

# ***Local government performance, community development and political behaviour in South Africa***

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## **1. Introduction: Putting People First**

The struggle to liberate South Africa led to the entrenchment of democratic practices in the democratic mass movement of opposition. In coming to power the post-apartheid government was faced with the task of carrying these principles, also enshrined in the constitution, into the daily practice of government. There was a particular urgency to democratise the civil service and to transform conditions of the lives of the black majority. These tasks involving socio-economic and political transformation have been summed up in the concept of a democratic developmental state. In South African such a state would employ 'inclusive embeddedness', meaning that "the social basis and range of accountability goes beyond a narrow band of elites to embrace broader sections of society" (White 1998: 98). The two concepts of inclusion and accountability are critically important in the South African context, in engaging those previously excluded in forms participatory government and in developing common approaches to key questions.

'Batho Pele' or 'people first' was adopted in 1997 as the framework to establish a new service delivery ethic in the public sector in line with the nation's constitutional ideals which promote the efficient, economic and effective use of public resources in a manner that is development-oriented and responsive to peoples' needs. Batho Pele constituted the inner core of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Notice No. 1459 of 1997) and which set out to allow citizens living "in third world conditions" to hold public servants to account.

The vigorous adoption of these democratic principles would lead to a discernable break from the 'over-centralised, hierarchical and rule-bound systems inherited from the previous dispensation' and set out mechanisms for accountability. Over time the focus has shifted to delivery on Batho Pele from the national to the municipal sphere of government.

Although the conditions were unique such instruments prioritizing the needs of citizens are not. The question is whether they make a difference. In advanced capitalist countries the widening gap between citizens and state institutions can be regarded as creating a 'diminished democracy' (Skocpol 2003:11). With parties' focus characteristically being on electoral processes to the detriment of effective representation, links between citizens and the state are not being developed. The result: a 'weak democracy marked by poor representation' (Carothers 2005). Such instruments attempt to reinforce one side of the participation process by ensuring a set of standards for civil servants to be required engage citizens in government decision-making processes and, for citizens, principles for consultation and redress. The problem appears that participatory mechanisms established to channel citizen input are not accessible to the majority population in societies characterised by inequality, particularly marginalized communities and sectors, and typically do not 'automatically benefit poor people and groups that have long faced social exclusion' (Manor 2004: 5). The current state practice, in South Africa, is an expression of a technocratic approach that views community participation as a politically correct add-on, rather than a core element of effective governance. This use-value approach runs contrary to the participatory culture that has always characterized the anti-apartheid movement.

The question is whether the Batho Pele instrument advances a technocratic perspective or assists in leading towards forms of genuine participation. The argument is advanced that, on balance, the instrument can be used as the basis of assessment of the behaviour bureaucracy and help develop citizen perspectives on local government.

In widespread protests over service delivery particularly since 2000, the questions of consultation in planning, quality of service and response to complaints are often highlighted. Politicians and municipal managers often respond by pointing to awards being won by their cities, increased access to services, and the extent to which they are working to meet working class interests. To what extent has service delivery been transformed on the lines of putting people, especially poor people, first?

Assessing the adoption of the Batho Pele principles provides the basis for an initial assessment of the working out of constitutional principles of government in practice. Consultation, Information and Openness and Transparency, for instance, provide the basis for assessing democratic principles in operation; Redress a measure for effectiveness, competence and responsiveness; and Access a measure of effectiveness. They can also be a basic measure of progress towards deepening democracy; providing a basic code for the assessment of the implementation of democratic, informational and competency principles in all tiers of government. The political contract between the people and government which was the cornerstone of the last manifesto of the ruling party is potentially either being deepened or stressed by the changing relations of trust in key political institutions. Is the trust or confidence in public institutions a matter of political belief or is it derived from experience? The Batho Pele principles provide the basis for assessing such questions.

This article explores public attitudes relating to the extent to which municipalities live up to the Batho Pele principles in providing household services. It goes on to offer a preliminary examination of some of the geographic, socio-economic and service delivery correlates of such assessments. It then proceeds to investigate the impact that perceived good or poor performance has on political values and behaviour by focusing on three fundamental sets of outcome variables, namely institutional trust; conventional and unconventional forms of political participation; and satisfaction with democracy and future expectations. The concluding section offers some reflections of the importance of the findings for public policy.

## 2. Methodology

The data that is used for this article derives from the 2007 round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), which is a nationally representative sample survey of adults aged 16 and older that has been conducted annually since 2003 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). SASAS gathers information on the public's attitudes, beliefs, behaviour patterns and values. The principal long term aim of the SASAS programme is to chart and explain the interaction between the country's changing institutions, its political and economic structures, and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. SASAS has been designed as a time series. Thus, as survey builds upon survey, it will provide evidence on the speed and direction of change in underlying public values over time.

Attitudes towards the performance of municipalities against the Batho Pele principles were included for the first time in the September 2007 SASAS round, as part of a broader service delivery module.

Corresponding to the eight service delivery principles, a set of nine attitudinal statements were developed in order to provide the first opportunity for a systematic public assessment of the degree to which the principles are being implemented by municipalities in relation to household service provision. The statements were crafted to reflect on the quality of delivery at the municipal level (Table 1).

