Journal of Rural and Community Development

Empowerment or Disempowerment: The Political Economy of Violent Service Delivery Protests in Cato Manor, Durban, South Africa

Author: NE Yende

Empowerment or Disempowerment:The Political Economy of Violent Service Delivery Protests In Cato Manor, Durban, South Africa

Yende NE
University of Mpumalanga
Mbombela, South Africa
nsizwazonke.yende@ump.ac.za

Abstract

The post-1994 South African government has seen a rise in grassroots social movements in the form of social protests, mostly related to service delivery. Such protests are directed at the local government's inability to deliver basic services such as housing, clean running water, and proper sanitation to its constituencies. The literature highlights that local people believe that protesting gives them an opportunity for their voices to be heard, influence decision-making processes, and contribute toward the progressive agenda of social change from below. Despite that protesting has a significant influence on policy review, the violent tactics that are usually deployed have been identified as counter-productive to community development. Therefore, my paper explores violent service delivery protests as a double-edged sword—empowerment or disempowerment—in the lives of the people in post-1994 Cato Manor. My paper was guided by the qualitative research method. I used Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation as a lens and framework to interpret the findings. I used purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit the 33 participants. For analysis purposes, I employed a thematic analysis facilitated by Nvivo. The findings reaffirm that protesting is one of the significant tools that empower alienated citizens to stimulate social change from below. Nonetheless, the violent tactics during service delivery protests that are accompanied by the destruction of infrastructure leaving communities in a state of despair, are a form of self-inflicted disempowerment.

Keywords: citizen participation, disempowerment, empowerment, protests, service delivery

Autonomisation ou déresponsabilisation : l'économie politique des manifestations violentes en matière de prestation de services dans Cato Manor, Durban, Afrique du Sud

Résumé

Le gouvernement sud-africain d'après 1994 a assisté à une montée des mouvements sociaux populaires sous la forme de protestations sociales, principalement liées à la prestation de services. De telles protestations visent l'incapacité du gouvernement local à fournir à ses électeurs des services de base tels que des logements, de l'eau courante propre et des installations sanitaires adéquates. La littérature souligne que les populations locales croient que manifester leur donne l'occasion de faire entendre leur voix, d'influencer les processus de prise de décision et de contribuer au programme progressiste de

changement social venant d'en bas. Bien que les manifestations aient une influence significative sur la révision des politiques, les tactiques violentes habituellement déployées ont été identifiées comme contre-productives pour le développement communautaire. Par conséquent, mon article explore les manifestations violentes en matière de prestation de services comme une arme à double tranchant – autonomisation ou déresponsabilisation – dans la vie des habitants de Cato Manor après 1994. Le document a été guidé par la méthode de recherche qualitative. L'échelle de participation citoyenne d'Arnstein a été utilisée comme lentille et cadre pour interpréter les résultats. Les méthodes de l'échantillonnage raisonné et de boule de neige ont été utilisées pour recruter les 33 participants. À des fins d'analyse, le document a utilisé une analyse thématique facilitée par Nvivo. Les résultats réaffirment que manifester est l'un des outils importants qui permet aux citoyens aliénés de stimuler le changement social par le bas. Néanmoins, les tactiques violentes lors des manifestations contre la prestation de services, qui s'accompagnent de la destruction des infrastructures, laissant les communautés dans un état de désespoir, sont une forme de privation de pouvoir auto-infligée.

Mots-clés : participation citoyenne, déresponsabilisation, autonomisation, protestations, prestation de services

1.0 Introduction

During the apartheid era of institutionalised racial segregation between 1948 and 1994 in South Africa, social movements in the form of protests or any other gatherings, especially by the disenfranchised black majority were illegalised (Bryant, 2008). This is because they were perceived as a threat to the system (Yende & Yende, 2021). Nonetheless, the post-1994 democratic government has embraced social movement in the form of protests as a significant human rights concern (Bryant, 2008; Republic of South Africa, 1996, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108). To progressively realise this, the Republic of South Africa (1994) adopted the "Regulation of Gatherings Act, Act No. 205 of 1993." This act provides a clause which perceives peaceful gatherings and protesting as an essential form of participation with the government and its executives from the national to the local spheres. This has created a conducive environment for the public to express their views in various forms including riots, marches, and petitions—even outside the formal and structured political space—to lobby and influence public opinion and decision-making processes (Bryant, 2008; Mamokhere, 2021). Hence, the post-1994 South African government witnessed an intensification of collective social movements in the form of protests as an important tool of engagement and participation in governance affairs, which was denied during the apartheid era (Kenyon & Madlingozi, 2022; Yende, 2022).

