

Developing the Participatory Capacity of South African Citizens in Municipal Service Delivery through Social Innovation

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Abstract

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 highlights that an active citizenry is fundamental to the country's development trajectory, occurring in a socially cohesive environment. However, the reality is that the service delivery interface between South Africa's municipalities and citizens appears to be characterised by discontent and a lack of confidence. A sustainable solution is called for that can restore and strengthen this interface while protecting democracy, and this article argues that it can be done through the use of social innovation (SI) by developing the capacity of South African citizens to participate in municipal service delivery. Social innovation underpins processes (collaborations, networks, co-productions) that are undertaken by societal actors, for instance citizens, to find innovative solutions to address societal challenges. South African municipalities' apparent failure to make adequate use of SI, and citizens' failure to participate fully during each stage of the service delivery cycle appear to be shortcomings that hamper service delivery reform in the local government sphere. In part, these shortcomings are inherent in the selective participation of citizens in some service delivery stages, which is determined by municipalities. The article argues that the use of SI in service delivery is fundamental to enhancing citizens' participatory capacity, which in turn could contribute towards strengthening the interface between citizens and municipalities and empowering citizens to influence the governance of municipal services.

Keywords: social innovation; citizens' participation; service delivery; local government; National Development Plan



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Introduction

The delivery of municipal services occurs through external or internal delivery mechanisms in accordance with municipalities' legislative functions and powers, and municipalities can levy fees for rendering these services (Craythorne 2006, 158–59). The use of social innovation (SI) for inclusive stakeholder and citizen participation in processes aimed at delivering municipal services holds the potential of developing an active citizenry that participates in the development of South Africa. Social innovation underpins processes (collaborations, networks, co-productions) that are undertaken by societal actors, for instance citizens, to find innovative solutions to address societal challenges. In this article, citizens refer to citizens who live in heterogeneous communities, and participation refers to citizens' participation in the governance of service delivery (planning, design, delivery and evaluation) through municipalities' application of SI. Citizens' discontent with some municipalities' service delivery raises questions about the extent to which citizens participate meaningfully in the different stages of the service delivery cycle (planning, design, delivery and evaluation). It also raises questions about the role and contribution of South African municipalities in facilitating the capacity of citizens to participate and in redirecting citizen participation to processes preceding service delivery. The importance of these issues is highlighted in South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) (South Africa, The Presidency 2011, 26; Van Der Waldt 2014, 28). Three of the priorities mentioned in the NDP are: (i) making an effort to promote an active citizenry that will contribute to strengthening a sustainable democracy, accountability and development; (ii) developing key capabilities of the citizenry and the state; and (iii) building a society that is centred on strong leadership that collaborates to solve societal challenges.

In South Africa, local governments (i.e. municipalities) are role players instrumental in achieving the abovementioned national priorities. Municipalities need to find solutions to meet societal challenges implicit in the twenty-first century, drive societal changes, and contribute to achieving the 2030 global sustainable development goals for the country. Alvord, Brown, and Christine (quoted in Bhatt, Ahmad, and Roomi 2016, 29) contend that innovative solutions are possible through the application of SI, which assists with mobilising ideas, resources, capabilities and “social arrangements that bring about sustainable social transformation.” Social arrangements (i.e. collaboration with stakeholders) pave the way for applying SI to improve municipal service delivery (Krasnopolskaya and Mersyanova 2014, 40) and promote inclusive citizen participation in the different stages of the service delivery cycle. However, South Africa's municipalities' infrequent use of SI, and citizens' lack of participation during each stage of the service delivery cycle point to shortcomings in service delivery reform in the local government sphere. In part, these shortcomings are inherent in the selective participation of citizens in some service delivery stages as a result of municipal administrative hegemony, and they appear to be counterproductive to the development of an active South African citizenry that can contribute to the development trajectory of municipalities and the country as a whole.

