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Community activism and protest in Khayelitsha, Cape Town

*Lisa Thompson
& Ndodana Nleya*

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Ford Foundation



**African Centre
for Citizenship & Democracy**

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Research on citizenship, development and democracy at ACCEDE

The process of democratic transition, while it results in political liberties, has not necessarily created an inclusive citizenship for many previously disenfranchised and economically marginalised communities. While government has ensured, through the enactment of statutes and policies, the participation of local communities in decision-making affecting their day-to-day lives, participation through these state structures remains marginal. Previous research revealed the disconnect between the institutional arrangements of the state, on one hand, and the ability of the poor and marginalised to get their voices heard, on the other hand. It is therefore apparent that an enabling legislative and policy framework in and of itself is insufficient in ensuring inclusive participation.

In this context the challenge, for many, is how to find voice in meaningful and effective ways, so as to be able to access resources and opportunities which will enhance their livelihoods and thereby enable them to escape chronic poverty. At the level of policy analysis, there is a need to move beyond formalistic understandings of citizenship to examine the ways in which rights are interpreted and used. Of particular concern in this respect is the challenge to move beyond the notion of representative democracy (which typically invokes the widest national and international scrutiny and which is assessed according to the freeness and fairness of elections), to forms of participatory democracy, which have substantive meaning for the majority of citizens. How citizens' rights are understood, by both public officials and ordinary people themselves, profoundly affects understandings of their legitimate entitlements to social services, as well as their obligations as citizens.

Issues relating to constructions and reinterpretations of citizenship in southern contexts form the central focus of research at ACCEDE. The links between citizenship, democracy and development are explored through the VLIR funded project that focuses on Citizenship and Democracy, the Ford funded project on New Forms of Citizenship, and the international Citizenship Development Research Centre (CDRC) hosted by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.

This working paper series aims to stimulate academic and policy debates through research emanating from the research programmes, as well as through publishing the work of visiting scholars, postdoctoral and doctoral research fellows at the Centre.

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Community activism and protest in Khayelitsha, Cape Town

Lisa Thompson & Ndodana Nleya



2010

INTRODUCTION¹

Ongoing protests in urban townships across South Africa have caused government to speculate on the possible existence of a ‘third force’ bent on disrupting the democratic project. It should be borne in mind that the importance of protests in overcoming the apartheid state remains etched in the psyche of many ordinary South Africans – akin to the historical constraints identified by Charles Tilly (Tarrow 2008). But why so much protest? Moreover, who is organising it? These two questions continue to be posed by politicians, academia and the media, all keen to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon. Presently, the protests have been framed as being about ‘service delivery’. Since 1994, however, government – local, provincial and national – has been actively involved in major service delivery upgrades in poor communities. Access to services has improved in the first 15 years of democracy, even though large pockets of delivery inadequacy are still evident, most visibly in informal settlements. Although we are aware of the arguments that link service delivery to community activism, this paper seeks empirical evidence of the link. In addition it looks for evidence of what may be instrumental in the generation of these protests.

Although this paper focuses on descriptions of protest, we are aware of the complex linkages between different forms of participation and do not see protest as a unique form of participation. Rather, we see it as it was envisaged by Tilly (2008), occurring in a continuum of citizen action in which forms of participation are ratcheted upwards from communal meetings to violent protests when peaceful engagement yields no favourable response. This simplification of the relationships between the different forms of engagement should not, however, detract from the existence of even untidier linkages in practice (Thompson and Nleya 2010). Tilly (2008:14) in Tarrow (2008) observes:

Claim-making resembles jazz and *commedia dell'arte* rather than ritual reading of scripture. Like a jazz trio or an improvising theater group, people who participate in contentious politics normally have several pieces they can play, but not an infinity ... Within that limited array, the players choose which pieces they will perform here and now, and in what order.

This paper examines the data generated through a stratified, random survey sample of 300 respondents that was undertaken in Khayelitsha in December–January 2008/9. The survey follows on from one undertaken in 2007, using the same area and the same data collection techniques and sample size. Our conclusions from the 2007 survey showed high levels of community organisation in Khayelitsha, ranging from street committees working both independently and with SANCO to a range of other governance-related structures like ward forums, as well as development organisations (Thompson and Nleya, 2010; Conradie and Thompson, 2009).

However, despite high levels of community organisation and involvement, protest levels in Khayelitsha are high. In this paper we again try to come to grips with the two questions isolated above by asking individuals what sort of community involvement they are engaged in, so as to understand the mobilisation strategies they use, the grievances they have relating to their lives as citizens and their levels of trust of government. We also use biographical variables – age, duration of stay, educational level, employment – to better understand who participates and how.

We argue that forms of mobilisation in Khayelitsha can be taken as a prototype of urban township life – it is the largest township in the Western Cape with a population estimated at between 500 000 and 1 000 000.² The majority of its urban poor are politically informed, regular voters and aware of their rights (Thompson and Nleya 2008, 2009). Yet, as a township created as a measure to ensure a spatially segregated labour force, a lack of service delivery has characterised its historical development. Inadequate roads, storm water drains, street lights, water supplies and sanitation infrastructure for much of the population, 70% of whom live in shacks, have ensured that it retains its tag of ‘township’ rather than a ‘suburb’, with all of the apartheid connotations of the former term. Partly because of living conditions and unemployment rates, reported levels of crime are extremely high. This is made even more uncomfortable by community feedback that much of the petty crime in Khayelitsha goes unreported (Nleya and Thompson, 2009). In this sense Khayelitsha shares its urban spatial, political and socio-economic landscape with other townships in South Africa, with the marked exception of its cultural homogeneity: most of its population have moved to Cape Town from the Transkei or Ciskei, two of South Africa’s former Bantustans.

Against this background the emphasis on upgrading service delivery remains a key aspect of local government’s local socio-economic development initiatives in Khayelitsha. Various initiatives, most significantly its inclusion in the Urban Renewal Programme³ by former president Thabo Mbeki, have led to a number of housing projects as well as projects aimed at upgrading basic services (Thompson and Matheza, 2005; Thompson and Nleya, 2009). Yet despite these interventions, services are dismal in many areas, perhaps reflecting the scale of the intervention that is needed to eradicate service delivery problems.

In our previous analysis of research findings from the 2007 data, we began by examining some of the analytical assumptions that underpin participation – in other words, attempting to understand the analytical significance of different forms of action and activism. These

range from informal community organisations that have governance structures that connect with those of local government, to more ad hoc forms of organisation or social movement forms of action (Thompson and Nleya, 2009; 2010). We concluded that the work of historical materialists, notably Robert Cox (1987), does not sufficiently take into account the significance of local resistance to the lack of social transformation – although the type of transformation being sought in the township setting of Khayelitsha is not a new form of state, but a more responsive, accountable and developmentally orientated state. We argued that based on the survey sample, it was clear that people were aware of political opportunities and political opportunity structures, as these occur close to them. However, the groundswell of this activism in the South African context is insufficiently organised to form an ideologically coherent counterpoise to the state. Instead, it displays dissatisfaction with governance both politically and socio-economically, without a clear framing of the terms of resistance. As it is, communities in Khayelitsha are coming to terms with having a legitimate relationship with the state, no longer being treated as foreigners in their own country, as happened under apartheid. The meaning and content of democracy and democratic engagement is constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted in local community settings. Organised, state-created spaces of participation – as Cornwall and Coelho (2007) and others have dubbed structures created by government, such as ward committees/forums – are not ignored, but nor are they always used effectively. Our data and qualitative research shows that ward councillors and ward forums are one step removed from day-to-day grievance resolution. For a number of reasons, protest action in the form of *toyitoyis*,⁴ blockades and sometimes damage to public and private property, has come to be seen as an effective measure of last resort, as government is perceived to respond to such forms of visible discontent. In general, Khayelitsha is also characterised by high levels of organisation at grassroots level in the form of street committees, although these are clearly more effective in some areas (Site C in particular) than in others.⁵