Conspicuous in these gatherings is the intensification of protests related to the lack of basic but essential services directed at the local sphere of government. For example, Municipal IQ. (2023) highlighted that South African municipalities are averaging approximately four to five protests a day, which are known to be directed at the local government's inability to deliver services to its constituencies. Despite that the intensification of protests related to service delivery is an expression of public opinion, the violent tactics deployed during these protests are the major cause of concern for the democratic government (Breakfast et al, 2019; Mamokhere, 2021; Yende, 2022;). This is because during service delivery protests, the post-1994 local government has seen the destruction of significant public and private infrastructure such as schools,

community health clinics, community halls, and local shops (Mamokhere, 2020). For example, the 2009 violent service delivery protests in Mpumalanga, Piet Retief, and eThandukukhanya left the townships with no community health clinic, hall, and library among other basic amenities after they were torched and burned by the protesters (Sinwell et al., 2009). Also, Mushoma (2020) demonstrates a case in Vuwani, Limpopo where protesters burned local schools and libraries. Hence, the South African Local Government and Traditional Affairs; 2015) highlights that such protests affect local people and the government in a similar proportion. This is because it directs much-needed resources to rebuilding the damaged infrastructure, which delays development (Yende, 2023).

The violence during service delivery protests has also caused clashes between the police and protesters leading to physical torture, injuries, and even death in different instances (South African Local Government Association, 2015; von Holdt, 2014). For example, the violent service delivery protest that transpired in Ficksburg in April 2011 left the town and the protesters emotionally broken after the death of one of the protesters—Andries Tatane—at the hands of the police (Roelofse, 2017). Cato Manor in eThekwini Municipality has not been immune to the disruption of infrastructure, and the loss of lives during violent service delivery protests (eThekwini Municipality, 2017). My paper analyses violent service delivery protests as a double-edged sword for communities as a form of empowerment and disempowerment of local people. I begin the discussion wit the study area and motivation of the paper. After that, I look at the available literature on protests. Thereafter, I discuss Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation that I adopted as a theoretical lens to guide the analysis. Then, the qualitative research methodology that was employed to design the paper is discussed. I proceed to present and discuss the findings. Eventually, I conclude with a summary of the key arguments raised in the main text.

2.0 Area and Motivation

Cato Manor—also called Umkhumbaan—is located approximately 10 km west of Durban city centre, within eThekwini Municipality (Jagganath, 2023). It lies on roughly 1,800 hectares and accommodates about 90,000 residents (eThekwini Municipality, 2017). The area has a rich cultural heritage, coupled with a multifaceted history of dispossession, resistance, and struggle against apartheid (Nyamapfene, 2019). The area is composed of both formal and informal settlements (shacks), which accommodate some of the poorest people in the municipality (eThekwini Municipality, 2017). Despite post-apartheid developmental policies meant to empower the constituencies, the area continues to be engulfed in socio-economic challenges including poverty, crime, and inadequate infrastructure (Jagganath, 2023). The literature highlights that Cato Manor constantly experiences violent protests related to service delivery (Yende, 2023). The protesters constantly barricaded roads with burning tyres on the national road (N2), burned community facilities, and torched municipal assets including vehicles and buildings (Gray & Maharaj, 2017). Hence, within eThekwini municipality, Cato Manor is regarded as a hotspot of violent protests (Majozi, 2018; Mottiar, 2014). On the other hand, Alexander (2010) argued that it is one of the exemplary cases of the rebellion of the poor in post-apartheid South Africa. Studies have been conducted in Cato Manor (see Jagganath, 2023; Khumalo, 2020; Mottiar, 2014; Nyamapfene, 2019), however, there is still a gap in the literature on research that analyses violent service delivery protests as a double-edged sword for local communities towards community development. Hence this is my reason for writing this paper.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Brief Conceptualisation of Empowerment and Disempowerment

Empowerment and disempowerment are two interrelated and interwoven concepts which centre on access and lack of access to power (Tchida & Stout, 2023). Power is commonly understood as "the ability—i.e. the skills and resources—of an actor (e.g., person, social group or local community) to make decisions and determine their own affairs, regardless of the actions of other actors" (Tian, Stoffelen & Vanclay, 2023 p.554). Hence Avelino et al. (2019) conceptualise empowerment by referring to its "inverse of disempowerment as an ever-present shadow side" (p. 145). Despite this, the literature reviewed highlights that empowerment emerged and originated in the community psychology discipline and has received greater attention among different scholars (Park, Zou & Soulard, 2023). Apart from this, it has become key in decision-making processes, policy development, implementation, and so forth, (Tchida & Stout, 2023). This is particularly because modern policy development aims not only at changing people's lives but also capacitating them to have "greater power and an ability to control their destiny" (Willis, 2011, p. 102). Through this process, the marginalised sector of the population "gains power, access to resources, and control over their lives" (Eshun & Asiedu, 2023, p.114). On the other hand, disempowerment is associated with marginalization and lack of capabilities, autonomy, and freedom (Tchida & Stout, 2023). My paper acknowledges the complexity of conceptualising empowerment and disempowerment. Hence

- *Empowerment* is understood as the "expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan-Parker, 2002, p.18). Therefore, this definition accounts for the paradigm shift of power as an ability, from the powerful to the powerless—from the authorities to the masses at the grassroots level (Tian et al., 2023). This considers the totality of local people's living from socioeconomic opportunities to political spaces.

- *Disempowerment* is understood as a lack of resources or limited capabilities that hinder communities from improving their lives and influencing the development agenda (Park et al., 2023). Likewise, Tian et al (2023) highlight that disempowerment is related to powerlessness and vulnerability which are associated with the "inability of someone to get access to and mobilise resources or decision-making" (p.554). For instance, lack of physical infrastructure, severe poverty and structural violence can all render people powerless and unable to have greater control of their lives. Therefore, the lack of basic services can be classified as a form of disempowerment, since it hinders people's abilities to achieve their livelihood strategies among other things (Yende, 2023).

