa, 2004 in Ngamlana and Mathoho, 2012). This begs the question of how such a dysfunctional platform can adequately reflect local development priorities in the IDPs. Ward committees, though conceptualised with the best of intent, are prone to 'hijacking' as local government sub-structures and often function in conflict with the established community power structures. Designed to be representative of a specific ward, they are not a community-created 'space' born out of meaningful dialogue. As such, ward committees do not represent the liberating pedagogy (Kent, 1981) promulgated by CBP founded on meaningful dialogue. The focus should be on the process rather than the product or outcome of planning, placing people first on the development agenda.

Community based planning can connect the dotted lines where the NDP does not emphasise local area development planning and related governance (PPT, 2012). The continued lack of emphasis on 'people first', reflected in ongoing efforts to establish ward committees as the only formally recognised structure through which communities can engage with the state on their development, is limiting the emergence of alternative, citizen initiated forms of organisation (Ngamlana and Poswayo, 2013). For as long as local development is influenced by 'top-down' planning and the integration of community dialogue with planning remains mere policy, the Objects of Local Government will continue to be disconnected with reality. Citizens need their voices to be heard

within their own spaces and, through this process, shape the independent pieces that collectively form a whole for an *integrated* IDP.

State capacity to engage

Research and best practice show the need to reform local government structures to meet the needs of communities through area based organisation. A major stumbling block in this regard is the lack of political will to enhance participatory development. The politics of patronage contribute to the dysfunction of local government with elected officials looking up to their political masters rather than down to ordinary citizens. Heese and Allan (2009), cited in Ngamlana and Poswayo (2013: 93), note that poor communication between citizens and the state is arguably the biggest catalyst of service delivery protests. Ward committee failure to embody meaningful participation can be countered by a political will which promotes participatory methodologies beyond those recognised by the state (Ngamlana and Poswayo, 2013).

Decentralisation and the strengthening of responsive and effective local government structures is an important element in attaining an innovative state that allows for citizens to construct their own spaces of engagement. The goal is to focus on less being more, not simply creating additional misaligned platforms of citizen engagement but rather concentrating on recognised examples of best practice that are scalable and replicable. Community based planning, like other meaningful 'bottom-up' approaches, is time-intensive and requires significant patience and commitment to the process by all stakeholders. This does not necessarily imply time delays and extra costs, but does ensure an end product that is more acceptable to the ultimate beneficiaries (DPLG, 2004). The setting of priorities through IDP meetings and *Imbizos* needs to be planned in tandem with community processes of participation. They should present a joint plenary for discussion and budgeting after CBP and local prioritisation processes. This is crucial in creating a credible, community-based planning environment which allows for continued dialogue stretching beyond a specific project.

The success of a participatory process rests with all stakeholders and their understanding of their own and other role-players roles and responsibilities (DPLG, 2004: 11). The role and responsibility of communities is to represent interests and contribute knowledge and ideas to the planning process. Due to capacity constraints, IDPs are usually compiled by planners, engineers and consultants who are trained to focus on spatial and infrastructural issues rather than process dynamics of community participation. Hence, they tend to neglect the roles and responsibilities of communities and civil society. The challenge in enhancing the state's capacity to engage in alternative structures is to establish a CBP process which is empowering for the local community whilst remaining affordable and replicable. Further, any recognition of alternative participatory spaces that fall outside of legislated structures must be accompanied by capacitating the state's ability to engage effectively in these alternative spaces (Ngamlana and Poswayo, 2013).

Building on community based planning

Meaningful participation plays an important role in the development outcomes of communities. The NDP affirms that where people live, work and play matters, not just in the aesthetic sense but also recognising that our environments have a profound impact on our overall health. The challenge, however, remains how to develop a vertical planning system which effectively integrates plans at community, local government and national levels whilst accommodating horizontal linkages across sectors (Goldman and Abbot, 2004). Goldman and Abbot (2004: 6) believe that CBP presents an opportunity to plan across sectors and multi-tier linkages without losing the voice of community. Being broad in its nature, community based planning emphasises the participatory process that leads to the formulation of a joint neighbourhood vision. The first step in achieving this is the building of capacity towards establishing, fostering and maintaining processes at community level that encourage communication amongst individuals and external stakeholders (Theodori, 2009: 12). The development of 'community' leads to a competent populace that can demand and lead their own development process. According to Ruderman (2009: 3), competent communities are able to;

- I. Collaborate effectively in identifying the problems and needs of their communities
- II. Achieve a working consensus on goals and priorities
- III. Agree on ways and means to implement agreed upon goals
- IV. Collaborate effectively in the required actions.