In short, redressing grievances relating to services – grounded as they are in issues of governance and public management – is linked to the ability of the different tiers of government to design effective policies that are implemented efficiently and with sufficient community input. This is as much about the day-to-day articulation between local governance structures and government as it is about the content of the policies themselves. Both our qualitative and quantitative research show that, given the tenuous and conflictual nature of these communities' relationship with the state at all levels in the apartheid era, older patterns of community action and behaviour still manifest themselves. Solving day-to-day problems still frequently occurs at community level, albeit not always in strictly legal ways. Electricity is a case in point. Many areas of Khayelitsha are illegally electrified and local government has been ineffectual in controlling connections and reconnections of illegal electricity lines. At the same time, street committees loosely affiliated with SANCO form the building block of community action and involvement with governance and government, from interaction with organisations such as the Khayelitsha Development Forum (KDF), which was set up

to ensure that development projects occur under local leadership and with locally recruited expertise and labour, to representation at ward forums (Bottoman, interview, September 2008; Benu, interview, September 2008).

The 2009 survey aims to revisit the nature of different forms of participation and mobilisation, based on survey data, to provide a more robust framing for our qualitative research on leadership structures and forms of governance in Khayelitsha⁶ (Conradie and Thompson, 2009). How are communities continuing to address their grievances about services? Where do they participate? What outcomes are they seeking and what outcomes do they perceive themselves to be achieving? Is the 'biographical profile' of a protester a constant? It is to these questions that we now turn.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: the next section focuses briefly on some of the assumptions prevalent in social movement theory as the motivations for, as well as the forms and outcomes of, social activism and social movements. Here we also examine some of the dominant views on the success or not of social movements, as well as how 'success' is defined. Thereafter we summarise the analysis and explain the form of data used in the paper. The following section details the issues that emerge as key explanatory variables. Finally, we explore our findings in the context of understanding the continuum of activism outlined above, and its meaning in relation to broader notions of social activism, social movements and transformation.

THE LINKAGES BETWEEN CITIZENSHIP, DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In a recent analysis of analytical understandings and theories of collective action and social movements, the *raison d'être* of social movements in the global South is understood as somewhat different from the North. Basic political rights and socio-economic entitlements may not be present and thus forms of organisation and ideological cohesion may be less organised (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010). Based on the extant literature emanating mainly from Northern contexts, dominant approaches to understanding why social movements arise and how they organise include resource mobilisation theories, political opportunity theories and frame theory, where political identity formation and collective action are key focus areas. These tend to assume that social movements arise as a result of the coalescing of community identities, common strategies and objectives, as well as structures of political opportunities (with structures seen both as institutions as well as openings or moments of political opportunity, hereafter both referred to as POS). Resources for mobilisation in the form of time, knowledge and finance are also shown to be instrumental in the success of social movement organisations (SMOs), as well as in larger or less structured social movements (SMs) (McAdam 1986; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991; McCathy and Zald 1977; Klandermans 1984).

Recent anti-globalisation protests were organised by groups of people with the resources to travel and, indeed, to understand the complex working of globalisation as a hegemonic discourse.

These middle-range theories, as they are sometimes called, mostly do not focus on meta-theorising the relationships between society, state and the global political economy. Instead they tend to focus on what makes certain forms of collective action more organised and successful than others in achieving stated desired outcomes. The type of participant in social action is often also seen as important. The role of education, income and age, for example, have been debated as important to understanding who mobilises and who drives social movement objectives and action (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010: 12–20).

The transformative outcome of mobilisation and social movement action has become less disputed since Marxist and historical materialist approaches have been replaced with an academic fixation on democratisation, even though the meaning and nature of democracy remains elusive (Von Lieres and Coelho et al, 2010). Ironically, since social movement theories were originally grounded in discussions about the transformative potential of societal challenges to the state, middle-range theories tend to focus more on how the state is challenged to be more democratic and accountable in terms of the provision of rights. Activism, provided it is not violent or unruly, is seen as a positive assertion of democratic freedoms.

As already mentioned, our fieldwork and survey data shows that activism and social movement action in Khayelitsha are not fundamentally challenging the nature of the state. In this sense, it resonates well with the framings of resource mobilisation, political opportunity structure (POS) and frame theories, in that activism is mediated by resources, POS and collective identities and framings of grievances and strategies. Although the profile of who protests shows some unique features, by and large social action is about claiming rights. The critical aspect of this activism is that it is predominantly towards the claiming of socio-economic rights, as is much social activism in the South (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010). This is akin to the relative deprivation theories stemming from Tedd Gurr's seminal *Why Men Rebel* (1970) (see also Opp, 1988).

However, what is also at issue is the unruliness of what are referred to as service delivery protests, where loosely organised groups come together to demonstrate through toyi-toyis, blockades and sometimes unruly behaviour, such as looting and destruction of private property. In South Africa, government has often dismissed protests because of this unruly dimension, but has also used violence to clamp down on protest in ways that are similar to what happened under apartheid. Our analysis below shows that while communities may not be challenging the nature or form of the state, the state's inability to deliver basic socio-economic entitlements calls into question the rights and duties of the 'ideal citizen' (to respect private property, for example), and ultimately threatens the legitimacy of forms of more formal participation with the state in the eyes of the politically aware urban poor. Thus while the nature of democracy may not be at question, at issue is the legitimacy of the local government tier of the state, which does not deliver.

ANALYSIS AND DATA PRESENTATION

The analysis presented in this paper is based on analysis of variance (ANOVA). In the present study, most questions had four or five categories of responses relating to the degree of acceptance of the options in the survey instrument. The vertical axis, or mean participation as it is labelled in each of the charts, is based on a participation scale from 0 to 4, where 0 = will never participate, 1 = will participate if had a chance, 2 = has participated once or twice, 3 = has participated a few times, 4 = participates often. Given that it is a mean, i.e. is derived from dividing the sum score of that category by the frequency, it is essentially a rate of participation.

The SPSS software was used to generate the mean statistics, after which Microsoft Excel was used to produce the graphs presented here. Although these graphs are similar to the means plot produced in SPSS, the data presented here is not continuous, rendering means plots inappropriate. In the case of comparison between two groups, such as the case of gender effects and differences between informal housing and formal housing, the procedure selected was the t-test. In the analysis the missing values were excluded, as were 'don't know' responses.