3.2 The Different Forms of Protests

The vast evidence from the literature highlights that post-apartheid South Africa continues to experience various types of protests ranging from orderly, disruptive, and violent (Bekker, 2022; Bohler-Muller, et al. 2017; Mamokhere, 2023). The study by Runciman et al (2016) which was conducted in four different sites, confirms that these three forms of protesting are prevalent in democratic South Africa. Thus, these forms of protesting deploy different tactics as protestors seek to engage the government with its executive on different

social, economic, and political affairs. Hence, in conceptualising these protests, Alexander et al (2018) claim that:

- *Orderly* protests are normally those which are classified by law enforcement officers as peaceful. Therefore, these are protests which are constitutionally legal and tolerated because they are negotiated with legal authorities before they are executed. Thus, these orderly forms of protests include but are not limited to, massive public rallies, marches, and picketing (Alexander et al., 2018; Bekker, 2022; Bohler-Muller et al., 2017; Halliday, 2000; Runciman et al., 2016).

- *Disruptive protests*, on the other hand, are different from both orderly and violent protests. For instance, writers such as Alexander et al. (2018), Cornell and Grimes (2015), and Runciman et al. (2016) stipulate that disruptive protests include those social movements which block roads using things such as rocks and burning tyres. Bohler-Muller et al. (2017) note therefore that disruptive protests do not involve injury to persons or damage to infrastructure. Both orderly and disruptive protests appear to be minimal in South Africa, especially during service delivery.

- *Violent protests* are those social movements where protestors engage in actions that create conspicuous danger which results in harm or injuries to persons, damage, and sabotage to property (Alexander, et al., 2018; Bekker, 2022; Runciman et al., 2016).

Despite that violent protests and disruptive protests conceptualised different, these forms of protesting typically overlap in some instances. For example, scholars including Alexander et al (2018) and Cornell and Grimes (2015) argued that disruptive protests are those which deploy tactics such as blocking roads with burning tyres. This conceptualisation of disruptive protest is ambiguous because such tactics constitute protests which are seen as violent in the literature since the burning tyres cause damage to infrastructure, specifically roads. Paret (2015 p.109) provides a substantial argument for understanding violent protests and argues that "achieving greater precision with respect to the meaning of violence demands answers to two questions: first, what physical acts does it entail, and second, who is responsible for carrying out those acts" (p. 109). Therefore, understanding the 'what' and 'who' is significant to better conceptualise violent protest. Also, the categorisation of some protests as orderly as shown above is ambiguous. This is because the way orderly protests are conceptualised does not consider that generally, protests are disruptive in nature. For instance, marches and picketing which are regarded as forms of orderly protests, usually disturb, interfere with, or prevent normal work functions or activities and thus constitute disruptive protests because they do not cause any harm to people or infrastructure. This usually emanates when protesters block the movement of transport and pedestrians, without causing physical harm, to public and private assets or infrastructure.

The categorisation of protests as disruptive, orderly, and violent still needs more attention from scholarly interrogation. Nevertheless, this is not the focus of this paper—for more discussion on this see Paret, 2015. For my paper, Wasserman, Chuma, and Bosch's (2018) conceptualisation of violent protests is adopted because it offers a comprehensive view of such protests considering the ambiguities surrounding them. Therefore, violent protests in this paper are defined as those in which participants engage and deploy acts that either cause physical harm or can result in the destruction of assets. This includes incidents where protesters burn infrastructure, loot shops, burn tyres to block roads, and where there are clashes between the crowds and the police. Therefore, the

reviewed literature highlights that post-1994, South Africa has experienced violent protests including those which are related to a lack of basic services—known as service delivery protests (Breakfast et al., 2019; Khambule, Nomdo & Siswana, 2019; Mamokhere, 2021; 2023; Wasserman at al. 2018; Yende, 2022). Furthermore, Lancaster (2018) claims that democratic South Africa has witnessed an increase in violent service delivery protests that worsened between 2013 and 2016, as they intensified from 43% to 65% respectively. During these protests property, including municipal offices, was destroyed and shops were looted (Mamokhere, 2020; Ngcamu, 2019; Yende, 2022). Cato Manor has not been immune to these protests (Naidoo, 2020; Yende, 2023).

3.3 Contextualisation of Protesting in Cato Manor

Generally, protesting is perceived particularly by the radical school of thought as a tool that provides local people in a confined environment united with those of governmental authorities to improve their socioeconomic situation by empowering local people to collectively make better decisions about the use of the resources (Hanna et al. 2016). Thus, the protests that emerged in the post-apartheid Cato Manor are perceived as not challenging the state to overthrow it *per se*, compared to the protests in the apartheid era (Majozi, 2018). However, the protest "seeks to gain a piece of the pie on offer" (Sinwell, 2011, p. 62). In essence, such protests are staged to obtain access to the fruits of democracy, including better access to basic essential services. Lodge and Mottiar (2016) gave two distinct perceptions of the ongoing protests engulfing Cato Manor. The first perception was that these protests were related to a lack of basic services including housing, sanitation, clean running water, and proper stable electricity for mainly shack dwellers. Second, such protests were executed by the disadvantaged sector of the population who felt ignored by the politicians, hence, residents protested because they wanted "to make their voices heard outside Cato Manor and to compel politicians to be more responsive" (Lodge & Mottiar, 2016, p. 823). Thus, this perception presents protests in Cato Manor as a significant tool of citizenship, endorsing democratic decentralisation by uplifting the marginalised poor black majority to have their voices heard and attended to.

