



## (RE)CLAIMING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE

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Local democratic space is the arena where civic actors and the state negotiate for influence (over ideology and development choices), resources and power. As such, local democratic space needs to enable inclusive democratic practices, i.e. practices which acknowledge difference, diversity, power imbalances and contestation. Unless local democratic space offers value and legitimacy to community realities and concerns, and unless engagement in local democratic space leads to substantial outcomes, citizens<sup>1</sup> will deem those spaces ineffective, if not exclusionary. In such instances, they are likely to become despondent toward state-driven processes and/or may opt for alternative strategies, including actions that are seen as hostile towards the state.



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IT IS WIDELY acknowledged that institutionalised spaces for state-citizen interaction in South Africa are by and large not vibrant local democratic spaces. Increasingly, local and/or political elites are encroaching these spaces (Van Vuuren 2014). This is one of the factors that has led to a growing disillusionment with government, Parliament and South Africa's political leadership at the highest office.<sup>2</sup> The inadequacy of public participation spaces is a

critical factor in the erosion of public trust in local government:

There has been a decline in public trust in municipalities, which have sometimes failed to manage resources efficiently, maintain basic municipal services and collect revenue. Causes include weak leadership or political interference in operations, vacancies in critical posts, poor financial management, lack of transparency and

accountability, and weak and ineffective platforms for public participation and communication with communities. (The Presidency 2014: 27)

A decline in public trust does not necessarily imply greater passivity on the part of citizens and civic groups. In fact, there is clear evidence in South Africa of the opposite: community protests, petitioning, public marches and public interest litigation are but some examples of tactics used by civic groups engaging in (sometimes assertive) modes of claims-making.<sup>3</sup> This suggests a strong desire on the part of civic actors to claim, or reclaim, space for political expression and democratic engagement and to gain recognition for their concerns.

Municipal elections represent a particular moment in shaping the nature and quality of local democratic space. With municipal elections due in August 2016, political contestation has intensified over the past few months. According to media reports, the councillor candidate selection process has led to a jostling for nominations and a raft of complaints by party members and/or party hopefuls against the candidates put forward by their political party. It has also led to defections and, in the most serious expression of political intolerance, killings of party representatives.<sup>4</sup> As the candidate selection process has drawn to a close, it is too early to say whether the candidates put forward represent a positive change in the governance of municipalities after the elections.

Regardless, the municipal elections also represent a particularly important moment for the electorate to hold incumbent representatives to account and to shape the relationship between elected representatives and local constituencies for the next five years. With an increase of over 2.6 million voters on the voters' role, indications are that a record number of people may turn up to vote in the municipal elections.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that the electorate

sees the forthcoming elections as an important moment in potentially (re)claiming local democratic space. Actual voter turnout and voting results will signal the electorate's views and expectations to the new municipal leadership.

This paper offers an interpretation of what local democratic space is and looks like – or ought to look like. It further argues that where local democratic space does not enable deliberation, difference and negotiation (in a manner that overcomes underlying power imbalances and systemic exclusion) towards clear outcomes and actions, disillusionment and lack of recognition may breed violence. At the same time, an inability (or unwillingness) to appreciate dissent may fuel state-sanctioned violence. The paper concludes with a reflection on local democratic space in South Africa and different perspectives and tactics on (re)claiming local democratic space, as reflected in subsequent contributions to this volume.

## DEFINING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE

Democratic space is broadly defined as 'the arena between the state and the individual in which people interact to hold the state accountable, shape public debate, participate in politics and express their needs and opinions' (Horner and Puddephatt 2011:3). While democratic space may take different forms, depending on context and the nature of political regimes, 'it can only be deemed to be democratic when it is underpinned by the values of liberal democracy such as individual autonomy, political freedom, representative leadership, accountable governance and respect for human rights' (Horner and Puddephatt 2011: 3).