**Table 1: SASAS statements on Batho Pele**

<b>Batho Pele principles:</b>	<b>SASAS Statements (5-point agreement scale)</b>
1 Consultation (BP1)	Municipalities consult communities enough on basic services
2 Setting service standards (BP2)	Government is providing basic services that are of good quality
3 Increasing access (BP3)	Government is making progress in giving all SA equal access to services

4 Courtesy (BP4)	Municipality treats people with respect
5 Providing information (BP5)	Municipality provides people with good information about basic services
6 Openness and transparency (BP6)	Municipality provides regular information on its performance in delivering services
7a Redress (BP7a)*	Municipality responds quickly to complaints about problems with services (redress: rapid response)
7b Redress (BP7b)*	Municipality does a good job of following through and fixing problems (redress: fixes problems)
8 Value for money (BP8)	People are getting good value for the money they are charged for basic services

\* The Redress principle was divided to allow respondents to distinguish whether rapid response to complaints led to problems being fixed.

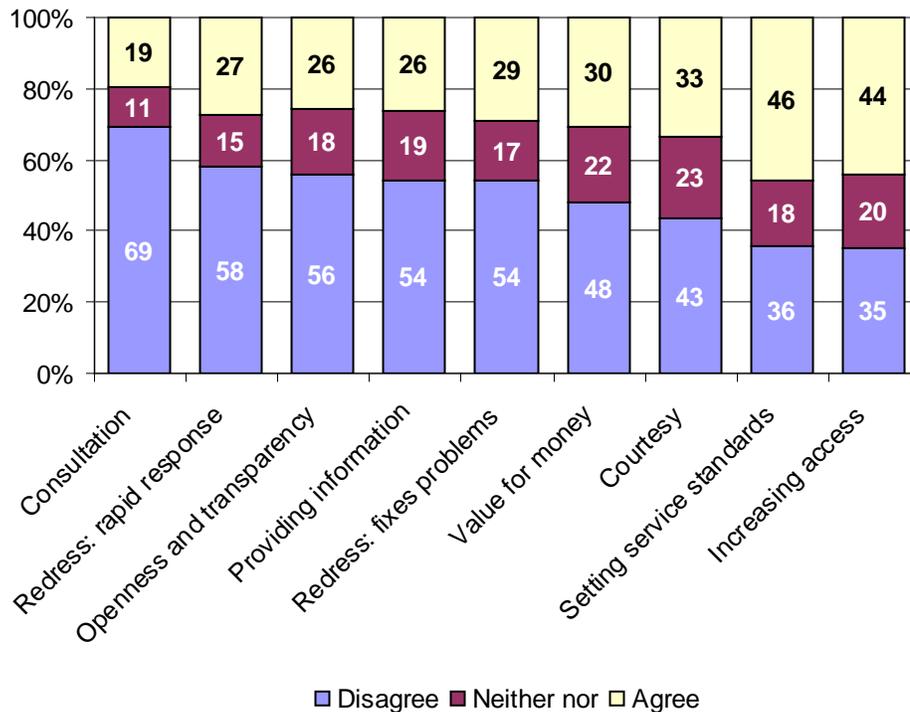
Participants in the survey were asked to respond to positive statements about services relating to each of the eight Batho Pele principles at a municipal level. For analytical purposes, a Batho Pele Index (BPI) has been created. This Index is a summated scale of responses to the nine statements relating to the Batho Pele principles, which was subsequently transformed so that the range of values runs from 0 to 100. The composite BPI score ranges from '0' meaning lowest possible municipal performance to '100', which represents the maximum possible municipal performance.

### 3. Assessing the components: Do people feel they and their needs come first?

Batho Pele is often considered as a general statement of intent to provide services in a new democratic context, but the eight principles allow the different constituent parts to be identified and individually assessed. In Figure 1 these are ranked according to the level of agreement with various positive statements about public service adherence.

The survey results indicate that people see a difference in practice between the various principles at the municipal level. The greatest disagreement with the positive statement relates to Consultation (BP1), which indicates that this is the main gap in implementation. The least disagreement is with Setting Service Standards (BP2) and Increasing Service (BP3). Consultation could be considered together with Openness and Transparency and Providing Information (BP5 and 6); there appears little agreement that all these aspects of communication are in place. There is also disagreement that municipal responsiveness (Redress: rapid response) is in evidence.

**Figure 1: Agreement with statements on municipal Batho Pele performance, 2007 (%)**



Source: HSRC SASAS (2007)

The overarching message from respondents is that local government is improving delivery but not managing to communicate and respond to people's priorities.

The level of agreement with statements about Batho Pele in Figure 1, is generally low; ranging from 19% in Consultation to high of 44% in relation to Increasing Access. No single principle receives a positive rating by more than half of the adult population. The low levels of agreement in relation to Consultation indicate that, despite provision for forms of participatory democracy in legislation, this is not being brought into effect.