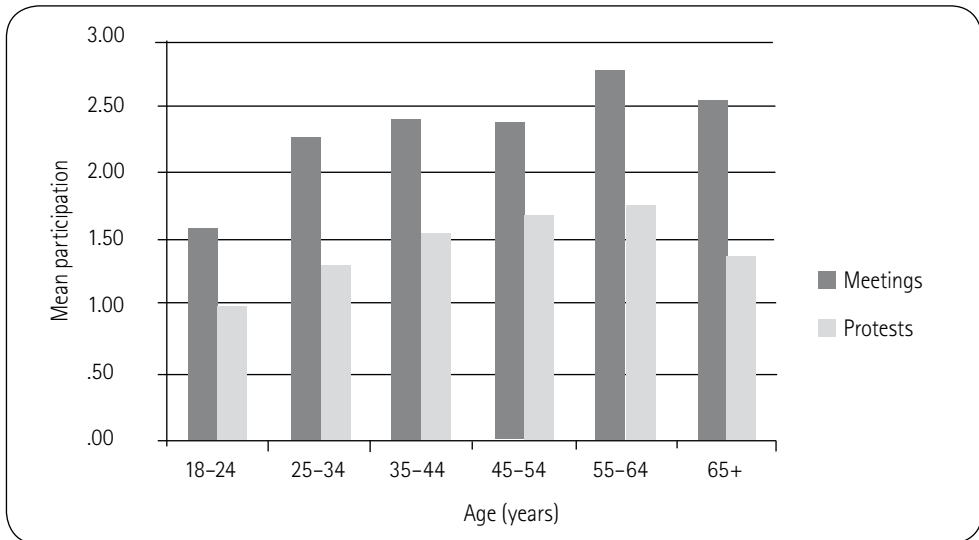
MAIN FINDINGS – TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF COMMUNITY ACTIVISM IN KHAYELITSHA

The main findings are divided into three subsections: biographical variables, grievances and forms of mobilisation. The importance of biographical variables is considered first. We selected the following variables for analysis: age, length of residency in Khayelitsha, educational level and employment, which are considered in that order below.

Biographical variables

Figure 1 shows that formal participation in meetings increases with increasing age. The age group 18–24 participates the least in both forms of community activism. Participation peaks in the 55–64 age group. The decline in participation over 65 is largely expected, as people generally do tend to be less active at that age. The differences between group means are statistically different for attendance of meetings ($p=0.03$) while they are not significant for protests ($p=0.076$). The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is 0.192 ($p=0.001$) for meetings and $r=0.155$ ($p=0.008$). It is apparent that younger groups are generally more demobilised from active community participation than are older groups. This demobilisation can be explained by their relative lack of integration in the economic system given higher levels of unemployment among the youth.

Figure 1: Age and participation



In Figure 2 on the following page it can be seen that as the length of residency increases, the mean participation in both meetings and protests declines. In both cases the differences between means of the time periods is statistically significant i.e. $p=0.08$ and <0.001 for meetings and protests respectively. The decline in participation may be related to the material conditions of newly arrived migrants, whose position tends to be worse than that of more established residents. This finding, however, runs against the notion that longer residency is associated with higher social capital, which is necessary for mobilising community action. Longer periods of residency may also be associated with higher levels of apathy from those who have yet to benefit from improved material conditions. This latter conclusion is reinforced by the emerging profile of those ‘who don’t participate or protest’ that we develop below.

The level of participation in both protests and meetings is highest in the group with no formal education and lowest in the group with the highest educational attainment, tertiary education, in figure 3 below. However, respondents with a secondary level education participate more than those with a primary level of education. The differences in means of each of the levels of education are statistically significant for both cases, i.e. $p=0.007$ and $p=0.002$ respectively. Higher levels of educational attainment, in particular tertiary level education, tends to be associated with better material conditions of life. For example, respondents with higher educational attainment tend to live in formal houses as opposed to informal settlements (Pearson $r = 0.303$, $p<0.001$) and are more likely to own motor vehicles (Pearson $r = 0.379$, $p<0.001$).

Figure 2: Length of residency and participation

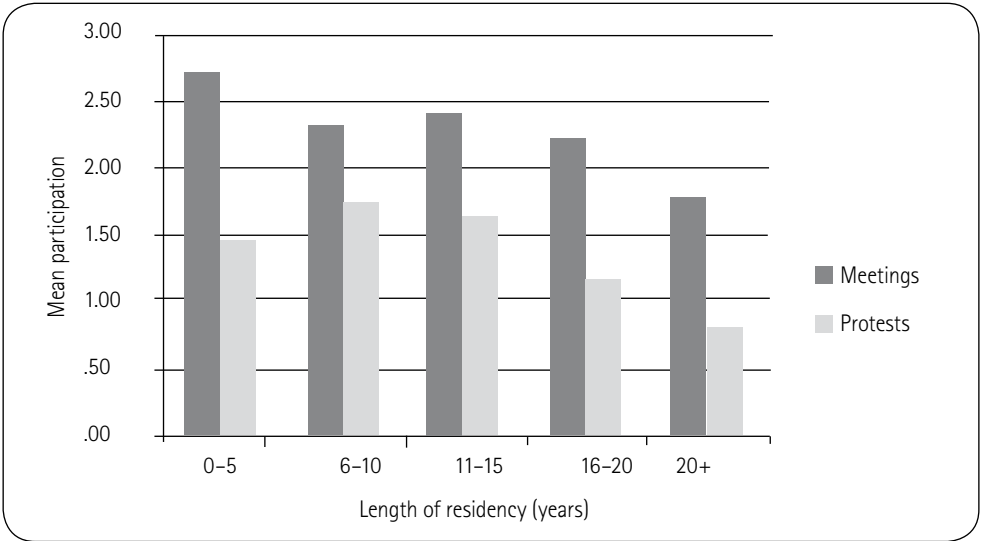
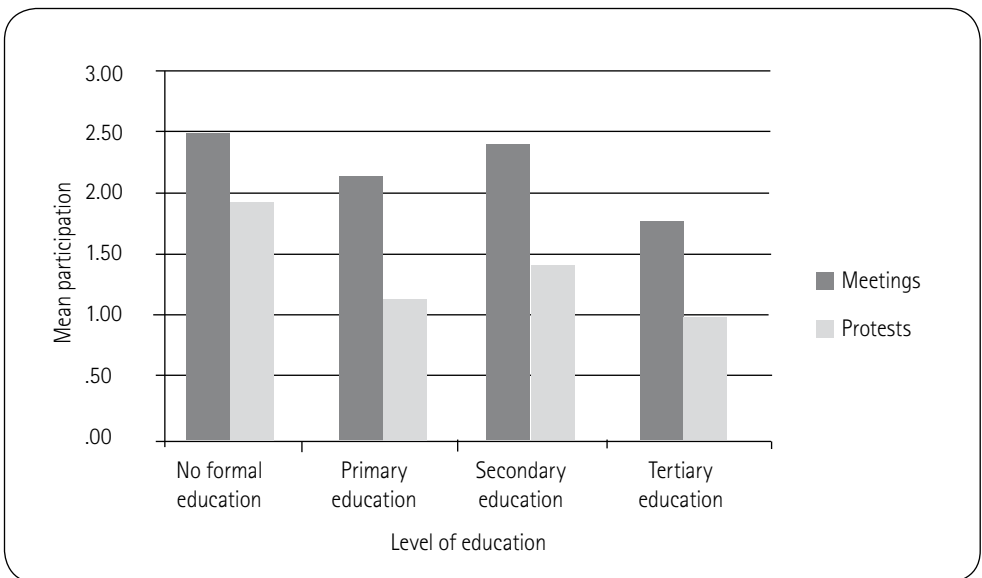
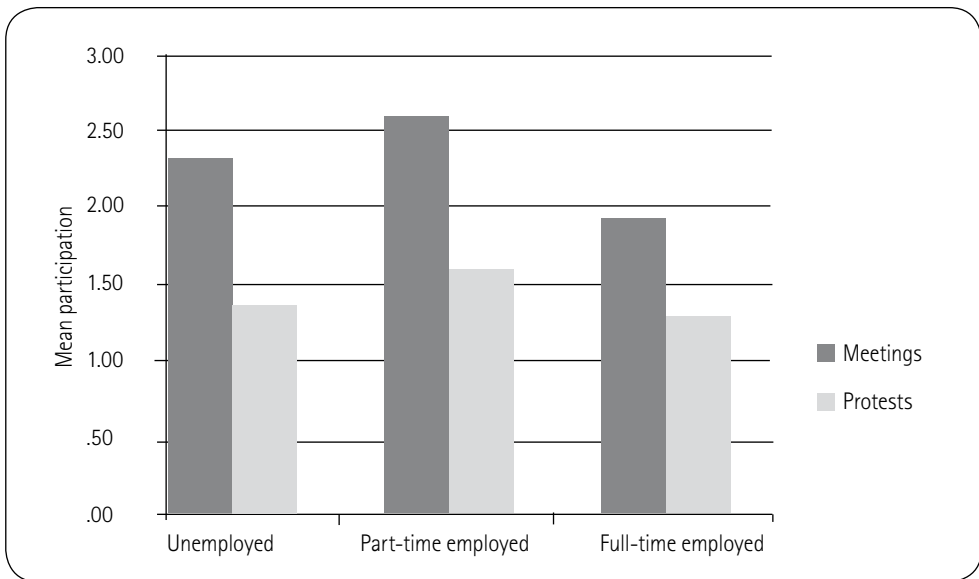