Horner and Puddephatt (2011) suggest that democratic space has two dimensions: a procedural and a metaphorical one. Parkinson (in Barnett 2013) adds a third dimension, namely a physical one<sup>6</sup>:

Localism – the devolution of decision-making, resources and power to the local level, where community knowledge is embedded and where users of public services reside – is a critical feature of democratic space (Ercana and Hendricks 2013).

- ✦ The **procedural** dimension refers to the formal institutions, structures, procedures and processes that civic actors can access or employ to express their voice and hold the state to account. In other words, these are formally sanctioned avenues of engagement and political expression (or claims-making by civic actors on the state).
- ✦ The **metaphorical** dimension refers to the ideals, values and interactions which give life and meaning to the procedural dimension. In addition to the values highlighted above, the metaphorical dimension would include values such as inclusion, participation, openness, transparency and local empowerment/ownership.
- ✦ The **physical** dimension refers to the actual space and setting where social and political imaginaries find expression – through statues, memorials and street names, for example. Beyond these more obvious examples, the physical dimension of democratic space is also about the value ascribed to public space and how public space is used by local residents. It makes visible whether core values such as inclusion and respect are borne out in the physical realm. As such, it is the setting where democratic practice is lived out/enacted, where civic organisation takes shape and identities are formed.

Taken together, these dimensions determine the nature and quality of interaction between state and society. A society may have established structures, procedures and processes for political expression and interaction, but if these are not operating in accordance with

core democratic values they will most likely become contested, if not meaningless in the eyes of segments of society. Likewise, a society may have adopted progressive measures to advance participatory democracy in line with core democratic values, but these will mean little if the physical environment continues to represent exclusion and hostility towards certain social groups.

Localism – the devolution of decision-making, resources and power to the local level, where community knowledge is embedded and where users of public services reside – is a critical feature of democratic space (Ercana and Hendricks 2013). Localism is also concerned with strengthening the capacity of citizens/civic actors to promote development and governance from below. Ultimately, the aim is to create a democratic space where citizens and leaders have positive and constructive relationships and are closely connected, and where citizens are part of policy development and implementation processes, including the provision of services. In summation, localism as a feature of democratic space promotes citizen ownership, trust, the development of social capital, empowered citizens and a transparent and accountable government.

### CHARACTER OF LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE

Taking into account the three dimensions of local democratic space (i.e. concerned with procedures, values and physical/visible manifestations where people live and move), we can paraphrase Scott's definition of democratic space as 'the values, rights, procedures *and settings* that constitute democracy with the inclusion of socio-political space for deliberation and differencing' (Scott 2008: 301, emphasis added). The definition highlights two critical features of democratic space: deliberation (i.e. the process of discussion, consideration and negotiation

to arrive at a judgement about what action to take) and difference (i.e. recognition given to the state or relation of being different).

According to the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, *deliberation* refers to ‘an approach to decision-making that involves an informed public, thinking critically together and discussing options from multiple points of view. It encourages enlarged perspectives, opinions, and understandings and can result in better decisions and policies’.<sup>7</sup> As such, deliberation is distinguished from both representation (through elections and exercising one’s right to vote) and consultation. The underpinning argument is that representative democracy cannot replace the importance of civic actors influencing public debate, debating options and trade-offs for development, and holding the state to account. Also, in a democratic dispensation consultation without real influence on the development trajectory of one’s neighbourhood, municipality, or even the country is deemed inadequate.

However, inclusion in deliberation processes does not guarantee that citizens will be treated equally or with the same consideration (Young 2000). Hence, democratic space needs to take into account and accommodate *difference*. Democratic procedures inherently give rise to, and should allow for, differences – in experiences, expectations, cultural and/or political expression, perspectives, levels of influence, and so forth. All of these, although different, need to be accepted as being valid.<sup>8</sup> However, in a deeply unequal society such as South Africa, it is critical to move beyond a liberal notion of difference and plurality and recognise the asymmetry of knowledge, power and influence that often determines how citizens are treated and to what extent their issues and concerns are taken up. Furthermore, it is important to heed Benhabib’s word of caution against a romantic notion of difference

and differentiate clearly between ‘forms of difference which foster democracy and forms of difference which reflect anti-democratic aspirations’ (Benhabib 1994: 3), such as nationalist, xenophobic or tribalist interpretations.