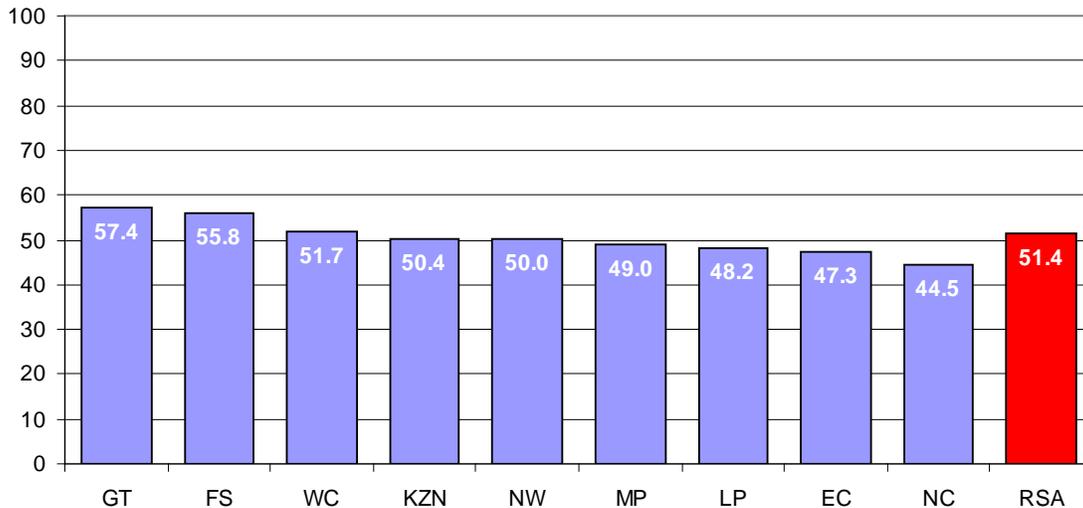
#### 4. On the correlates of public assessments of municipal performance

The preceding section provided a sense of how, at an aggregate level, the public rates their municipalities in terms of adherence to critical service delivery principles. Yet, much of the literature on the post-1994 transformation of local government in the country points to the severe and differential strains that many municipalities face in living up to their developmental mandate and addressing pervasive problems such as poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, as well as municipal ineffectiveness in service delivery, and poor responsiveness to public grievances (Atkinson, 2007a). In such a context, it is important to explore sub-national variation in perceived municipal performance, as this will reflect the realities of varied capabilities of municipalities as well as their differential levels of accountability to the citizens they serve. Given that the focus is on attitudinal data, it is equally important to explore the relationship between Batho Pele ratings and the household and personal characteristics of the survey respondents. Access to basic household services as well as level of service may be instrumental in shaping one's views of local government. One would also expect that socio-economic status may exert an influence on assessments of municipal performance.

#### 4.1 Geographic variance

Using the composite Batho Pele Index (BPI) provides the basis for making broad assessments nationally and across provinces. The analysis of this rating is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by province (2007)**



Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

Note: The Batho Pele Index is a summated scale of nine statements relating to the Batho Pele principles. The composite score ranges from '0' meaning lowest possible municipal performance to '100', which represents the maximum possible municipal performance.

In Figure 2, the Index shows that nationally the public rates Batho Pele as achieving just half of its potential. The provinces which have higher than average ratings include Gauteng, Free State and the Western Cape. Those which are at the lowest level rating include (in reverse) the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga.

The BPI score for Gauteng is significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than for all other provinces, with the exception of the Free State. Furthermore, the reported scores in the Northern and Eastern Cape as well as Limpopo are significantly lower than the Free State. For the other mean BPI scores, the differences are too small to be statistically significant.

With regard to type of location, a more unequivocal pattern emerges. The average BPI score was highest in formal urban areas (56.5), followed by informal settlements (49.5), communal rural areas (45.4) and commercial farmworker households (33.7). Post-hoc significance tests indicate that all the mean BPI scores are statistically significant from each other. If one further divides formal urban areas into metropolitan municipalities and small towns, we find that residents in the former report a BPI score of 58.4, compared to 53.1 in small towns.

These are notable findings in that they convey foremost the extent to which municipalities are struggling in particular to meet the service delivery needs of South Africans living in rural areas. In addition, it casts attention on the situation of farmworker households. The fact that it is amongst this group that the lowest BPI scores are found raises questions about living standards of those farmworkers who continue to reside on farms, including the kinds of public services extended to them by the farmers. Existing research has tended to show not only the poor social conditions but also a demonstrable decline in the provision to public services to farmworker households since 2000 (CLRS 2001; Du Toit 2004; Atkinson 2007b). Reasons that have been cited for this deteriorating scenario include municipal service budgets focusing increasingly on under-served urban, peri-urban and communal rural areas at the expense of commercial

farming areas, as well as farmers seeing the provision of on-farm housing and services as risky and unprofitable in the face of changes to land and labour legislation (CLRS 2001; Atkinson 2007b).

#### 4.2 Access to household services

As the aforementioned geographic variation in the survey results suggested, there clearly emerges a relationship between the level of service that households are receiving and expressed assessments of municipality performance. Table 2 provides mean Batho Pele Index scores for three basic household services, namely water, sanitation and electricity. With regard to water, the mean BPI scores are indistinguishable for those with piped water in their dwelling and those with tap water in their yard or on site (both around 56). The principal gradient of difference is between these two categories and those with either a public or communal tap (44.7) or below RDP level water service standards (40.1). A similar pattern emerges in relation to sanitation, where those with an unimproved toilet or no toilet at all significantly more discontent with municipal performance than those that have either a pit latrine or flush toilet. The difference in ratings between those with a standard pit latrine and ventilated improved pit latrine are not statistically significant, though all other differences are.