Against this background, the research question posed in this article is how the use of SI could develop the capacity of South African citizens to participate in municipal service delivery. To explore this question, the investigation follows a qualitative research design, incorporating a review of official government documents and peer-reviewed literature. The methodological processes adopted are synthetic and analytic in nature. The synthetic methodological process is embedded in the contribution of this study to exploring the utilisation of SI to develop the capacity of South African citizens to participate in the municipal service delivery cycle. The method is analytical in its examination of relevant research by other scholars. Against this backdrop, this exploration starts by contemplating the use of SI as a relative advantage to citizen participation in service delivery. Subsequently, citizen participation in service delivery through SI is investigated in respect of the significance it has for South Africa. The study concludes with a presentation of a conceptual framework for utilising SI to develop citizens' participatory capacity in relation to municipal service delivery. It remains to be seen whether the proposed use of SI could influence the actual use of SI, promote service delivery reforms in the South African local government sphere, strengthen the municipal-citizen interface, and develop an active citizenry.

Social Innovation: A Relative Advantage to Citizen Participation in Service Delivery

The word innovation refers to a new method of doing things, for example, changes in organisations, processes, services, and products (Serrat 2017, 692), whereas the word social relates to the interactions that underpin the relationships between citizens or actors (Kolleck 2013, 2). The literature indicates that the concept of SI hinges on different meanings and that its application has the following objectives: (i) restoring trust and societal ties between stakeholders; (ii) harnessing new capabilities or improved and new relationships; (iii) using innovative pragmatic ideas suitable for a particular context; (iv) co-producing innovative solutions (products, models, services, processes) to address societal needs; (v) improving the utilisation of resources and assets; and (vi) providing, through bottom-up approaches, resources that empower citizens to participate (Evers and Ewert 2014, 11; Lévesque 2012, 15). In this conceptualisation of SI, three commonalities emerge that underpin its application and purpose: (i) SI practices can contribute to meeting basic societal needs not provided by the state; (ii) SI practices can change the governance system in terms of allocating goods and services to meet basic needs, and (iii) SI practices can change governance systems based on citizen empowerment (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Lévesque 2012, 15; Marques, Morgan, and Richardson 2018, 500; Serrat 2017, 695).

Social Innovation Practices Meet Basic Needs not Provided by the State

It is argued that citizen participation in service delivery (including services of a tangible and intangible nature, as well as aspects such as public satisfaction, activities and benefits) and community development processes is premised on citizens being in a

position to analyse societal challenges confronting them, identify their service delivery needs, and take and/or influence decisions to improve their socio-economic status (Draai 2016, 147; Fox and Meyer 1995, 18). Thus citizen participation is based on citizens having direct experiences and an understanding of societal needs and challenges affecting them, and of having tacit knowledge that is considered essential during service delivery planning processes and the use of SI (Davies et al. quoted in Kim et al. 2015, 173). These experiences and this understanding and knowledge are inherent in participation during the application of SI, which makes citizens key role players in finding innovative solutions to meet their basic needs and better-adapted solutions as service users. Therefore, citizen participation is essential for SI to have the desired impact in addressing the unmet societal or basic needs of its intended beneficiaries.

Citizen participation is recognised as a key attribute of SI due to the interactive environment its use creates for collaboration between diverse actors in developing and sustaining new solutions to societal challenges that could meet basic needs (Davies and Simon quoted in Kim et al. 2015, 173). Of importance to this interactive environment are the opportunities created to integrate citizens with participatory service delivery processes, in particular citizens who have been marginalised or excluded from such processes as well as from access to some public information, benefits, resources, platforms, opportunities, and services (Westley quoted in Kim et al. 2015, 173). Through SI, marginalised citizens can be reintegrated with participatory processes that identify solutions to service delivery challenges affecting them, and their social and economic needs can be addressed through their active involvement (Bhatt, Ahmad, and Roomi 2016, 30, 31; Westley quoted in Kim et al. 2015, 173).