Both deliberation and differentiation suggest that *contestation* is a reality. This is a third key feature of democratic space. Society embodies many different ideologies, opinions, aspirations and experiences, all of which are brought to bear in democratic space. This reality, as well as the fact that different groupings in society have different levels of power and influence, can manifest in contestation and dissent. In fact, the potential for conflict and violence is inherent to democracy, but can paradoxically be overcome by allowing conflict and contestation to play an integrative role (Springer 2011: 531) – assuming that such processes are well-facilitated to avoid papering over pre-existing inequalities. Unfortunately, even in democratic societies, dissent is often demoted or repressed (Webster 2015). When contestation is not managed well and there is no room for dissent in democratic space, it leads to a frustrated citizenry, which may well resort to transgressive and seemingly undemocratic strategies and tactics in an effort to gain recognition.

In essence then, local democratic space represents the institutional (procedural), symbolic and physical space where the state and civic actors (including communities, political parties and other interest groups) deliberate on local challenges and priorities, where difference and contestation is made evident and fairly managed, and where citizens organise themselves around key issues, make claims on the state and hold their local representatives (elected and appointed) to account. Put simply, it is the space where local democracy is practiced and enacted.

### (RE)CLAIMING DEMOCRATIC SPACE THROUGH VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT MEANS

The nature of local democratic space is important in ensuring a sense of recognition of community issues. Where democratic space is unable to do this, citizens are disempowered and may turn to alternative and transgressive measures to elevate their struggles, as experiences in South Africa and elsewhere have shown. The majority of these tactics are nonviolent and within legal and democratic parameters, such as peaceful demonstrations, pickets and petitioning. But in some instances where communities feel ignored, misunderstood or disrespected somehow, violence is sometimes used as a tool to challenge the status quo, to make their voices heard and to legitimise community issues. Springer (2011) refers to these popular outbursts of violence as violence 'from below' (Springer 2011: 526). In those instances, violence is a mechanism for citizen expression and to gain political meaning – even if the outcome could be detrimental to the community in the short and long run.<sup>9</sup>

But communities and popular movements are not the only ones resorting to violent action in an attempt to claim democratic space. Springer (2011: 526) also identifies state-sanctioned violence, referred to as violence 'from above'. While violence from below is an expression of anger and resentment toward existing structures or the state of affairs, violence from above is used to maintain the status quo and quell dissent. More often than not, violence from below is a tool of frustration, rather than a preferred tactic to pursue certain democratic outcomes (Von Holdt et al. 2011). Violence from above is clearly antithetical to democratic practice founded on respect for human rights.

The use of violence is an extreme (and thus far, minority) response to a sense of failing of democratic space – or, in the case of state-sanctioned violence,

an extreme response to dissent, perceived agitation and, in some instances, the use of extra-procedural or unlawful tactics by civic actors. In other instances, the recognition of a 'democratic deficit' has given rise to the creation of new democratic spaces, aimed at deepening local democracy (Shankland et al. 2006: 1). For those concerned with the shortcomings of democratic space, these new initiatives are very exciting as these hold the promise of revitalising ineffective platforms, diffusing power imbalances and/or bringing about substantive results in people's lives. Examples are participatory budgeting, citizen oversight committees, community-based planning and social audits, to mention but a few. However, Shankland et al. (2006) caution against a wholesale uptake of such initiatives, without fully appreciating relevant contextual factors and institutional design considerations. For example, while some initiatives are aimed at enhancing public accountability, others seek to embed more inclusive and effective deliberation. The effectiveness of new democratic spaces also depends on contextual factors, such as the legal, historical and cultural setting, the extent of conflict, the role of political parties and civil society organisations, and the availability of human and financial resources (Shankland et al. 2006: 1).