Community protests emanate when the invited participatory spaces such as mayoral forums and izimbizo—public gatherings for participatory spaces where government officials can promote dialogue—by the government are deemed ineffective and void (Yende, 2023). Hence, they challenge the illegitimacy of the local government's inability to provide services, and this is done outside the formal political party formations. Generally, the literature highlights protesting in Cato Manor as a tool that gives power to local people to engage with government structures in political decentralisation and democratic accountability processes. Hence, Khumalo (2020) claims that Cato Manor is known for "service delivery protests, which are used as a form of participation to bring about social change by democratizing society from below" (p. 23). This demonstrates service delivery protests as a means that local people assume to close the gap between their needs and the provision of basic but essential services in Cato Manor. Emanating from the grassroots, service delivery protests in Cato Manor are a significant mechanism to "create a sense of agency in the broader population" (Thompson, 2014, p. 338). Also, protesting is perceived as getting the desired attention because it triggers the necessary dialogues between protesters and their leaders (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016). Thus this indicates that such people-driven protests create consciousness among people about the lack of services and public representation of grassroots service delivery needs.

Service delivery protests are significant in forging positive social change in the process of engagement between informal settlement residents and the government (Lodge & Mottiar, 2017). Furthermore, Majozi (2018) states that even service delivery protests in Cato Manor present the voice of the voiceless, who are severely affected by structural violence, inequalities, and material deprivation—mainly residents of informal settlements where such protests are likely to emanate. Hence, local people believe that protesting is the 'last resort' for the African National Congress led democratic government to "…come to the grassroots and hear our voices" (Lodge & Mottiar, 2016, p. 823). Therefore, service delivery protests in Cato Manor are understood from the facet of self-empowerment, whereby the affected local people assume a collective responsibility to challenge service delivery injustices, lack of accountability, disrespect, and alienation. Notwithstanding, like many poverty-stricken and service deficiency-characterised townships in South Africa which engage in service delivery protests, the protestors in Cato Manor usually deploy violent tactics (eThekwini Municipality, 2017). Generally violence is described as an "entrenched part of the history of Cato Manor and this trend continues into the 21st century" (Gray & Maharaj, 2017, p. 9). Dlamini (2020) reveals that Cato Manor is characterised by different forms of violence, ranging between violent crime, gender-based violence, and taxi violence.

Gray and Maharaj (2017) concur with this argument and stipulate that in the past 70 years, Cato Manor has been one of the areas in South Africa where violence has had a visible pattern of occurrence and the right to work and live has been violently contested. Hence, Naidoo (2020) reveals that, generally, Cato Manor is plagued and engulfed with violent protests because of the inability of the municipality to fulfill its developmental promises. Nyamapfene (2019, p.20) argues that during service delivery protests in Cato Manor, "violence is viewed as the only effective means to communicate its predicament" to their officials. This argument resonates with the perception raised by von Holdt et al. (2011) that "it's the smoke that calls" (p. 44). This indicates that municipal officials in local communities respond to community deficiencies when people start burning property and the smoke that stems therein attracts their attention (Lolwana, n.d). The Municipal IQ (2023) highlights that violence during protests has become an increasing way in which local people try in earnest to raise awareness and make their plight known. Despite that service delivery protests have been identified in the literature as a mechanism for engagement (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016), the violent tactics in Cato Manor have had dire impacts on infrastructure and assets. For example,the South African Local Government Association (2015) states that violence during service delivery protests in Cato Manor has deteriorated to a critical level as protestors are seen to create an ungovernable situation destroying municipal assets including burning offices and vehicles as well as looting local tuckshops. Also, the prevailing violence during service delivery protests has led to severe injuries and several deaths (Gray & Maharaj, 2017; Yende, 2023).

3.4 Theoretical Framework

I employed Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation as a theoretical framework and a lens to interpret the findings. In her seminal work, Arnstein coined the phrase 'ladder citizen of participation' to describe various factors that influence participation from low to high levels of genuine engagement. Accordingly, there are eight different rungs of participation, which are exemplified in three different levels—from low to high levels of participation (Dror & Zehavi, 2022). For instance, at the bottom of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy, which describes non-participation, where local people are not enabled to participate in development planning. The second level is tokenism, which is composed of (3)

informing, (4) consultation and (5) placation. In these rungs, local people can voice out their concerns but "participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow through, no muscle, hence, no assurance of changing the status quo" (Arnstein, 1969 p.25). At the top of the ladder is citizen power, which is composed of (6) Partnerships, where local people work together with their leaders to influence decision-making processes. While within (7) delegated power, local people have a significant level of influence in community development. In rung (8), citizen control, local people assume a larger control of their lives such that they control development programmes. Hence, Dror and Zehavi (2022) highlight that citizen control on the ladder of citizen participation is about the ability of a community to organise itself to lobby and influence public opinion and decision-making processes, and make their voice heard (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). In my paper, this theoretical framework was deemed suitable as a lens for the interpretation of the findings because it substantially appreciates the different rungs of participation from non-participation to citizen power (see Arnstein, 1969). It further recognises the massive responsibility to be assumed by local people in development initiatives (Holum, 2023).