Viewing community as a collective construct not given to, but rather emerging from a local society and persisting as long as citizens uphold the common bond that brings them together (Theodori, 2009) is important. It allows the community to define their own actions based on their specific collective and gain influence over conditions that matter to them as people who share neighbourhoods, workplaces, experiences or concerns (Ruderman, 2009).

Community based planning, like other participation tools, provides a broad range of strategies to guide the conceptualisation of community values, needs and aspirations, which in turn become the drivers of plans that reflect and advance the community's vision for the future (Davis et. al, 2013: 1). Engaging in community based planning does not entail the abandoning of professional planning; rather it serves to supplement the process with sound ideas born out of experience of being part of a community (as shown in the Tanzakesho case study). Amongst the major concerns relating to local government participatory structures in South Africa, is the issue of transparency. Weak and ineffective communication structures, operating bilaterally between communities and local government, are one of the lead causes of inadequate service delivery and the resultant, oft-violent public protests. Current public participation exercises tend to play lip-service to the principle without taking the submissions of communities seriously. Public mistrust of government and its elected officials ensues, negatively impacting on citizen-local government relations (Davies et. al, 2013). The participatory foundation of CBP provides an opportunity to heal this rift.

As with all forms of social interaction, community development does not occur without contestation. More often than not, community development involves conflict, confrontation and negotiation between diverging interests (Theodori, 2009: 15). Negotiations in these regard need to be governed by a long-term vision for a community created in an inclusive and meaningful manner (Cook, 2009).

Based on this vision a framework for action and change can be formulated. Cook (2009: 8) describes four planning categories that form the backbone of CBP:

- 1. Getting Ready for CBP:** getting the community interested and involved in planning requires a deep understanding of the stakeholder environment in order to ensure meaningful dialogue in the planning process (Davis et. al, 2013). This stage is divided into two sub-categories:
 - a. Launching CBP: getting community and leadership support for the process, understanding what it means, clarifying expectations and sharing past experiences.
 - b. Building capacity to plan: organising community champions to drive the CBP process is critical. There is a need, at this stage, to identify what skills, roles and responsibilities are required to carry out CBP.

- 2. Conducting CBP:** tools for participatory planning take a variety of arrays and they can be used in different settings, combinations and formats (Davies et. al, 2013). Processes and methods depend on in-depth engagements with stakeholders and partners. This activity is sub-divided into 6 categories:
 - a. Cementing partnerships and stakeholder relationships: there is a need to ensure that partners in development share the same vision with the beneficiaries. The role of all stakeholders should be clearly defined
 - b. Building the process: an effective process includes continuous adjustments and the use of a diverse set of methods and tools to involve all stakeholders in decision-making
 - c. Engaging the community: meaningful dialogue and continuous community involvement in the process is critical for long-term implementation success. There may be a need to create an engagement and communications strategy that governs how all stakeholders will be equally involved in the process
 - d. Creating the vision: includes the determining of goals and action priorities by defining values and objectives, building on strengths, addressing root causes of issues, identifying opportunities and communicating results. A framework for decision making and an overall plan of action that clearly shows and sequences priorities is needed to turn the vision into a reality
 - e. Connecting the parts: begin to establish opportunities for linkages (horizontal and vertical) in order to maximise buy-in and the efficient use of resources
 - f. Communicating results: recording and sharing the results of the CBP process and outcomes influences meso level plans like IDPs
 - g. Getting approval: all stakeholders agree and accept the planning outcomes.

3. **Implementing CBP:** details of implementation vary from project to project but within the implementation phase, the maintenance of regular communication is essential to keeping project stakeholders motivated and informed:
 - a. Getting to action: Stakeholders need to prepare to carry out actions agreed upon in the planning phase. The transition from planning to doing is critical in the CBP process and it is critical at this stage to maximise the benefits deriving from strategic partnerships and collaboration.
4. **Assessing the Results:** in order to learn from experience communities, local government and other stakeholders in the CBP process need to know what worked and what didn't and whether the project achieved its objectives (Communities in Action, undated: 15).
 - a. Keeping the plan alive: completing actions and realising the benefits allows results to be tracked and assessed hence creating an opportunity for adaptive learning. Communities need to determine whether the vision is creating the expected change.