Furthermore, these new democratic spaces are not without challenges, such as disputes over assertions of representation and competition with existing participatory spaces, amongst others. Ironically, new democratic spaces may not actually be effective in overcoming the democratic deficit, as Shankland et al. describe 'In settings where there is deep-rooted mistrust between state and citizens, groups may refuse to enter new democratic spaces even when these are designed to be inclusive and transparent' (Shankland et al. 2006: 3).

New democratic spaces can be initiated, or supported, by the state, but they can also originate

and remain outside of the state. The remainder of this paper will review local democratic space in South Africa, the role-players involved, and methodologies and tactics used to (re)claim local democratic space. Rather than presenting a comprehensive overview and analysis, it will do this by signposting other contributions from GGLN member organisations in this volume, which deal with different aspects, traits, shortcomings and possibilities of local democratic space. These contributions are concerned with the essence of local democracy, and with the need to reclaim space for civic actors in the realm of local democracy in South Africa.

## (RE)CLAIMING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Much has been written about the state of local governance in South Africa, and in particular about the state-citizen/community interface.<sup>10</sup> It could be argued that in South Africa the procedural dimension of local democratic space is well developed and institutionalised (albeit not always functioning optimally), but that the metaphorical dimension is particularly weak. As mentioned before, the metaphorical refers to the ideals, values and interactions that give life and meaning to the procedural dimension. Because in many instances, structures and procedures aimed at enabling public participation in local governance (such as ward committees, Integrated Development Plan forums, etc.) operate without truly reflecting the democratic values that gave rise to them and that they were meant to embody and express, these platforms are often experienced as ineffective, exclusionary and even illegitimate by those intended to make active use of them. Furthermore, if one looks at the key features of local democratic space – i.e. deliberation, recognising difference and contestation – it is

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clear that these are not characteristic of most of the institutionalised spaces for state-citizen interaction.

In as far as the physical dimension of local democratic space is concerned, the pervasive spatial segregation across the South African landscape and the bleakness of many townships and low income settlements show that there is still a long way to go before it truly reflects the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution (see, amongst others, NPC 2012).

While government has identified these challenges for some time now, there is little evidence that this realisation is fuelling the revitalisation of local democratic space in a manner that expands the scope for popular influence and advances community-driven local development. This appears to be a key driver in fuelling various modes of claims-making, as evidenced in the burgeoning of community mobilisation, public interest litigation, petitioning and protests, amongst others.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, the state is not always appreciative of community-led processes to (re)claim democratic space. In fact, sometimes the state adopts a harsh stance, even resorting to repressive tactics to gain control over the situation (SERI undated; Van Vuuren 2014). It goes without saying that such an approach goes against the grain of what local democratic space is about and seeks to achieve.

Conflict and violence, both at a community level and state-sanctioned violence, are worrying signs of

democratic space being eroded, or at least being under duress. As highlighted in the introduction, levels of trust – a critical ingredient of, and prerequisite for, a vibrant local democratic space – within the political system (between government, political parties and citizens/communities) seem to be at an all-time low.

Given the performance of many municipalities, the persistent inadequacies in service provision and deepening challenges of unemployment and inequality (all of which are made more intractable as the economy continues to perform weakly), we can anticipate more such efforts to (re)claim local democratic space by/for civic actors and local communities in the foreseeable future. While the vast majority of these will undoubtedly remain within the confines of law and adhere to democratic principles (as is currently the case), not all of these modes are necessarily constructive or democratic – which is not to suggest that the underlying concerns may not be valid and should not be responded to. Also, as Budlender et al. (2014) alert us, not all underlying interests are progressive; conservative and narrow-minded interests will equally seek to stake their claim and broaden the scope for political influence.