4.0 Research Methodology and Design

In this paper, I adopted qualitative research to gather the subjective perceptions and the lived experiences of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). In line with the qualitative method, my paper adopted two non-probability sampling methods, namely purposive and snowballing. Through the purposive sampling method, four municipal officials, three ward committee members, and 20 residents were recruited because they understood the dynamics of the community and have witnessed the prevailing violent service delivery protests. Snowballing was adopted during the fieldwork and six more participants were recruited because they frequently participated in violent service delivery protests. The recommended interviewees included three community activists and three members of Abahlali BaseMjondolo (Abahlali or ABM)—a non-politically affiliated shack dwellers movement that "struggles for land, housing, basic services and the dignity of the poor" (Gill, 2014, p. 211). The total number of 33 participants was determined by data saturation as espoused by (Guest et al. 2020). I used two sets of semi-structured interviews for data collection purposes. The first set of questions was meant for local people in Cato Manor, while the second set of questions was meant for the municipal officials. The data collection process was conducted in cognizance of all the ethical principles such as ensuring confidentiality and privacy, informing the participants that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time. After the collection process, I used thematic analysis to generate findings from the raw data and produce knowledge and a report on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used NVivo software to derive codes, categories, and themes for the data analysis. I analysed and interpreted emerging themes using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

5.0 Presentation of Findings and Analysis

In this section, I present and analyse the findings and the responses from the participants in a verbatim way. In the analysis, I identified different and contesting views regarding social collective action in the form of protests in post-1994 Cato Manor. The theme that I present explores (violent) protests as a form of (dis)empowerment in the lives of the people.

5.1 *Protest as a Form of Empowerment or Disempowerment*

The findings established people's perceptions of the implications of violent protests related to service delivery in Cato Manor. The participants believed that the existing formal participation and protesting does not bear any fruit, while the militaristic approach during protests outside the formal participatory spaces is beneficial. For example, this is what some of the participants had to say:

> Protesting [orderly] and concerns we raise in community meetings usually fall on the deaf ears of the municipality until we destroy infrastructure, burn tyres and offices. It is only then that the municipality pays attention. Violence during service delivery protests makes things happen in Cato Manor (Participant 10, resident).

> They deceive us with war rooms, which are not working. Also, we cannot communicate with the municipality through marches, petitions, and memorandums. All these things are useless. It is only through violent protesting for services that we bring the government closer. Hence, we regard it as the solution (Participant 4, ABM).

> We must stop manipulating people and saying things that we cannot do because we want votes. This makes people frustrated and angry, hence, during protests they burn municipal assets (Participant 30, municipal official).

The responses from the participants indicate that the orderly form of protesting and invited spaces of participation are limited since they do not have a significant influence on decision-making processes and service delivery in Cato Manor. Instead, they believe that the invited spaces of participation such as community meetings and war rooms are manipulative. This is because they do not bear any fruit. Hence, violent protesting is seen as a solution to their poor living conditions and the tool that challenges the status quo. This perception from the participants resonates with von Holdt et al's (2011) argument that "it is the thick, black smoke that calls"(p. 44). This substantiates the argument by the participants that municipal officials start to interact with the constituencies when they start destroying assets, as they believe it brings about service delivery. However, the participants could not point out any development initiative that has happened because of violent protesting. Subsequently, when they say, 'municipality pays attention' or 'things get done', they speak more about municipal visibility in the area to address them, not the actual development that addresses their socioeconomic challenges and needs. For example, some of the participants said: "there are no tangible development activities because of violence but it assists us to engage with the municipality since they come to us" (Participant 26, activist), and "no, there are no initiatives, but they will come to hear our concerns. Violent protests can bring down even the Premier or President" (Participant 7, resident).

Instead of bringing about service delivery in Cato Manor, violent protesting has had dire consequences for the existing assets and delayed service delivery. The findings show that the participants are aware of the negative impact of violent protesting. Nonetheless, they use it because it seems to be working. Some of the participants said: "we know that violent protesting is not the way to go since it

delays service delivery but when you deal with stiff-necked people, violence is seen as the only solution" (Participant 16, AMB), and "It is because of violent protests that the clinic is no longer opening 24/7. It was looted it and almost killed the staff. We know the negative implications of violence but are frustrated" (Participant 5, resident)., Another participant said:

> Protesting is people's democratic right but the violent elements delay services delivery because the municipality is forced to use its limited budget to fix the damaged infrastructure before we can attend to their grievances. This perpetually creates a cycle of protesting for the same thing (Participant 32, a municipal official).