Figure 3: Education level and participation



In both types of participation, the part-time employed group are the most active participants. Only for meetings are the differences between the groups statistically significant. The fact that the part-time employed group participates the most is indicative perhaps of its access to the resources needed to participate – it has been hypothesised in the resource mobilisation theory that employment increases the resources available to facilitate participation in community activism. The likelihood of coming into contact with individuals and organisations involved in social mobilisation increases when people are employed and as a result their political skills improve. The fact that the unemployed participate less reinforces this idea. Moreover, the unemployed are more likely to focus on finding work than on communal activity, although it is easy to assume erroneously that they have a lot of time available to be engaged in communal activity. Lower levels of participation by those who are employed full time indicates that they have neither the time nor the grievances of those who are either employed part time, or are unemployed, and they are thus less inclined to participate. Certainly, this would be consistent with patterns of participation in historically more affluent neighbourhoods as our survey data in other areas has indicated.

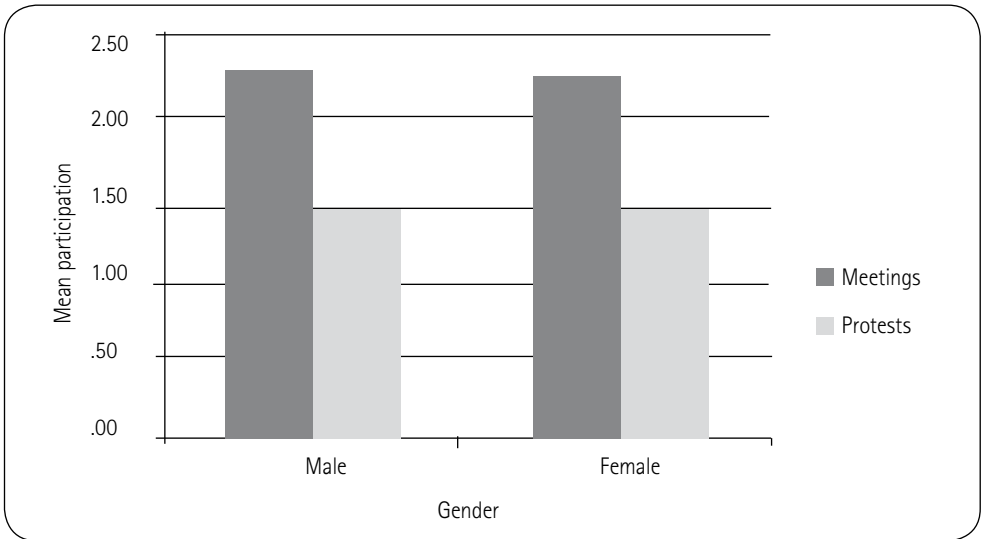
Figure 4: Employment and participation



The differential participation of men and women in communal activity is a subject that has occupied feminists and non-feminists alike. Conflicting results have been obtained in different contexts, perhaps illustrating the importance of the different political cultures of each of the sites. Female equality and emancipation from patriarchal domination, even in industrial democracies which often are posited as paragons of democracy, is ongoing. The participation

of women in political life in South Africa, including in the anti-apartheid struggle, is well documented (See for example Gouws, 2005; Fick, Meintjies and Simons, 2002)). Figure 5 below illustrates that there is no difference between participation rates of women and men in both community meetings and protests.

Figure 5: Gender and participation



Grievances

The deprivation approach maintains that grievances – deprivation and alienation – are the main source of protests. The following aspects of community/household life are examined in relation to defining grievances: household living conditions, lack of income, fear of crime, performance of government in water and electricity provision, and type of housing. One of the most difficult issues in understanding what underpins grievances held by poor communities is the high correlation between different grievances. For example, the unemployed are more likely to be poor and live in informal settlements with distant water supply connections, poor sanitation and high crime rates. Thus it may be difficult for a resident of such areas to separate grievances that are clearly related.

Figure 6 below corroborates our earlier conclusion that those with better living conditions tend to participate less. It is pertinent to note that those whose living conditions are fairly bad are more likely to attend meetings than those whose conditions are ‘very bad’. Since higher participation levels are found for the most deprived groups – those describing their conditions as very bad and fairly bad – and given that the five most problematic issues in Khayelitsha were found to be unemployment, housing, crime, electricity, poverty and des-

titution, it is most likely that these are the problems that define these conditions as bad. The fact that unemployment is mentioned as the biggest problem should not escape attention of those interested in explaining the *mêlée* South Africa finds itself trapped in. This finding also supports the assertion made in deprivation theories that grievances are responsible for protest action, being directed at the solution to these problems. A key point about these main problems is that they go beyond municipal service delivery: this is important in the debate on the causes of anger against government. Tapscott (2009) hypothesises that by framing their grievances around service delivery – a public good – citizens are able to unite to demand performance by government as opposed to demanding employment – a private good. In the same way, government cannot escape its culpability around service provision, which it would be able to do if the grievance was framed as unemployment as it could then plead that, in a free enterprise economy, its role is limited to creation of an enabling environment.