### STAKEHOLDERS, ACTORS AND INTERESTS

The contributions to this volume focus on different stakeholders and actors in local democratic space, ranging from municipalities, community groups, social movements, civil society organisations and the media. While trade unions, organised business, traditional leaders and academic institutions can also be significant role players in local democratic space, depending on the local context, their role is not given much attention here, although the *In Profile* contribution by Planact begins to reflect on the role of the mining sector in this regard. The role of political

parties and their representatives in local democratic space is given some consideration (see the *In Profile* contribution by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group and the paper by Isandla Institute), although one could argue that their role in shaping and potentially usurping local democratic space warrants greater attention. Each of these role players represents particular interests – and may in fact represent a variety of voices and interests. These interests can be as varied (and at times as diametrically opposed) as meeting basic needs and addressing poverty versus profit and market expansion, or building/ supporting a constituency versus pursuing equality, amongst others. Interests held by actors in the local democratic space can guide their processes and activities toward expanding or foreclosing the democratic space.

The state is a key actor in enabling and upholding local democratic space. As mentioned before, by adopting a legal framework for citizen engagement and establishing democratic structures the state can provide an enabling environment. But it also requires sustained support for such structures and reciprocity on the part of the state. The contribution by Afesis-corplan draws attention to the importance of local government support for community oversight and management structures in the context of informal settlement upgrading. The paper shows that the allocation of municipal resources for project implementation is critical to the effectiveness and legitimacy of such structures; it also reveals that where the municipality is slow to respond to community plans (in terms of service delivery and infrastructure development) residents feel disillusioned, apathetic and frustrated.

As noted before, the state can also be a disruptive or eroding force, particularly when it engages in state-sanctioned violence. The contribution by SERI describes a worrying trend of

violence “from above”, where the state responds to dissent through police harassment, intimidation, excessive use of force and persecution without grounds. This desire to crush dissent narrows democratic space, which propels organisations such as SERI to use another arm of the state (the judiciary) to safeguard civil and political rights through litigation. The *In Profile* contribution by Ndifuna Ukwazi similarly highlights the importance of strategic litigation to compel government to adhere to democratic principles (in this case, the right to public input regarding the intended disposal of public land).

Communities, civic groups and social movements are critical actors in claims-making and seeking to influence the political agenda and decisions regarding resource allocations. The way they organise themselves and manage internal differences and dissent is an important reflection on the nature of local democratic space. The contribution by the Community Organisation Resource Centre makes a strong case for community-based saving as a lever for co-financing and an enabler of inclusionary practice in informal settlements. The contribution by Isandla Institute includes a critical take on the deep-rooted levels of intolerance in society, which can also manifest within local communities and among activist organisations.

Civil society organisations such as NGOs can play an important role in safeguarding and deepening local democratic space, through supporting community mobilisation, capacity development, acting as bridges and translators of sorts between communities and government (Cornwall and Coelho 2007), and even taking government to court when local democratic space is perceived to be under threat, amongst others. Every contribution in this volume brings out the important roles that NGOs can – and do – play in nurturing, safeguarding and deepening local democratic space. These roles

include social facilitation, mobilisation, technical support (including legal/litigation support), capacity building and training, and public awareness raising. The contribution by the Open Democracy Advice Centre (ODAC) serves as an important warning that NGOs can foreclose local democratic space by acting as a conduit of information, which means that they can determine what information to share (or hold back) and how to share it with local communities.

The media can also be a strong force in the democratic space as it has a very broad reach and can play a vital role in sharing information, exposing non-transparent and/or exclusionary practices and holding government to account. Furthermore, the media has a strong influencing role in shaping public opinion and by enabling/stifling the representation of a multiplicity of ideas and experiences. The *In Profile* contribution by the Eastern Cape Communication Forum (ECCF) shows how media literacy can enable youth in marginal communities to use communication as a tool to bring their issues to bear on local democratic space. It also underscores the powerful (and negative) role media can play in portraying marginal communities. The *In Profile* contribution by Ndifuna Ukwazi shows how the effective use of media and communication can be a powerful tactic in advocacy and garnering public support.