Despite its implications for community development, most of the participants (28) believe that violent protesting makes their voices louder than any other forms of protesting such as petitions, marches, and so forth. In essence, it is through violent protesting that the government and its executive respond and listen to people's grievances (Khumalo, 2020). Also, Mamokhere (2023) said that violent protesting "can lead to positive changes in service delivery planning and implementation" (p. 66). Thus, this further indicates that the element of violence during protests is a symbolic language that community members use to attract the attention of their leadership (von Holdt et al., 2011). Subsequently, it can be argued that the vulnerable sector of the population is made to believe that the use of violence during protests is the solution to all their problems (Lolwana, n.d.). Hence, violent practice during protests is believed by the marginalised to offer them an opportunity to voice their concerns to the municipality (Nyamapfene, 2019). The militaristic nature of protests in Cato Manor represents the move away from the formal and institutionalised forms of participation that protesters perceive as ineffective (Khumalo, 2019). Despite the popular view that violent tactics during service delivery protests are perceived as a form of self-inflicted pain because they deprive residents of material benefits, such protests reflect people's material deprivation (Paret, 2015).

6.0 Discussion

My paper shows that when local people feel that the municipality has failed to meaningfully engage with their demands, this leads to an increased sense of disempowerment, which propels them to assume control. Hence, my findings indicate that orderly protesting is a form of self-empowerment of local people because it enhances their voices to be heard by their local authorities. For instance, this is exemplified by Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, which has various rungs of participation. Within the context of Cato Manor, it can be argued that the participants have assumed citizen control. This is because they believe that formal participatory spaces are 'deceiving' and 'manipulative', which fall within non-participation and tokenism respectively in the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969). The participants feel they have been neglected despite the presence of institutionalised participatory spaces, hence, they engaged in protests to challenge the status quo, as highlighted by the ladder of participation. Furthermore, protesting has emerged as a common voice and shared vision that supports protest action as one of the mechanisms of communicating their grievances (Mottiar, 2014). The idea of protesting emanating as a space for citizenship is further explained by Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Accordingly, in a situation where local people are not genuinely heard in the formal participatory spaces, they begin to assume citizen power in the form of a collective movement to contribute towards social change

from below. Hence, orderly service delivery protests can be said to represent the interests of the poor and marginalised.

Nonetheless, violent service delivery protests in Cato Manor are associated with high levels of discontent and prolonged elements of frustration (Yende, 2023). Beyond this, such protests appear to be a complex phenomenon that interplays with people's lived experience of powerlessness, vulnerability, and structural violence that continue to create structural poverty among the residents of Cato Manor (Gray & Maharaj, 2017). Despite the popular perception from participants that 'violence during service delivery protests is effective', there is not sufficient evidence provided to support this perception. Contrariwise, there is plenty of evidence that suggests that violent tactics during service delivery protests are a crisis in the well-being of the area (Yende, 2023). For instance, some of the participants mentioned that during violent protests, basic but critical amenities are destroyed. This aligns with the argument by Gray and Maharaj (2017) that violent protesting in Cato Manor substantially affects development initiatives which are meant to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the people. Therefore, it can be argued that despite its ability to shape public opinion and frame discourse of interpretation, violent protests related to service delivery significantly dis-empower local people's capacity and ability to use the available infrastructure as a means or a tool to address their socioeconomic challenges and meet their livelihood (Park et al., 2023). Furthermore, the damage to infrastructure leads to material deprivation, which significantly slows down the pace of community development activities (Yende, 2023).

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

My paper demonstrates that protesting, whether violent or orderly, is a collective symbol by the people to disclose their dissatisfaction to their leaders. Within the context of Cato Manor, violent protesting emerges as a means not an end, hence the participants stressed that '…violent protesting is how we communicate with the municipality…'. Thus, this indicates that violent protesting in Cato Manor is identified and perceived as a tool that protesters use to communicate their daily struggles, and shape, and control the public narrative because of the ineffectiveness of the formal participatory spaces. Despite being seen as effective, the findings illustrate that violent tactics during service delivery protests are a form of disempowerment. This is because the militant approach delays service delivery and contributes to material deprivation, since such protests damage critical infrastructure which is significant to the well-being of the people. Furthermore, the local municipality is thus expected to use its limited financial resources to fix the damaged infrastructure, continuing a cycle of deprivation. This delays new development initiatives, creating barriers to sustainable service delivery and community development. In conclusion, it can be argued that the violent approach during service delivery protests is self-disempowering to the residents of Cato Manor since it limits their freedom and capabilities to utilise the available infrastructure to initiate projects that can empower them to maintain their livelihood strategies. Therefore, my paper recommends that:

- The municipality increases its visibility in the area not only in terms of its presence when there are violent service delivery protests but also through the provision of services transparently and honestly.

- The municipality enhances the working relationship between and among different stakeholders within the municipality where service delivery is co-provided—working with rather than for the community.

- A reform of the existing institutionalised spaces of participation as an effective tool for accountability, engagement, and foundation for service delivery. This will help the municipality to respond effectively and timeously to the needs and concerns of the community.