Figure 6: Personal living conditions and participation

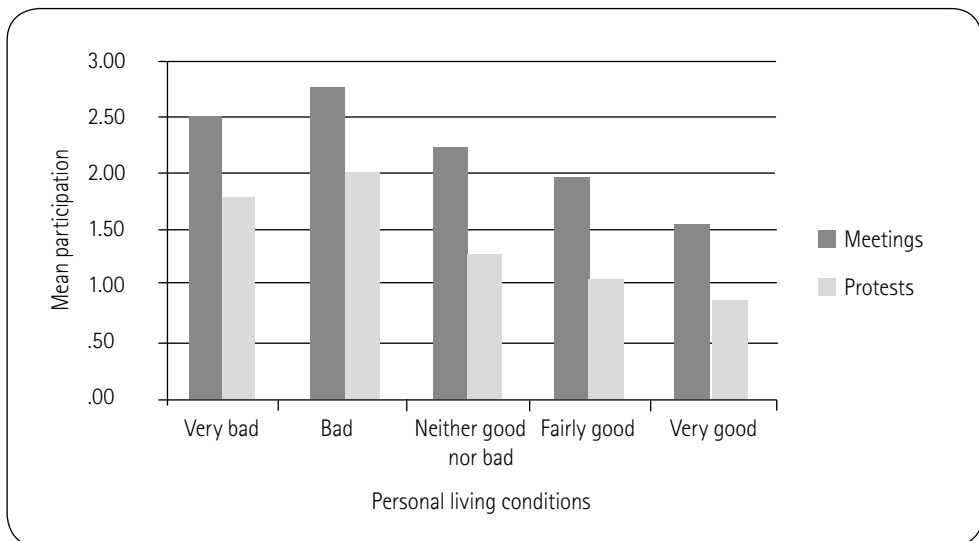
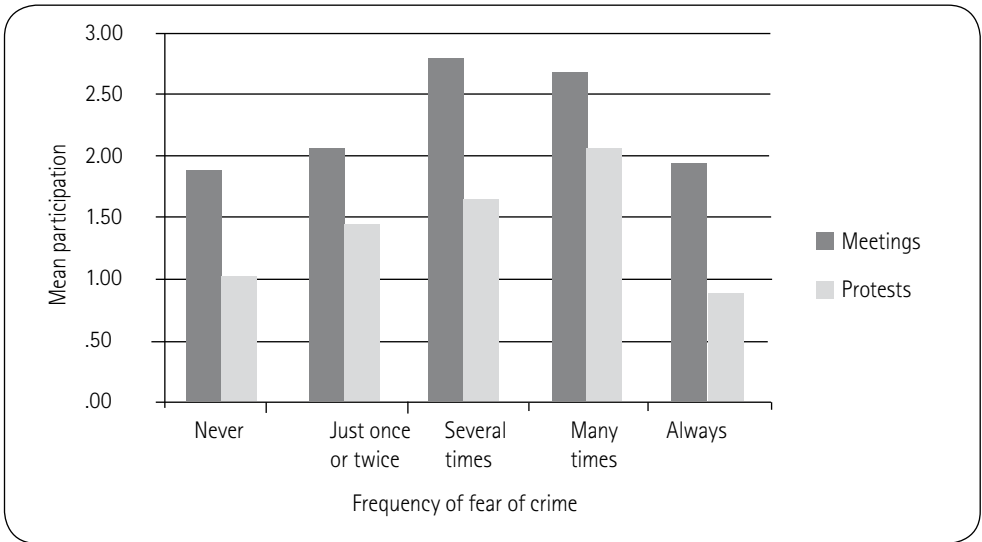


Figure 7 below illustrates that participation in communal activity increases with increasing fear of attack. This result reinforces the idea of grievance being the cause of participation. In fact, on one hand, fear of crime declines with improvements in living conditions, and on the other hand, it increases with shifts from brick houses to informal settlements, with Pearson correlation constants (r) = -0.254 ($p < 0.001$) and $r = 0.330$ ($p < 0.001$). Fear of crime is thus an important determinant of personal living conditions, while living in informal settlements increases one's fear of crime. Khayelitsha is one of the most crime-ridden places in the whole of Cape Town, with per capita rates of more than 106 murders per 100 000 of population per year (Nleya and Thompson 2009).

This relationship between crime and participation is consistent with qualitative interview data and policy dialogues that have been undertaken with representatives of organisations like Abahlali BaseMjondolo,⁷ a housing organisation, who informed us of their tendency to protest because of ongoing poor living conditions and high levels of crime.

Figure 7 Fear of crime and participation



Up to now we have not addressed service delivery grievances – housing, water supply, sanitation and electricity – directly. We have been able to show that the type of informal settlement, in particular, but poor housing conditions in general, are instrumental and operate in combination with other factors to increase the level of fear of crime and decrease the quality of life. We have alluded to rationalisation theories by Tapscott (2009) through which many grievances are deliberately concealed from public discourse, while service delivery is given prominence. To investigate the importance of service delivery, we use perceptions of three variables – provision of water and electricity, housing and type of water connection. Figure 8 shows that protests decline with improving assessment of service delivery performance.

The relationship between type of housing and participation illustrated in Figure 9 below shows the influence of relative deprivation, yet it is important to note that there are still many people in brick houses who are actively involved. This suggests that services may not always be the only underlying grievance. It is clear from the Figure 9 that housing plays a major role in increasing the propensity to protest. It is important to state that the type of housing is arguably the most important proxy for ‘service delivery’ and a key demand in protests, since formal brick houses usually come with water – either internally or through yard taps – as well as toilets and electricity, while informal settlements are served from communal

stand pipes for water supplies, largely dysfunctional communal toilets where they exist at all and a lack of connection to the electricity grid.