Last but not least, the role of political parties in local democratic space needs to be fully appreciated. One could argue that it is in the nature of political parties to seek to usurp political power, to strengthen

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the local (constituency) base and to use their influence to direct state development and public resources (either from within or from the outside). This may come with an intolerance towards other forms of political (yet non-partisan) activism, as is evident in South Africa. The worrying trend of intolerance is further discussed in the paper by Isandla Institute. The *In Profile* contribution by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) makes a case for the importance of making contact details of elected representatives available to the electorate in the interest of improving public accountability and overcoming the social distance between elected leadership and local constituencies/residents.

In conclusion, different role players can bring different insights, competencies, experiences and expectations to bear that may support and uphold (or otherwise threaten and undermine) the democratic space. The manner in which relationships and alliances are formed, and the particular interests promoted and reinforced, all plays out in the democratic space and determines the (im)balance of power.

### METHODOLOGIES AND TACTICS FOR (RE)CLAIMING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE FROM BELOW

Local democratic space is a delicate arrangement of institutions, procedures, values, interests, deliberation and contestation among a variety of stakeholders. In contexts where democratic space is being minimised and the dominant actor (the state) is dismissive of local communities and their attempts to make their voices heard, these communities in turn tend to look for alternative modes of expression and claims-making.

Popular mechanisms used by non-state actors to (re)claim local democratic space in South Africa

include petitions, submissions and demonstrations, amongst others. The paper by ODAC shows how access to information, through the use of relevant legislation and administrative recourse, is an important strategy as well.

Public interest litigation is becoming a more popular approach to support and legitimise citizen issues through the legal system and gaining legally binding outcomes, often after lengthy legal processes and a breakdown of relationships, as shown in the paper by SERI and the *In Profile* contribution by Ndifuna Ukwazi.

Similarly, media, social media and communication technology hold the potential for mass mobilisation and to garner external support for local struggles. Information technology and Apps development has been gaining momentum in popular struggles, including the Arab Spring and more localised struggles for change. As mentioned previously, the *In Profile* contributions by the ECCF, Ndifuna Ukwazi and PMG offer examples in this regard.

Community mobilisation and organisation is another key strategy adopted by local communities and supportive organisations. In support of community struggles, social movements have been able to create inclusive spaces, encourage effective citizen engagement, promote citizen ownership and influence policy changes (Benequista and Gaventa 2011). In different ways, the contributions by Afesis-corporan, CORC, DAG and Planact show how NGOs can fulfil similar supportive and enabling roles.

In recent years, social accountability has become a stronger focus in governance and development, with methodologies like social audits utilised to (re)claim democratic space and empower citizens to challenge the status quo. The paper by Isandla Institute briefly reflects on one such example, namely the case of the Social Justice Coalition (SJC).

This is by no means an extensive list of methodologies and tactics used to (re)claim local democratic space in South Africa. Each of these can hold significant value for local struggles, as well as possible limitations. Both need to be properly understood to determine which tactic, or combination of tactics, will be most effective under specific conditions.

## CONCLUSION

Local democratic space is the terrain of political expression and agency, where alliances are forged and recast or dissolved, where interaction between citizens/communities and the state takes place, where options and priorities are weighed up, where differences in perspectives and tactics are expressed, and where fundamentally divergent interests are negotiated – all within a human rights framework that actively seeks to overcome inequality and systemic bias. It is also the space of transgressive claims-making by civic actors, outside the prescribed confines of procedures and processes. As such it cannot, and should not be, a space that is dominated by one or a few actors or interests. In South Africa, the extent to which party political interests have, in

many respects, been able to commandeer the space is a reason for concern. This is a case of weakened or eroded democratic space, where citizens either become compliant or passive/disengaged, or turn to more assertive – and potentially extreme – measures to expand the democratic space.

(Re)claiming local democratic space is not about taking back power from powerful elites for exclusive control. Rather, it is about rebalancing the space towards more inclusive, collaborative and engaging relationships and practices that appreciate (and successfully manage) difference and contestation in a manner that enables integrative and positive outcomes. Local democratic space will always have to contend with contestation and power imbalances, however, if rooted in strong democratic values and ideals, these can be successfully navigated.