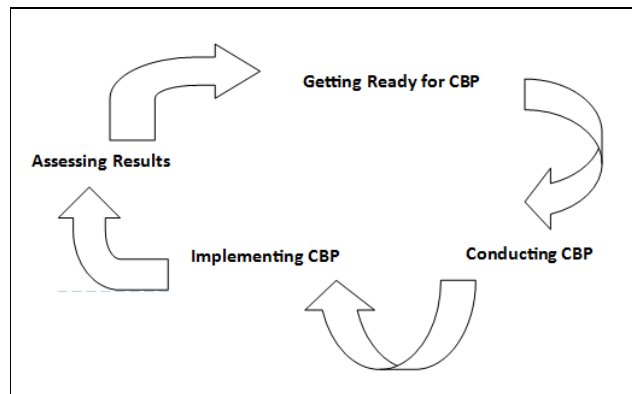


Figure 2: Illustration of CBP process (adapted from Cook, 2009)

Community based planning and the NDP – Where does it all fit?

The transformation of communities to improve the lives of citizens is one of core objectives of the NDP. Whilst policies are in place to achieve this, the main challenge remains government's failure to develop relevant programmes in response to policy, thus ensuring its own capacity to deliver. Chapter 15 of the National Development Plan (2012) acknowledges the need to build the capacity of both the state and citizens if any form of transformation is to be achieved and in a manner that supports locally driven spatial development. The recognition of the development disparities between different sectors of South African society is perhaps the most critical starting point towards this change. The NDP (2012: 264) acknowledges the failure to differentiate planning responses in relation to varying settlement types as a major shortcoming of past and present practices. For example, cases exist of poor spatial planning where a disproportionate number of houses have been built in areas of little or no growth (NDP, 2012: 270). Participatory development presents a proven edge in this regard, enabling the discussion and prioritisation of development according to a shared vision.

The South African local government model provides for integration between community participation, IDP processes and performance management. Policy recognises the need for input from the beneficiaries at both ends of service delivery. In light of this, community based planning could serve either as an alternative structure to ward committees or to build capacity of existing structures. The CBP methodology offers ward committees a powerful planning and implementation tool to carry out their roles and responsibilities. It provides an agenda and ward plan (Goldman et. al, 2005: 15) whilst granting the ward committee and the community at large an on-going role in development through the implementation and monitoring of this plan.

Community based planning mobilises and integrates people into contributing meaningfully to the development of their specific areas as well as feeding into the agenda of national development (Abiona and Bello, 2013). Present local government models have been largely unsuccessful (CoGTA, 2011) and the state is currently undertaking a review to ensure a more effective cooperative governance system that allows for greater active citizenry. To streamline decision making and coordination of development, the NDP (2012: 266) leaves room for the consideration of institutional structures that can ensure greater collaboration and harmonisation of plans. 'Making the future work' requires meaningful engagement with all citizens. Participation allows the through-flow of information to those corners of the development process which other tools have failed to reach. In sections, the wording of the NDP clearly shows that the notion of meaningful dialogue between government and citizens has become the foundation of development; however this position has not been consolidated at local government level. Botkin et. al (1979) cited in Finsterbusch and van Wicklin III (1987: 3) in their work *No Limits to Learning* declares that "the amount of innovative learning in the world system hinges on the degree of effective participation at international and local levels". Community based planning permits a location-specific approach to development hinged on continuous dialogue through which communities increasingly strive to develop themselves as they become empowered through learning. In the South African context, there is a need to strike a balance between local actions in the immediate and the larger, long-term changes needed to counteract the impact of apartheid. Seeing immediate benefits to participation reduces the likelihood of a community getting participation fatigue and withdrawing from future engagements.

Project Preparation Trust (2012: 5), in its submission on the NDP, states that too much focus is placed on high level, spatial planning when the actual problem lies at local level. 'Top-down' planning neglects some of the intricate relationships that exist within a community, the most obvious being "the relationship between where people live and how they survive" (NDP, 2012: 266). Integrating CBP into existing planning tools, allowing the collective a voice in the system, will inadvertently lead to a shift in priorities towards putting people first. Local level development needs to be defined as "the unlocking and enhancing of human potential, rather than the wholesale replacement of existing spatial systems" (Finsterbusch and van Wicklin III, 1987: 3). Integrating CBP into the existing system of citizen engagement need not entail an overhaul of policy; local government simply needs to show willingness to explore alternative spaces of engagement to supplement legislated spaces. Indeed, challenges faced in South Africa to meaningful participation are not as a result of a vacuum in policy. Effort should be made to build institutional capacity, establish strong instruments for implementation and ensure coordination across different sectors. To make the NDP more responsive to gaps between policy and implementation, professional facilitation of multi-sectoral engagement and participative planning processes should be considered (PPT, 2012: 5). Simply providing the opportunity for local communities to take part in preparing their

own plans, in isolation of the wider developmental context, may create new forms of inequality since better resourced communities are more likely to respond appropriately to the opportunity (NDP, 2012: 275). The starting point should be the mobilisation of support from the different role players; however this is often the least resourced part of the process. Community based planning is not just about setting up the institutional arrangements; but also about developing a network of people that are committed to and can influence the process- finding drivers and working with them.