Figure 8: Electricity and water delivery and participation

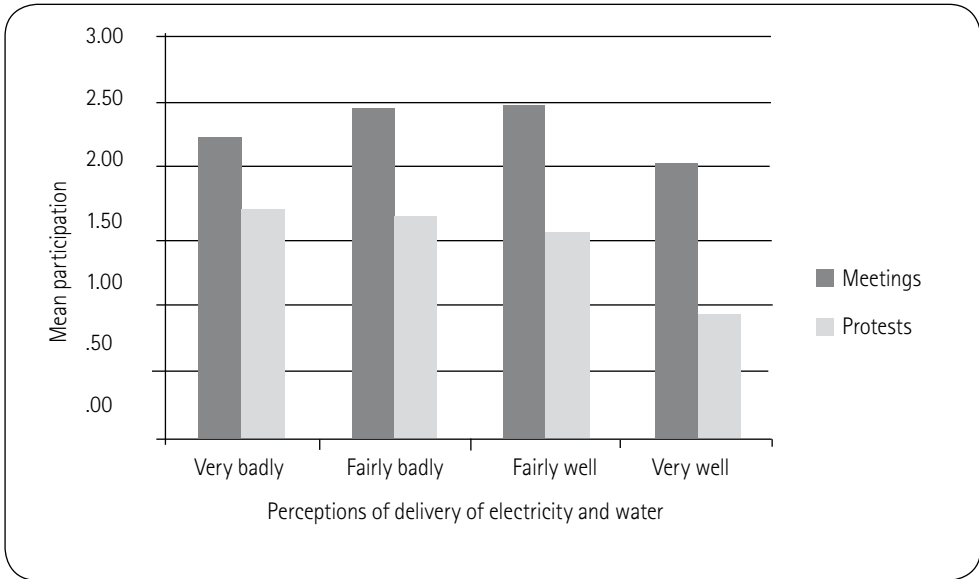


Figure 9: Type of housing and participation

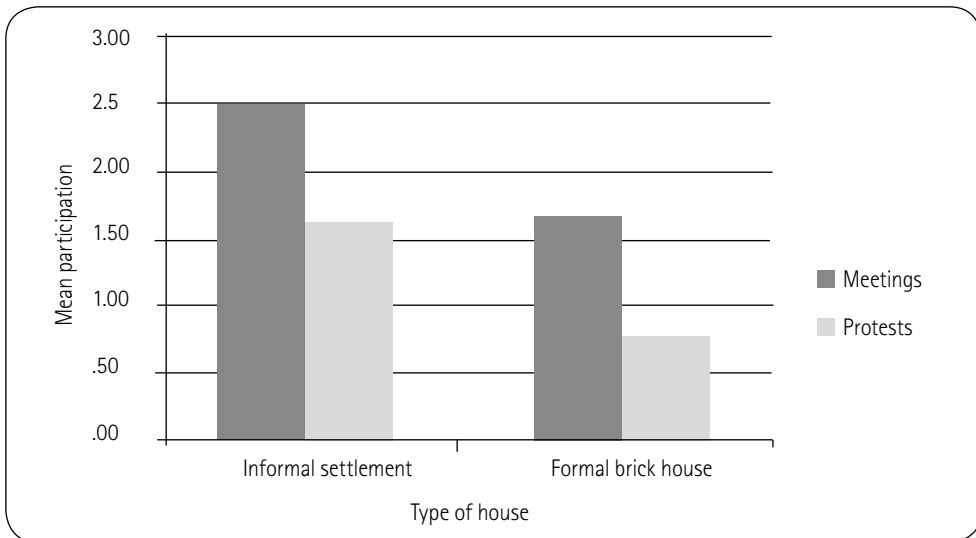
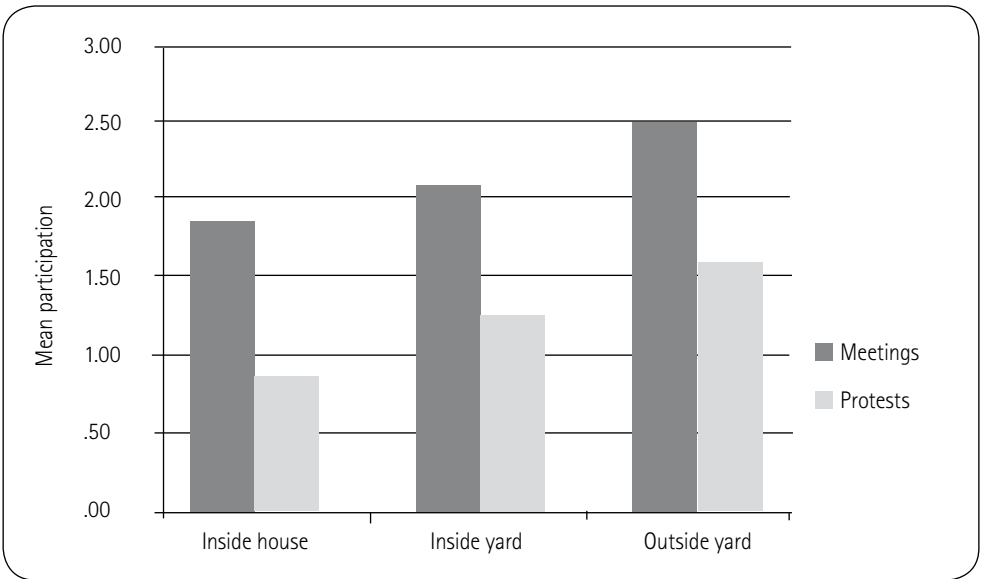


Figure 10 below indicates that a relative improvement in services – from a stand pipe in the vicinity of a shack through to a yard tap for a house without internal plumbing, and finally, through to the highest level of connection, namely the internal water tap – is accompanied by declining participation levels. This is linked in a domino effect to other services – a tap inside the yard may mean the occupant has a brick house but no proper amenities due to financial and other constraints.

Figure 10: Location of water source and participation



Organisational participation, ward councillors and trust

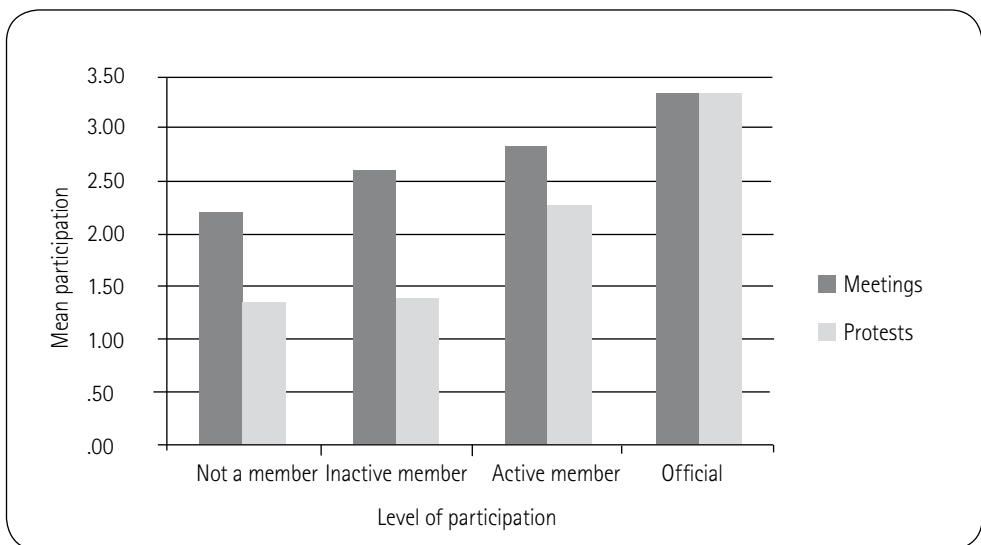
In this section we examine a broad spectrum of variables that are instrumental in mobilisation strategies: participation in street committee activities, the attentiveness of the ward councillor, the number of contacts with the ward councillor, interpersonal trust and trust in national institutions.

Street committees are area-based civic organisations that are largely affiliated to the SANCO and operating in largely black neighbourhoods – the townships. Although unresolved leadership battles have paralysed SANCO at a national level (Nzimande 2008), local level activity remains as arguably the first port of call when communities encounter problems. Street committees have a long history, having been instrumental in resistance to the apartheid state (Burman & Schärf 1990; Seekings, 1997; Zuern, 2006). It is important not to overly romanticise the street committees, however, as they have been singled out as being involved in undemocratic and illegal activities as well, such as vigilantism, and also in

the 2008 xenophobic attacks on foreigners across the country (Misago, 2009; Monson and Misago 2009) In addition, SANCO's strong links with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) blurs the separation between civic and political battle lines, something that has become more apparent in Khayelitsha since the breakaway of some ANC leaders to form the Congress of the People (COPE) with the formation of parallel COPE civic organisations.

Participation increases with the level of membership – those who are active members or officials in street committees are obviously very active in meetings, yet what is more interesting is that these members are also more likely to protest, which indicates, perhaps, the importance of street committees in the generation of protests and community meetings. Street committee activities are however not necessarily membership based in the ordinary sense – participation is at household level by virtue of residency in the particular area served by the street committee and is thus automatic rather individual membership-based organisation.

Figure 11: Street committees and participation



People who believe that the ward councillor is not listening to his or her constituents are less likely to participate in meetings and protests alike, as shown in Figure 12. Figure 13 shows that the higher the frequency of meeting with the ward councillor, the more participation in community meetings and protests is likely. These two sets of results taken together mean that higher levels of participation stem from the belief that ward councillors will take on board the issues raised in meetings, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.240 ($p < 0.001$). The higher level of protests for first, higher levels of belief that ward councillors listen, and second, higher frequencies of interaction with ward councillors, can be explained in terms of the eventual failure to resolve the grievances.