South Africa seems to have reached a tipping point of sorts: continue to erode local democratic space in the interest of order and control (with long-term harmful consequences), or use the occasion of the upcoming municipal elections (and the installation of a new municipal administration) to reinvigorate the values, practices and lived experiences of local democracy.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper the notion of citizens is used to refer to all inhabitants of the country, irrespective of their place of origin or legal status.
- <sup>2</sup> The Challenging Face of South Africa, Presentation by Jos Kuper (Futurefact) at The South African Regional Strategic Forecast hosted by The Economist Corporate Network in Johannesburg on 31 March 2016 (available on [www.futurefact.co.za](http://www.futurefact.co.za)).
- <sup>3</sup> According to Lindekilde (2013), 'Claims-making refers to the process of performing or articulating claims that bear on someone else's interests. In its simplest form an instance of claims-making includes two actors—a subject (claimant) and an object (addressee)—and a verbal or physical action (demanding, protesting, criticizing, blaming etc.). In the context of social movement studies and contentious politics, claims-making has most often referred to the conscious articulation of political demands in the public sphere...'
- <sup>4</sup> See, amongst others, "Candidates tell ANC: Pick us or face revolt", Sunday Times, 29 May 2016; "ANC members dissatisfied with candidate list for local government elections", Mail & Guardian, 2 June 2016; "ANC risks losing votes in candidates list dilemma", News24, 9 June 2016; "ANC members who stand as independents 'will expel themselves'", News24, 10 June 2016; "DA in KZN whisper sweet nothings to candidates", Mail & Guardian, 10-16 June 2016, p4; "No one should die to be a councilor – Cosatu", News24, 12 June 2016.
- <sup>5</sup> This is compared to previous municipal elections. According to the Independent Electoral Commission ([www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za)), 58% of a total of 23,65 million eligible voters turned out to cast their vote in the 2011 municipal elections. Recent voter registration drives have resulted in a total of 26,3 million registered voters, an increase of 11% compared to 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> One could argue that the media comprises a fourth dimension, given its role as a conduit to disseminate information and views, a determinant of public opinion as well as a market place for contending ideological forces (adapted from Opuamie-Ngoa 2010: 133). This is not further explored in this paper.
- <sup>7</sup> The definition is taken from the website of the DDC (<http://www.deliberative-democracy.net>).
- <sup>8</sup> Benhabib (1994: 3) cautions against a romantic notion of difference and argues for a clear distinction between 'forms of difference which foster democracy and forms of difference which reflect anti-democratic aspirations', such as nationalist, xenophobic or tribalist interpretations.
- <sup>9</sup> The burning down of over 20 schools in Vuwani in the Makhado municipality, Limpopo, in May 2016 by angry residents who disagree with the redemarcation of their area into the newly established Malamulele municipality is clearly detrimental to the community itself as it undermines the prospect of improved developmental outcomes for a younger generation.
- <sup>10</sup> See, amongst others, the annual 'The State of Local Governance' publications of the GGLN, CoGTA's Turnaround Strategy (2009) and its Back to Basics Programme (2014), as well as the 2012 National Development Plan.
- <sup>11</sup> In as far as public interest litigation is concerned, Budlender, Marcus and Ferreira (2014) show a growing trend in public interest litigation since the apartheid era. In fact, they argue that in the post-2010 period it has become an appealing tactic for conservative interests as well and caution against a backlash. On the issue of protests, Municipal IQ (2016) recorded 70 protests during the first quarter of 2016, which is already 43% of the total number of protests in the whole of 2015. In terms of submissions, in May 2016 the Social Justice Coalition supported residents of Khayelitsha in making public submissions on the City of Cape Town's 2016/17 budget, whereas in June 2016 Ndifuna Ukwazi led a public submission process directed at the Western Cape government in support of the 'Reclaim the city' campaign.