References

Alexander, P. (2010). Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests—a preliminary analysis. Review of African Political Economy, 37(123), 25–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056241003637870

Alexander, P., Runciman, C., Ngwane, T., Moloto, B., Mokgele, K., & van Staden, N. (2018). Frequency and turmoil: South Africa's community protests 2005–2017. *South African Crime Quarterly, 63*, 27–42. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2018/v0n63a3057

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35*(4), 216–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225

Avelino, F., Wittmayer, J. M., Pel, B., Weaver, P., Dumitru, A., Haxeltine, A., Kemp, R., Jørgensen, M.S., Bauler, T., Ruijsink, S., & O'Riordan, T. (2019). Transformative social innovation and (dis)empowerment. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 145*, 195–206. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.05.002

Bekker, M. (2022). Language of the unheard: Police-recorded protests in South Africa, 1997–2013. *Review of African Political Economy, 49*(172), 226–245.

Bloomberg, L. D. & Volpe, D. (2016). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Bohler-Muller, N., Roberts, B. J., Struwig, J., Gordon, S. L., Radebe, T., & Alexander, P. (2017). Minding the protest: Attitudes towards different forms of protest action in contemporary South Africa. *South African Crime Quarterly, 62*, 81–92. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2017/v0n62a3041

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breakfast, N., Bradshaw, G., & Nomarwayi, T. (2019). Violent service delivery protests in post-apartheid South Africa, 1994–2017-a conflict resolution perspective. *African Journal of Public Affairs, 11*(1), 106–126.

Bryant, J. (2008). Towards delivery and dignity community struggle from Kennedy Road1. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 43*(1), 41–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909607085585

Cilliers, J., & Aucoin, C. (2016). Economics, governance and instability in South Africa. *Institute for Security Studies Papers, 2016*(293), 1–24.

Cornell, A., & Grimes, M. (2015). Institutions as incentives for civic action: Bureaucratic structures, civil society, and disruptive protests. *The Journal of Politics, 77*(3), 664–678. https://doi.org/10.1086/681058

Dlamini, S. (2020). A comparative analysis of the quality of Community Police Forums in local Cato Manor & Glenwood communities, South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences, 6*(1), Article 1809141. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1809141

Dror, M., & Zehavi, A. (2022). Delimiting citizen participation: How Israeli mayors get the most out of the process. *Local Government Studies, 48*(1), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2020.1821663

Eshun, F., & Asiedu, A. B. (2023). Residents' empowerment for sustainable ecotourism: Insights from Ghana. *Anatolia, 34*(2), 113–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.1993285

eThekwini Municipality. (2017). *Annual report 2015/16*. Durban, South Africa.

Gill, G. (2014). Knowledge practices in Abahlali baseMjondolo. *Interface, 6*(1), 211–229.

Gray, R., & Maharaj, B. (2017). *Poverty, inequality and violence: A case study of Cato Manor*. International Development Research Centre, http://hdl.handle.net/10625/56491 .

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PloS ONE, 15*(5), Article e0232076. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076

Halliday, F. (2000). Getting real about Seattle. *Millennium, 29*(1), 123–129. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290011201

Hanna, P., Vanclay, F., Langdon, E. J., & Arts, J. (2016). Conceptualizing social protest and the significance of protest actions to large projects. *The Extractive Industries and Society, 3*(1), 217–239. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2015.10.006

Holum, M. (2023). Citizen participation: Linking government efforts, actual participation, and trust in local politicians. *International Journal of Public Administration, 46*(13), 915–925. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2022.2048667

Jagganath, G. (2023). Urban gardening and food insecurity: The Cato Manor Health Centre in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. *African Journal of Development Studies (formerly AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society), 13*(3), 259–274. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-aa_affrika1_v13_n3_a12

Kenyon, K. H., & Madlingozi, T. (2022). 'Rainbow is not the new black': #FeesMustFall and the demythication of South Africa's liberation narrative. *Third World Quarterly, 43*(2), 494–512. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.2014314

Khambule, I., Nomdo, A., & Siswana, B. (2019). Burning capabilities: The social cost of violent and destructive service delivery protests in South Africa. *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies, 8*(1), 51.

Khumalo, H. (2020). *A study of public participation in Cator Manor during and between elections (2018–2019)* [unpublished Master's thesis]. University of Kwazulu-Natal.

Khumalo, Z. (2019). *The impact of informal settlements on environmentally sensitive areas: A case study of Cato Crest informal settlement, in Durban* [Unpublished master's thesis]. The University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Lancaster, L. (2018). Unpacking discontent: Where and why protest happens in South Africa. *South African Crime Quarterly, 64*, 29–43. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2018/v0n64a3031

Lodge, T., & Mottiar, M. (2016) Protest in South Africa: Motives and meaning. *Democratization, 23*(5), 819–837. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1030397

Lodge, T., & Mottiar, S. (2017). South Africa 'unrest' or rebellion: A focus on Durban community protests. In M. Paret, C. Runciman, & L. Sinwell (Eds.), *Southern resistance in critical perspective: The politics of protest in South Africa's contentious democracy* (pp. 72–88). Routledge.

Lolwana, P. (n.d.). *Mitigating service delivery protests through skills development and deployment* (Final report). Researching Education and Labour Centre, University of Witwatersrand.