**Table 2: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by access to basic household services (2007)**

	Batho Pele Index Score (0-100)
<b>Main Source of Drinking Water</b>	
Piped tap water in dwelling	56.4
Piped tap water on site or yard	56.3
Public or communal tap	44.7
Below RDP standards	40.1
<b>Type of Toilet</b>	
Flush toilet	56.6
Pit latrine with ventilation pipe	47.7
Pit latrine without ventilation pipe	44.7
Unimproved toilet/none	40.6
<b>Electricity access</b>	
In-house meter	55.8
In-house pre-paid meter	52.4
Other form of access	32.0
No access to electricity	40.1
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>51.5</b>

Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

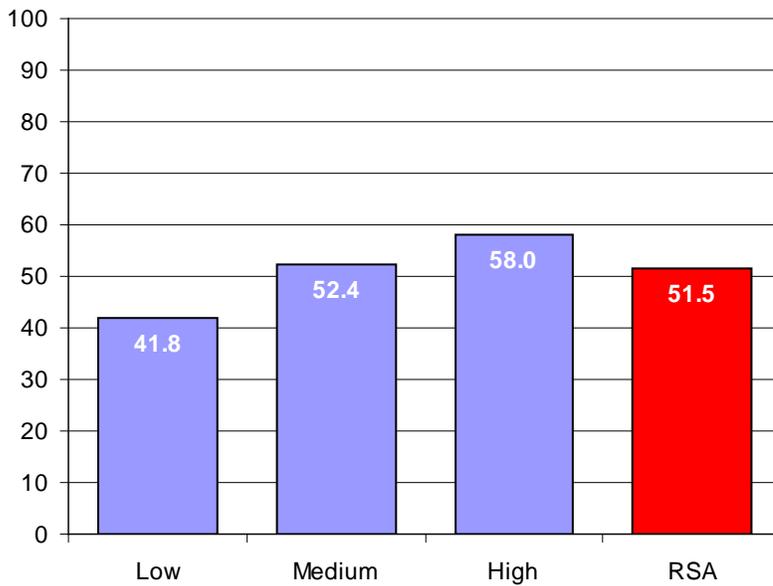
Finally, with regard to electricity, those with no access as well as other forms of access (illegal connection, generator) are substantially less satisfied with their municipal performance compared to those that have either an in-house metered connection as well as those using prepaid electricity. All the mean-score differences are significant, including the difference between in-house connections with prepaid electricity metering systems and in-house credit metered connections.<sup>1</sup> This latter distinction is notable in that prepaid meters have been the source of resistance and discontent, with concerns being raised, among other things, over affordability of electricity beyond the free basic electricity amount (50kWh per month) for low income households, inconvenience (repeated monthly trips to prepayment token vendors, long waiting times), and the depoliticisation of cut-offs by replacing manual cut-offs and reconnection with automatic or self-imposed cut-offs (Van Heusden 2008; Anneke 2008; Ruiters 2008). Therefore, in accordance with this body of evidence, prepaid electricity systems do appear to have a modest dampening effect on self-rated municipal service delivery performance.

<sup>1</sup> Electricity that is provided to domestic consumers by means of 'credit meters' refers to situations where households have a meter that records electricity usage, with consumption figures being collected periodically by meter readers and municipalities issuing bills based on the metered readings.

### 4.3 Socio-economic cleavages

Despite the attempts of municipalities at providing free basic service and to clear the backlog that exists in relation to basic services (Hemson 2004), it is evident that households with lower levels of service are considerably more discontent with the extent to which their municipalities are living up to the spirit of the Batho Pele principles. While recent research has produced some fairly convincing empirical evidence that government service delivery during the first decade of democracy was characteristically pro-poor, with the poorest households benefiting most in terms of growth in access to services, the reality is that sizable backlogs in basic services persist (Bhorat et al, 2006). Related to this backlog, there does appear to exist a distinct socio-economic divide in relation to attitudes towards local government service delivery efforts. Corroborating evidence is found when one examines mean BPI scores by Living Standards measure (LSM), which is in effect a form of index of the different assets that households possess (Figure 3). The results here are significantly different, and show that those with low living standards are more likely to rate offer poorer assessments of their municipalities' performance than those with medium and high living standards.