Figure 12: Attentiveness of the ward councillor and participation

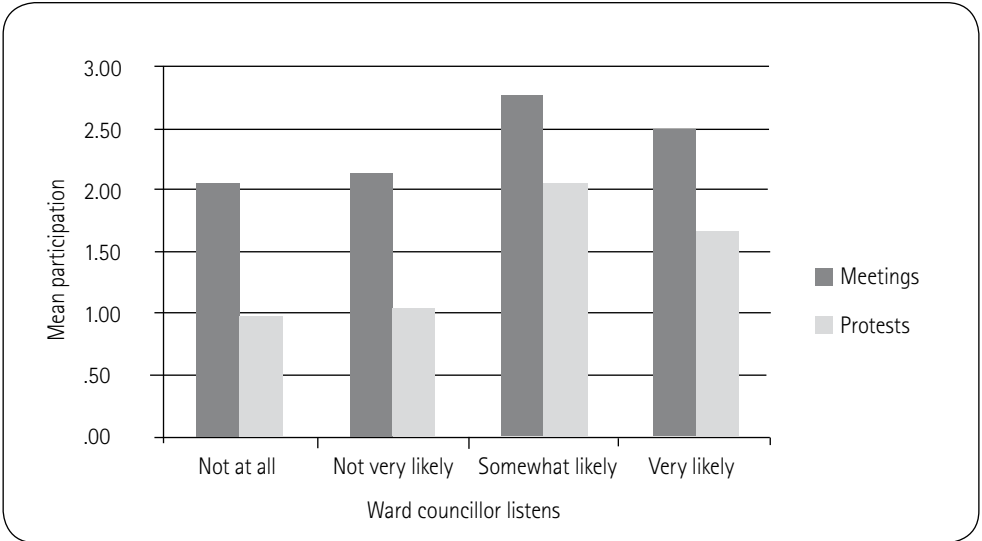
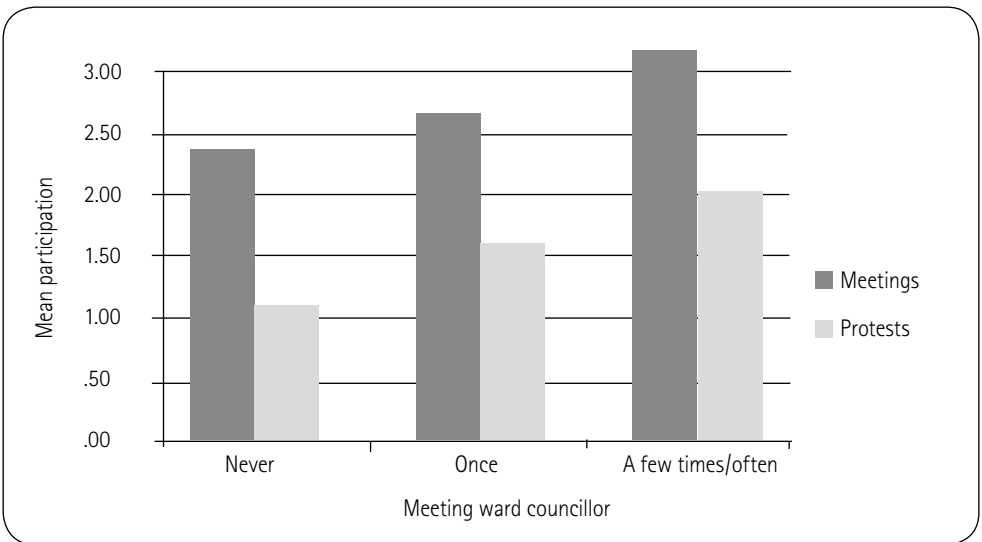


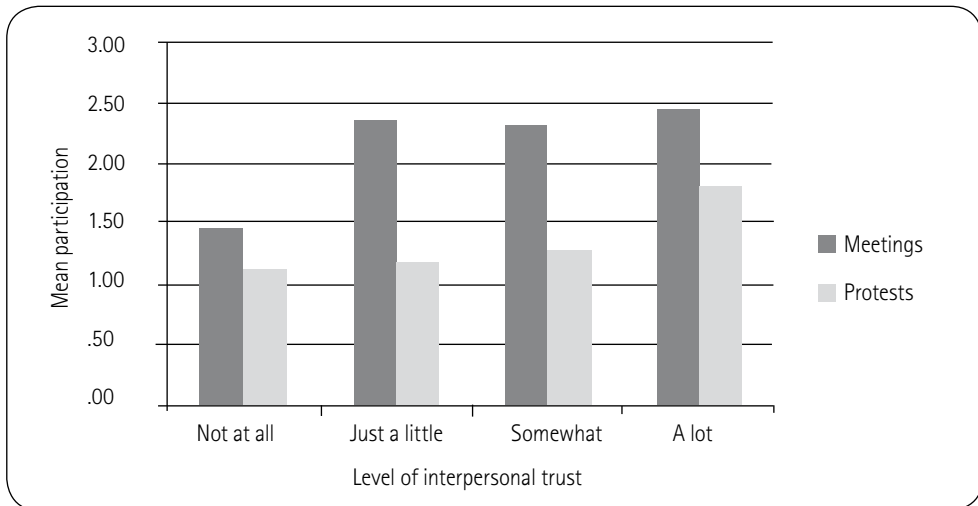
Figure 13: Contact with ward councillor and participation



According to the South African Concise Oxford Dictionary, trust is a firm belief in someone or something – the acceptance of truth of a statement without evidence or investigation. Conjecturally, public participation subsumes high levels of trust within the community on which to base such deliberations. Our data indicates that with regards to interpersonal trust,

higher levels of trust indeed imbue stronger ability to participate in both community meetings and protests (see Figure 14 below).

Figure 14: Interpersonal trust and participation



Higher levels of trust in national institutions are expected to correlate with higher levels of public participation in formal channels, a point that is visible in the data presented in Figure 15 on the next page. Counter-intuitively, though, higher trust levels in national institutions leads to higher levels of protest. This suggests that protests are not seen as anti-democratic by those involved in them, but as part of legitimate repertoires. Lack of trust is clearly linked to disengagement from formal participatory processes.

Figure 16 on the next page shows the intersection of meetings and protests, each plotted against the other. For example, attendance at meetings is plotted against options under attendance at protests in the horizontal axis. In both cases, higher levels of participation in one form of participation are associated with higher levels of participation in the other. Analytically, this confounds the popular wisdom that those who protest are only the disgruntled and disenchanted but indicate that protests, as Tilly (2008:14) underscores,

people who participate in contentious politics normally have several pieces they can play...
the players choose which pieces they will perform here and now, and in what order.

Similarly, in Khayelitsha, community activism involves a mix of strategies with which the communities make claims against the state. Meetings and protests are only part of these strategies. Crucially, meetings are important for the organisation of protests; equally, protests may end with a meeting. This interrelatedness between these two repertoires perhaps

underscores their similarity –after all, they have the same aims. The fact that protests are monitored and regulated by the authorities and denigrated by the media reinforces their efficacy more than it defeats them – something that remains one of the biggest ironies of attempts at controlling protest.