According to the NDP (2012), sound spatial governance can only be achieved if complemented by strong professional capacity and mobilised communities. In South Africa, most municipalities struggle with a lack of capacity. Since local government is a critical partner in community development, a lack of capacity on their part limits the effect that 'bottom-up' efforts are likely to have. Low capacity of local government aggravates the lack of citizen engagement in neighbourhood planning and development (NDP, 2012: 275). The NDP recognises the efforts of communities that have tried to initiate their own planning and problem-solving tools. These demonstrate that a foundation of practice exists on which there is room to build and learn. Community led capacity building needs to be done hand in hand with local government in order to build their capacity to engage and respond to communities. Participatory processes need to be recognised beyond compliance driven action by ensuring that accountability works both ways. Empowerment entails citizens holding local government to account and demanding the kind of development that they want. Through communities becoming involved in development, taking ownership of their destiny, citizen dependency on the state will drop and active citizenship, driven by meaningful engagement, will increase.

Spatial policy can be used to bring different actors and interests groups together to define a common future, binding all sectors locally, provincially and nationally (NDP, 2012: 277). The use of social compacts in formalising the obligations of development partners can be a good way to mediate conflicting interests and provide a platform for future action. Meaningful participation is usually short-circuited by local government, prolonging the development process, because it requires budget, human resources and time. In addition to existing policy requirements, social compacts will ensure that local government provide for meaningful dialogue and integrate alternative participatory planning structures to the formal IDP processes. For the compacts to be binding, they should be agreed on by all stakeholders through democratic principles. While the planning process is, in most instances, initiated and co-ordinated by the municipality, community based planning should be viewed as a partnership between the community, the ward committee and the municipality. The plan is owned by the community or ward and other structures should build capacity of and facilitate the process as agreed upon in the social compact. Hence, developing social compacts should be done through giving voice to all competing interests and the end result should address the responsibilities of the state, the private sector and the citizenry (NDP, 2012: 282).

As citizens engaging meaningfully in their own development, agreeing on the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and development partners, 'bottom-up' accountability is improved. Citizens become better placed to communicate their development grievances through negotiation, rather than protest, as co-owners of the development results. The current trend of out-sourcing the compiling of IDPs to consultants is unsustainable as it defeats the whole purpose of developmental local government. Out-sourcing reduces the likelihood of councillors and municipal employees being fully committed to delivering IDP priorities because they are disengaged from the

process. It also reduces the incentive of citizens to engage in the process. Community based planning can improve local area development and serve to build capacity of local government at the community level. As an on-going process of engagement, it can run outside of the IDP formal processes meaning that, when the time comes to deliberate in legislated planning spaces, communities have a greater foothold on their development priorities. Building capacity of local government and of communities to engage in their own development will begin to slowly push out and close the space currently occupied by consultants. Citizen participation has an important role to bring about transformation (NDP, 2012: 474) and it is critical in helping the state to recognise people's own spaces of dialogue and give meaning to them.

Conclusion

Community based planning is one of the many tools for participatory planning that can be adapted by local communities to claim their development rights. Local government is plagued by issues of capacity hindering their ability to deliver on their mandate. The NDP recognises these many shortfalls and acknowledges that the key to making local development work is to improve participation that is founded on the principle of 'people first'. Development is meant to improve the lives of communities; but if a 'disconnect' exists between community priorities and service delivery it may end up serving the reverse. South Africa needs to learn from international and local experience applying these to make local development work. Policy, practice and good experience need to intersect at a point where they begin to talk to each other. This will allow the re-shaping of spaces of engagement and, because all stakeholders are involved, CBP (as an alternative participatory space) can be integrated into municipal systems. The issue is not policy; rather (as recognised by the NDP and wider literature) bringing it all together and making it work. The concept of the active citizen, central to the NDP, stands to be manifested and engrained in community processes, as citizens become empowered, to think, plan and act on their development. Local government, instead of shunning community based planning, should embrace it and provide resources for its up-scaling. Engaging communities as development partners will result in contestation and grievance being resolved around the negotiation table rather than, as has become common practice, through violent protest action. Community based planning is not a one size fits all and will not necessarily solve the failings of local government, but it is a starting point that is premised on the critical aspect of developmental local government-meaningful participation.

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