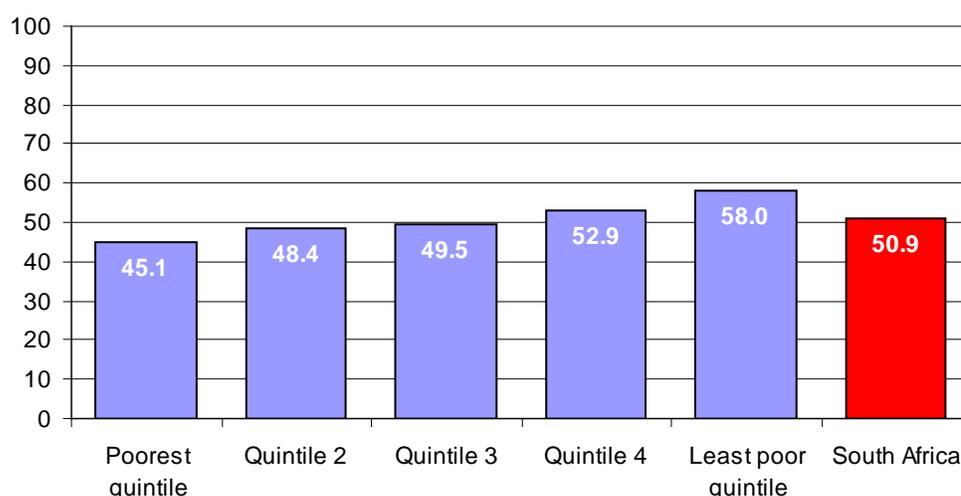
**Figure 3: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by living standards measure (2007)**



Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

As with many national surveys, nonresponse in relation to income-related questions emerges as an inevitable problem with the SASAS data given the sensitivity of asking households about such issues. Approximately 11 percent refused to answer, while a further 12 percent responded that they did not know or were uncertain of monthly household income. For the remaining three quarters of responses, we converted the banded total household income responses into per capita monthly income values, and then grouped the income distribution into income quintiles (20% groups). As with LSM categories, income-based differences are immediately apparent (Figure 4). The poorest three quintiles possess BPI scores below the average for all those reporting income values (50.9). The poorest 20 percent of households have significantly lower BPI scores than all other quintiles, with the exception of the second poorest quintile. Conversely, the least poor quintile has a mean BPI score that is significantly higher than all the quintiles. Similar findings are derived when one examines responses to subjective poverty questions.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 4: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by quintiles of per capita monthly income (2007)**



Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

Relative deprivation has received increasing attention as a potential factor informing the service delivery protests that occurred throughout the country over the last few years. Those that feel that they are lagging behind relative to others residing in close proximity are likely to feel marginalised and consequently express dissatisfaction with their municipalities in addressing their needs. Therefore, it is not only about being poor, but also about feeling poorer. The SASAS data lend credence to an association between relative deprivation and municipality ratings on the Batho Pele Index (Table 3). Those perceiving their household income to be much below the average income of other households in the area in which they live report significantly lower mean BPI scores than those whose household income is seen to be equivalent to or above the average income in the area of residence.

**Table 3: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by relative income categorisation, 2007**

Comparison of household income relative to other households in village / neighbourhood?	Mean Batho Pele Index (0-100)
Above average income	59.2
Average income	53.7
Below average income	50.5
Much below average income	45.2

<sup>2</sup> An example is the respondent's classification of the household's economic welfare on a scale ranging from 'wealthy' to 'very poor'.

South Africa	51.5
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Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

#### 4.4 Political party support

Analysis of party political support gives an indication of the extent to which the assessment of Batho Pele Principles and also of dissatisfaction with municipal government by the majority party. If attitudes were determined by political loyalty it could be imagined that supporters of the ruling African National Party would agree with positive statements on Batho Pele. The reverse is apparent. In the survey respondents were given the opportunity of identifying the party they would vote for or for not voting.

**Table 4 Levels of disagreement with statements on municipal Batho Pele performance, by party support (%)**

	ANC	DA	Other party	Will not vote	Total
Consultation	73	62	72	72	71
Setting service standards	35	36	47	38	36
Increasing access	35	33	46	40	36
Courtesy	47	30	48	38	44
Providing information	58	44	51	47	55
Openness and transparency	59	44	60	51	57
Redress: rapid response	63	37	63	54	59
Redress: fixes problems	57	40	59	59	55
Value for money	51	37	47	51	49

Source: HSRC SASAS (2007)

In table 4 party support is presented against levels of disagreement with statements on Batho Pele performance. Supporters of the ANC indicated a level of disagreement equal or greater than other parties in 7 out of 9 of the Batho Pele principles. Supporters of the main party of opposition, the Democratic Alliance generally expressed lower levels of disagreement than those of other parties.

## 5. Perceived municipal performance and political values and behaviour

The foregoing analysis has imparted a sense of how citizens rate municipal service delivery performance and how this varies according to location, level of service, as well as socio-economic status. What remains to be explored is the extent to which assessments in terms of the Batho Pele Index influence key outcome variables, especially those relating to political values and behaviour. Specifically, we briefly investigate this relationship in terms of confidence or trust in select institutions of democracy and service delivery, political participation (both electoral and uninstitutionalised forms), as well as satisfaction with democracy and future outlook.

### 5.1 Institutional Trust

Internationally, there is mounting evidence suggesting that the performance of governments and political institutions are critical factors explaining dwindling institutional trust. Measures of institutional trust are seen as a 'good thermometer of malaise' (Newton & Norris, 2000). The reason why trust matters for a young democracy such as South Africa is succinctly captured as follows: "Whether citizens judge politicians or government trustworthy influences whether they become politically active, how they vote, whether they favour policy or institutional reforms, whether they comply with political authorities, and whether they trust one another." (Levi & Stoker 2000: 501). Analysis of SASAS and other attitudinal survey collected by the HSRC has indicated that between the late 1990s and the middle of this decade,

there was a demonstrable improvement in public confidence in a wide range of public institutions on aggregate (Roberts 2008). However, since late 2005 there has been a worrisome reversal in trust in virtually all major public institutions, particularly local government and Parliament, but also the other two tiers of government. This downward trend continued into 2006 and 2007.