Figure 15: Trust in national institutions and participation

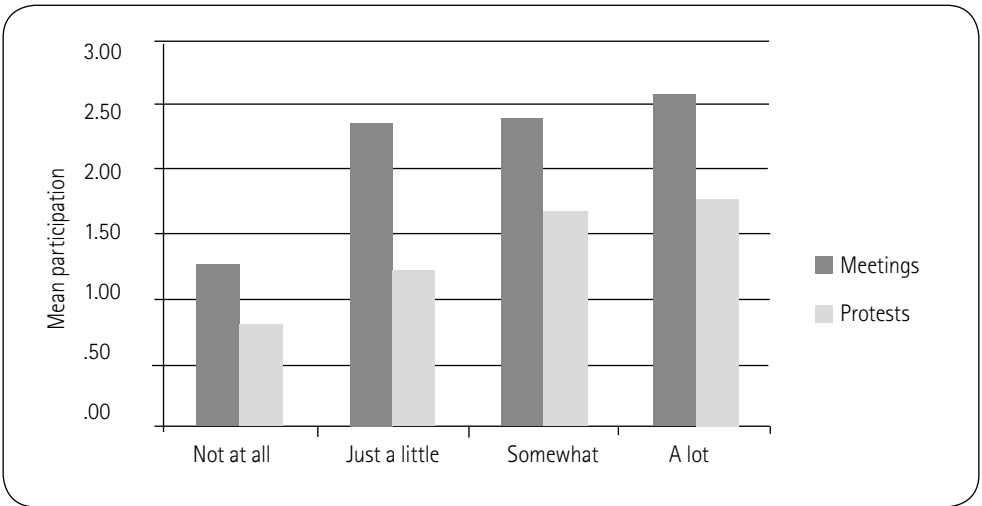
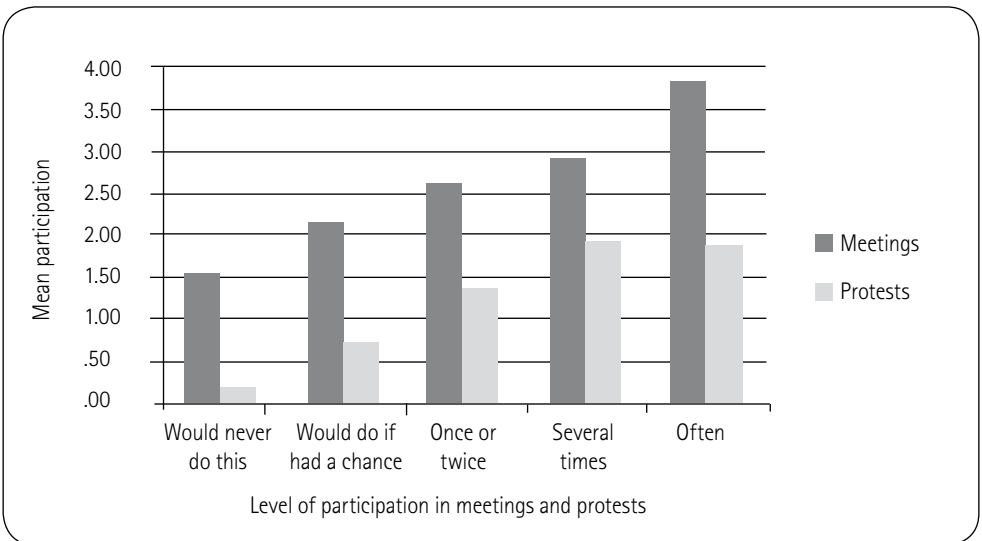


Figure 16: Interconnection of meetings and protests



CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented above confirms the arguments developed in our previous conclusion that protest occurs on a continuum of participation (Thompson and Nleya, 2010). While protests have a revolutionary history in South Africa, having been instrumental in undermining the apartheid state, and while those who protested then still participate in the South African body politic, it is important to note that those who protest still admit to trusting the national government. The demands being levelled against the state are largely superficial, directed mostly at resource allocation processes rather than at transforming the architecture of the state itself. These claims are akin to aiming at getting a better slice of the cake and having a say in how it is sliced rather than at changing the whole recipe.

It appears that, contrary to the unruly tag and the description of failing to engage, protests are in fact a sign that citizens engage in ways that allow them to define their citizenship and their place in South Africa's democratic trajectory in a favourable way. More concern should, in our view, be directed at the significant proportion of the disengaged, whose lack of involvement stems largely from a loss of faith in democracy. In this light, protests should be considered a good thing, albeit more about ensuring the rights and interests of the organised and mobilised than necessarily redressing the rights of the absolutely poor.

A further important conclusion is the need to re-examine the framing of protest in South Africa – to depart from continuous reporting of protest as 'service delivery protest'. We demonstrated that there are complex linkages between various grievances, some of which go beyond the everyday 'service delivery' frame – for example, unemployment, crime and living conditions. We found evidence that these play an important role in the development of feelings of deprivation and grievance over and above service delivery issues, of whose instrumentality we also undeniably found evidence. It is apparent that there is a lot more at stake than simply service delivery. The articulation between government and governance structures at a grassroots level are what communities in Khayelitsha use as a measure of true democracy – where such governance structures are well developed, the local state may more easily be able to ensure that policies addressing socio-economic and developmental issues are democratically implemented. The challenge of effective and meaningful engagement is therefore critical.

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Interviews

- Interview with Teresa Bottoman, Ward Councillor for Ward 87, Site C, Khayelitsha, 16 September 2008.
- Interview with Michael Benu, Khayelitsha Development Forum Secretary, Khayelitsha, 16 September 2008

Notes

- 1 A version of this working paper was presented at the VLIR annual project seminar on Citizenship and Democracy, Canal Walk, 16 and 17 March 2010.
- 2 The Khayelitsha population figures are a source of dispute between different stakeholders. The most comprehensive up to date data after the 2001 census on the population of Khayelitsha is the so called 'Khayelitsha Population Register Update 2005' which recorded a population of 406 779. This initiative was a result of a process initiated by the Khayelitsha Development Forum(KDF) and other stakeholders. It was initially geared at enumerating the whole area although in the end it only achieved a 67% sample. According to the KDF Chairperson Mr Sogayise, KDF withdrew from the process when it emerged the process would yield in an undercount.
- 3 According to the City of Cape Town, the URP is an integrated process targeting the regeneration of certain underdeveloped geographic areas to achieve sustainable development by bringing a balance between the social, economic, environmental and infrastructural aspects of city life. In Cape Town, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain are in the URP and have both received concerted interventions aimed at improving conditions informal settlements and housing conditions.
- 4 A *toyi-toyi* is a high-step dance accompanied by stomping of feet, singing and sloganeering, which assumed immense utility in the South African and Zimbabwean liberation movements, but largely retains currency in South Africa where protest culture is more entrenched.
- 5 Khayelitsha is divided into a number of sections. One of the oldest and presently the largest is Site C. See Thompson and Nleya 2010 for a detailed discussion of the different sections and the impacts of services on each of them.
- 6 The research on Khayelitsha is being undertaken quantitatively through the survey findings on governance and service delivery, as well as qualitatively through ethnographic research based on relationships built with women's empowerment groups and community leaders in predominantly Site C.
- 7 *Abahlali BaseMjondolo* means 'shack dwellers'