Majozi, N. S. (2018). *An investigation into housing delivery in Cato Manor's formal and informal settlements* [unpublished Master's thesis]. The University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mamokhere, J. (2020). An assessment of reasons behind service delivery protests: A case of Greater Tzaneen Municipality. *Journal of Public Affairs, 20*(2), Article e2049. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2049

Mamokhere, J. (2021). Evaluating the impact of service delivery protests in relation to socio-economic development: A case of Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, South Africa. *African Journal of Development Studies (formerly AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society), 2021*(si1), 79–96. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-aa_affrika1_v2021_nsi1_a5

Mamokhere, J. (2023). Sending a message to the top: The influence of service delivery protests on service delivery planning in South African municipalities. *Insights into Regional Development, 5*(2), 60–71. http://doi.org/10.9770/IRD.2023.5.2(4)

Mamokhere, J., & Meyer, D. F. (2022). Including the excluded in the integrated development planning process for improved community participation. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 11*(4), 286–299. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i4.1806

Mottiar, S. (2014). Protest and participation in Durban: A focus on Cato Manor, Merebank and Wentworth. *Politikon, 41*(3), 371–385. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2014.975933

Municipal IQ. (2023) *Numbers for 2022 bounce back to pre-covid numbers - 31 Jan 2023*. [Online] Retrieved November, 28, 2023 from https://www.municipaliq.co.za/index.php?site_page=press.php .

Mushoma, T. (2020). *Violent community protests and their impact on teachers: A case study of Vuwani, Limpopo Province* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa]. UNISA Institutional Repository. http://hdl.handle.net/10500/27741

Naidoo, A. (2020). The socio-economic impacts of solar water heaters compared across two communities: A case study of Cato Manor. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, 119*, Article 109525. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2019.109525

Narayan-Parker, D. (Ed.). (2002). *Empowerment and poverty reduction: A sourcebook*. World Bank Publications.

Ngcamu, B. S. (2019). Exploring service delivery protests in post-apartheid South African municipalities: A literature review. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa, 15*(1), 9.

Nyamapfene, G. T. (2019). *Participation of young mothers in peace building: An action research study of Cato Manor, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa* [Master's thesis, Durban University of Technology]. DUT Open Scholar. http://hdl.handle.net/10321/3267

Paret, M. (2015). Violence and democracy in South Africa's community protests. *Review of African Political Economy, 42*(143), 107—123. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.995163

Park, J., Zou, S., & Soulard, J. (2024). Transforming rural communities through tourism development: An examination of empowerment and disempowerment processes. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 32*(4), 835–855. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2023.2178446

Republic of South Africa. (1994). *Regulation of Gatherings Act, Act No. 205 of 1993*. Pretoria: Government Gazette, 343 (15446). https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act205of1993.pdf

Republic of South Africa. (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Roelofse, C.J. (2017). Service delivery protests and police actions in South Africa: What are the real issues? *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives, 2*(2), 1-22

Runciman, C., Alexander, P., Rampedi, M., Moloto, B., Maruping, B., Khumalo, E., & Sibanda, S. (2016). *Counting police-recorded protests: Based on South African Police Service data*. Social Change Research Unit, University of Johannesburg.

Sinwell, L. (2011). Is 'another world' really possible? Re-examining counter-hegemonic forces in post-apartheid South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy, 38*(127), 61–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2011.552588

Sinwell, L., Kirshner, J., Khumalo, K., Manda, O., Pfaffe, P., Phokela, C., & Runciman, C. (2009). *Service delivery protests: Findings from quick-response research on four 'hot-spots'*. Centre for Sociological Research, University of Johannesburg. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2614.1526

South African Local Government Association. (2015). *Community protest: Local government perceptions*. Pretoria: SALGA.

Tchida, C. V., & Stout, M. (2023). Disempowerment versus empowerment: Analyzing power dynamics in professional community development. *Community Development*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2023.2247470

Thompson, L. (2014) Expressions of citizenship through participation and protest. *Politikon, 41*(3), 335–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2014.975936

Tian, B., Stoffelen, A., & Vanclay, F. (2023). Ethnic tourism in China: Tourism-related (dis)empowerment of Miao villages in Hunan province. *Tourism Geographies, 25*(2–3), 552–571. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2021.1938657

von Holdt, K. (2014). On violent democracy. *The Sociological Review, 62*(S2), 129–151. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12196

von Holdt, K., Langa, M., Molapo, S., Mogapi, N., Ngubeni, K., Dlamini, J., & Kirsten, A. (2011). *The smoke that calls: Insurgent citizenship, collective violence and the struggle for a place in the new South Africa.* Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

Wasserman, H., Chuma, W., & Bosch, T. (2018). Print media coverage of service delivery protests in South Africa: A content analysis. *African Studies, 77*(1), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2018.1426312

Willis, K. (2011). *Theories and practices of development* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Yende, N. E. (2022). A narrative on violent protests at the local sphere of government from Mbeki to Zuma's administration. *Journal of Public Administration, 57*(2), 302–316. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-jpad_v57_n2_a9

Yende, N.E. (2023). The political economy of destructing essential ervices in the quest for basic services: The case of violent protest in Cato Manor. *Community Development Journal*, bsad007. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsad007

Yende, S. J., & Yende, N. E. (2021). Rhetoric versus the reality of the 'Rainbow Nation': A content analysis of racial tension in post-1994 South Africa. *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies, 5*(2), 75.