Over the three-year period between 2004 and 2007, trust in local and national government dropped by approximately 20 percentage points, and by 16 percentage points in relation to political parties. South Africans appear somewhat less likely to place confidence in their local government and the police (34% and 39% respectively in 2007), which are institutions at the forefront of government service. Political parties have consistently received the lowest trust ratings (27% in 2007) of all the political and social institutions examined. In spite of the declining confidence in government and other institutions of representative democracy over the past few years, in many instances the levels of trust still remain above those reported in the late 1990s. Exceptions include political parties, local government and the police, in which confidence remains marginally below 1998 levels.

**Table 5: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by levels of trust in institutions (2007)**

Batho Pele Index Score (0-100)	Strongly distrust	Distrust	Neither trust nor distrust	Trust	Strongly trust	South Africa
Parliament	40.6	47.1	49.0	54.4	59.5	51.5
Your local government	42.5	47.0	51.5	56.3	60.5	51.5
The police	41.7	48.3	51.1	52.8	59.0	51.5
Political parties	42.3	51.7	58.7	55.7	61.7	51.6
Politicians	42.5	48.4	51.5	53.7	59.8	51.6

Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

Is there a link between attitudes to perceived municipal-level Batho Pele performance and trust in public institutions? From an institutional perspective, one would anticipate that when the public identifies government or political institutions are performing well or inadequately, it responds by either extending or suspending trust and confidence. Therefore, when such institutions fail to effectively implement the Batho Pele principles, it is likely to instil feelings of distrust and depress levels of confidence. Arguably, the dramatic decline in levels of trust in local government over the last few years, together with the limited expressed confidence in political parties and politicians, could be seen as reflecting a sense that people are not being put first, and that the historical political developments that have transpired in the country since late 2007 represent a reaction to the groundswell of discontent and scepticism. Although the absence of trend data on the Batho Pele Index constrains the ability to determine whether the perceived performance of municipalities has followed a parallel trajectory with declining institutional trust, the 2007 SASAS data nonetheless confirm the existence of a positive performance-trust association (Table 4). Mean BPI scores are significantly lower among those that distrust or strongly distrust local government in contrast to those declaring that they trust their municipalities. Positive, statistically significant relationships are also found when examining municipal BPI performance and trust in political parties, politicians and the police.

## 5.2 Political participation

Of especial concern is whether the perceived performance of one's municipality in terms of service delivery has any bearing on decisions relating to public involvement in the political process. Public participation can assume a variety of forms, with the literature generally distinguishing between conventional and unconventional political behaviour. Conventional, institutionalised forms of political participation essentially refer to voting and related activities such as working in electoral campaigns or contributing funds to party candidates, but also extend to cover political interest and discussion. Unconventional political behaviour relates to direct, non-institutionalised, non-electoral forms of political participation such as protest politics, including signing petitions, attending peaceful demonstrations, engaging in boycotts, occupying buildings, and unlawful strike action (Verba et al 1978, Barnes et al 1979, Roefs 2003, Rucht 2007). The SASAS 2007 data permit us to provide some consideration of how the

different modes of political action (voting intention and protest politics) relate to assessments of municipal effectiveness.

If one compares mean BPI scores against the intention to vote if there were a national election tomorrow, there emerge small differences between those that declared they would vote, those that would not vote and undecided voters. Those that stated they would abstain had slightly lower BPI scores (49.9) than those who declared they would participate (51.1), while undecided voters expressed had the highest mean BPI score (53.8). However, post-hoc ANOVA tests revealed that the observed mean score differences are not statistically significant. It is therefore difficult to discern whether dissatisfaction with municipal performance is leading to higher intended electoral turnout or if it is fuelling feelings of democratic alienation and thus lower intended turnout. Similarly, there is no significant difference in BPI scores when one examines party affiliation. These findings are likely to reflect the complexity of electoral participation in the country and the multitude of reasons that inform turnout or abstention. Poor municipal performance in various facets of service delivery clearly represents only one reason amongst a range of other competing factors. For instance, other citizens who are content with municipal service delivery performance may feel compelled to vote due to a strong belief that they have a duty to do so. The implication is that differences in BPI scores among voters and abstainers get washed away in the process.

Turning attention to protest action, close to a quarter of the South African population older than 16 years declared that they have participated in a demonstration or protest march, while 13 percent had participated in a rates boycott (Table 5). Other disruptive but non-violent forms of protest such as sit-ins or interrupting government meetings were reported by marginally under a tenth of respondents, while about five percent had engaged in violent, forceful modes of participation. For all modes of unconventional participation apart from violent action, between a fifth and a quarter of respondents stated that that had not engaged in the activity but would consider doing so.

**Table 6: Non-institutionalised political participation, 2007 (%)**

	Attend a demonstration or protest march	Participate in a boycott of rates	Take part in a sit-in, disruption of government meeting	Use force or violent methods
Yes	22.1	13.0	9.2	4.5
No, but I would do it	22.7	25.0	20.1	7.4
No, I would never do this	55.2	62.0	70.7	88.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

In respect of the intersection between municipal performance and protest politics, the mean BPI score for those that had engaged in the four different forms of political protest examined was consistently higher than those that indicating 'no, but they would do it', with the differences proving statistically significant (Table 6). Those stipulating that they have not and would never engage in such political behaviour have mean municipal performance scores falling below those that had participated in all cases except for attending a demonstration or protest march, where the differences were not significantly different. These are interesting results as they suggest that those that have engaged in the different forms of non-institutionalized political participation tend to rate their municipalities *higher* against the Batho Pele principles. This could plausibly be attributable to a belief among respondents that these actions have influenced political decisions and brought about improvements in municipal performance.

**Table 7: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by engagement in non-institutionalised political participation (2007)**

Batho Pele Index Score (0-100)	Attend a demonstration or protest	Participate in a boycott of rates	Take part in a sit-in, disruption of	Use force or violent methods
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	<b>march</b>		<b>government meeting</b>	
Yes	51.5	53.6	57.7	58.8
No, but I would do it	49.4	49.2	48.5	51.4
No, I would never do this	52.4	52.2	51.8	51.3
South Africa	51.5	51.6	51.7	51.7

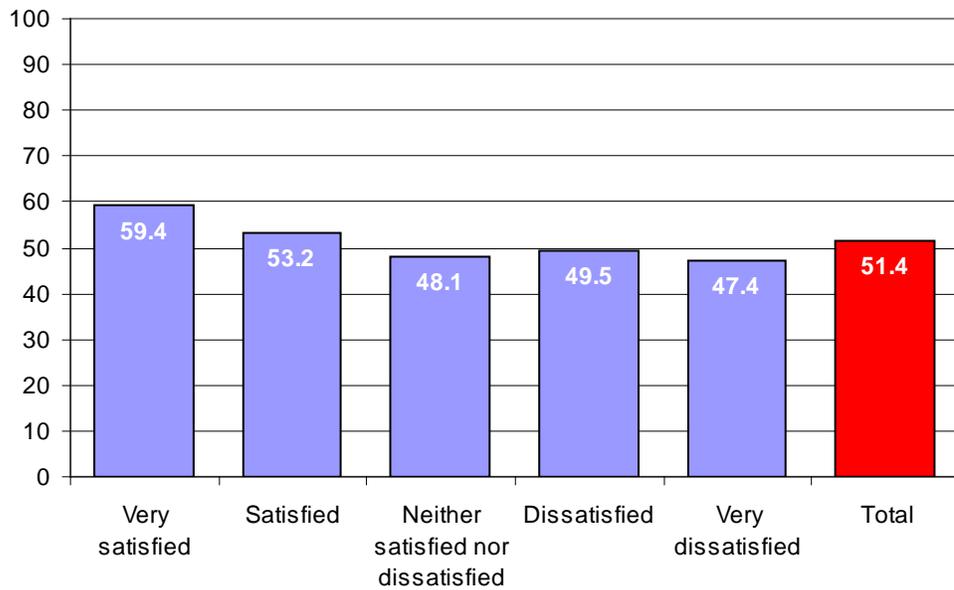
Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

The fact that those indicating that they had not engaged in protest activities but would do it tend to report lower BPI scores signifies that this is a group deserving of policy attention. They are more disgruntled with the manner in which their municipalities are handling service delivery and are not averse to pursuing non-institutionalized forms of political participation. We also know that they are likely to be poor, have low levels of service, feel relatively deprived and concentrated in rural locations around the country. If their grievances are not suitably addressed in the near future, whether by overcoming backlogs, maintaining quality of service or improving the effectiveness of municipal service, political protest action around service delivery is likely to remain an enduring feature of contemporary life in democratic South Africa.

### 5.3 Satisfaction with democracy and future outlook

Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and future expectations are both political values that one would expect to fluctuate with assessments of government performance. With regard to satisfaction with democracy, we employ a question that has been extensively included in attitudinal surveys internationally, namely: 'how satisfied are you with the way that democracy is working in South Africa?', with responses captured on a 5-point satisfaction scale. It is generally considered a reliable measure for gauging 'perceptions concerning the effectiveness of democracy in dealing with economic, social, and political problems' (Lagos 2001). Perceived performance in delivering goods to the public is a salient factor in the legitimacy of a democratic regime. Accordingly, good performance is likely to enhance support for the way democracy is working, while poor performance is likely to make the public less satisfied with the democratic functioning (Linde & Ekman 2003). Indeed this appears to be the case in the country, with the mean BPI scores reported by the those that are either very satisfied or satisfied with democracy being significantly higher than those who are dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or neutral (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Mean Batho Pele Index scores by satisfaction with democracy (2007)



Source: HSRC SASAS 2007

For those who believe that they have not received good service from their municipalities, a lingering question is whether they have remained optimistic in relation to the expectation that local government will provide in the near future or alternatively whether they have become quite pessimistic in their future outlook. As a measure of this, the following question was asked of respondents: 'Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next 5 years for people like you?'. Those that responded that life will improve have significantly higher scores on the Batho Pele Index (53.9) than those answering that life will remain unchanged (50.9) or worsen (46.8). This tends to affirm the view that municipal performance has a moderating effect on one's perceived prospects. It also suggests that, for a segment of the population, the failure to deliver upon developmental promises and expectations during the first 15 years of democracy has meant that hopes of being served are being replaced with disillusionment and disaffection.

## 6. Conclusion

From the analysis a number of conclusions can be drawn which relate to contemporary concerns about local government, service delivery and forms of accountability. The first is that Batho Pele appears to be an instrument which does relate to people's priorities in terms of the democratic provision of services as well as to efficiency, effectiveness and equity issues. Although this is not examined in detail in this article, there appears an association between trust in local government, democracy and the political system and the experience of service delivery by the people.

Secondly, Batho Pele provides the basis for concrete assessment of municipal performance from people's varying conditions and positions. In many ways, the Batho Pele principles also provide a more rigorous set of indicators than elections, in which changes in voting patterns may lag behind attitudes. Although elections highlight vital political issues and generally enjoy high levels of participation, they can often obscure direct service delivery assessment. Identity issues often can push service improvement issues into the background. Indeed, it has been argued that politics in South Africa operates largely independently of service delivery, with ineffective local councils often being re-elected. Batho Pele thus provides a means for people to evaluate services during the long period between elections and to make firm judgments.

Despite this the high levels of disagreement with positive statements about Batho Pele expressed by supporters of the ANC indicates that many of those dissatisfied with service delivery are also those who have voted in this party into government. Challenges to leadership, particularly in the municipal sphere, can be anticipated from within the party structures.

Although the survey indicates a generally low rate of approval, with a national average of just over 51.4%, the Batho Pele Index is sensitive to the difference between principles and differing geography. Although people generally assess Consultation at the lowest level of approval; the assessment of Increasing Access is at a considerably higher level. This demonstrates that people can be both dissatisfied with consultation as well as acknowledge that access to services is improving. The BPI also registers important differences across provinces (with the 'urban' provinces generally ranked higher and the 'rural' provinces lower). People's level of service is also reflected in the BPI: those with higher levels of service rate municipal government more highly and vice versa. Unfortunately the delivery of 'intermediary services' such as Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines do not lead to such higher ratings; possibly because their implementation is often associated with low levels of consultation and health promotion. There appears a special problem with farm worker households, which appear to have the least confidence that municipal government will work in their interests.

Thirdly, the implementation of Batho Pele does not at present appear to be operating as a pro-poor instrument; quite the reverse. The principles have been designed to mark the difference in public administration between the past authoritarian and the current democratic ethos and to redress historical imbalances. Although this should favour the previously dispossessed, this is not how the implementation of service delivery is seen by poor people. While the better-off express higher rankings on the BPI, the poorest express the lowest. Those who are particularly disadvantaged, such as people living in informal settlements or in rural areas have the lowest level of conviction that local government will operate in their interests. This is also shown in measures of relative deprivation. Those who see themselves as disadvantaged in comparison to their neighbours also register lower ranking on the BPI. This indicates that the developmental local government is yet to be seen by the poor to be providing the promised poverty alleviation.

Fourthly, and possibly not unexpectedly, low levels of trust expressed in political parties, local government and the police are also associated with low BPI rankings. This is also seen in relation to satisfaction with democracy. In summary, the institutions of democracy which are intended to practice and deepen democracy (such as political parties and local government) and protect the people (police) are generally not seen to be working as intended. Those who see democracy as not working also rank the prospect of improved delivery the lowest. Trust appears linked to competence as it can be seen as being accumulated with people's experience of good local governance and lost with people's experience of poor local government. Those whose life is not seen as improving in the future give a low BPI ranking, implying that they don't expect local government to assist through consulting them and redressing their problems. Despite research indicating benefits to the poor from post-apartheid social policy (as generally pro-poor) this is not how municipal government is perceived.

Finally, there is an interesting dualism between those who have taken un-institutionalised actions and attitudes towards Batho Pele and those who have not but are prepared to do so. It has been argued that the growth in poverty and inequality leads to citizens becoming increasingly sceptical and distrustful of political parties and institutions. This then leads to declining political participation. The South African experience shows a complex relationship between scepticism and unofficial action. Those have taken

unofficial action have a higher ranking of municipal performance, suggesting that such actions may bring about increased responsiveness. Those who are prepared to take unofficial action express lower BPI scores, and thereby represent a pool of potential protesters against perceived injustice. These reflections provide an insight into what could be a positive and dynamic aspect to social movements and increased accountability of local government.

To return to the theme of a democratic developmental state, the survey indicates a tension between the state and community. The components of participation and accountability which lie at the heart of the resistance of the 1980s and are embedded in transformation still remain to be realised. The rising level of strikes and service delivery protests which mark the period after the election of April 2009 demonstrate the explosive force behind the aspirations for participation and socio-economic gains after 15 years of democracy. Democracy in South Africa shows evidence of a socio-political deficit and the surveys of Batho Pele provide the concrete evidence.

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