Governance System Changes Relating to the Allocation of Goods and Services to Meet Basic Needs

In light of using innovation and, in particular, SI to locate citizen participation as central to service delivery and the allocation of goods and services, the changing of governance systems has become an essential requirement (Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 843). Governance is described as the collaboration between structures in society and government, and its aim is to deliver services that will benefit society. This implies that governance systems should be open to citizen participation (Thornhill, Van Dijk, and Ile 2014, 21, 22). In open governance systems, the state has ceased to be the sole role player in respect of service delivery, and citizens participate in some services affecting them (Thornhill, Van Dijk, and Ile 2014, 21, 22; Van der Waldt 2014, 28). Hence, when governance systems change from being closed (centred on administrative hegemony) to being open, they become citizen-centric and they integrate citizen participation with the allocation of goods and services. This change from closed to open governance systems appears to resonate with the use of SI in service delivery, which locates citizens as central to the governance of service delivery decision-making processes and the different stages of the service delivery cycle.

The allocation of goods and services in open, citizen-centric governance systems is premised on the collaboration between municipal officials as service providers and citizens as service users about the allocation of goods and services. The use of SI implies the creation and development of social alliances between municipal officials and citizens (Lévesque 2012, 16; Tshoose 2015, 19) within which the allocation of goods and services occurs. In respect of service delivery, open, citizen-centric governance systems integrate citizens as service users with the stages of the service delivery cycle and as key stakeholders in appropriating solutions to service delivery challenges. Through SI, citizens therefore become “full actors” in defining and implementing the responses to their service delivery needs (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400).

Changing Governance Systems Based on Citizen Empowerment

The use of SI to support and improve citizen participation in the allocation of goods and services and its governance has the potential to change the nature of the power and social relations between citizens and the government in relation to the governance of decision-making processes (Lévesque 2012, 16; Tshoose 2015, 19). Hence, where the concentration of power in decision-making processes was predominantly vested in municipalities (a closed governance system), this power is dispersed and some power is transferred from the municipalities to the actors, including citizens, in the governance relationship. This power dispersion increases citizens’ power to exercise agency in the governance of services and the allocation of goods and services, in that way improving the governance relationship as it becomes a shared one that empowers citizens. The significance of this empowerment is that citizens, groups or individuals can participate in decision-making processes to influence their social, political, and economic circumstances and futures with the aim of elevating their quality of life (Kahn, Madue, and Kalema 2016, 307; Mayekiso, Taylor, and Maphazi 2013, 197). In a governance relationship that aims to empower citizens, participation is based on exchanges between municipal officials and citizens to identify collective service delivery preferences that hold public value (Lévesque 2012, 28).

Exchanges could take place through negotiations and trade-offs, the development of long-term relationships, or collaboration and deliberation between municipal officials and citizens, all of which are aimed at the creation of public value in service delivery (Lévesque 2012, 28; O’Flynn 2007, 362). Consistent with the use of SI, these exchanges could occur within the framework of partnerships, networks, and resource integration between municipalities and citizens, as well as between service producers and citizens as service users (Lévesque 2012, 30; Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka quoted in Srivastava and Shainesh 2015, 247). As empowered participants in open governance systems, citizens are enabled to take part in debates about new approaches, solutions, and strategies aimed at overcoming societal and development challenges (Brandsen et al. 2016, 305; Kahn, Madue, and Kalema 2016, 307). Of significance to citizen participation during the application of SI is the extent to which citizens are empowered to take part actively in the governance of services, which contributes to restoring the

democratic deficit in governance systems in the twenty-first century (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400). Further, citizens' participation in the governance system enhances their capacity to act (Kim et al. 2015, 173). However, enhancing the capacity of citizens to act implies that they should find the act of participation appealing.

Harnessing the Participatory Capacity of Citizens

The participatory capacity of citizens can be related to the ability of users to take part in and to adopt SI. This ability appears to be underpinned by factors such as (i) the relative advantage of SI to the citizen, (ii) shared leadership, (iii) participation in SI structures, and (iv) participation in the collaborative sharing of solutions and strategies. The first factor (i.e. relative advantage) implies that the SI in which citizens participate must be compatible with their "everyday life" (Seyfang quoted in Dietrich et al. 2016, 1956). This relative advantage appears to be consistent with the contribution of SI to meeting basic needs not met by the state, an aspect that was highlighted earlier as a commonality underpinning the conceptualisation of SI (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Marques, Morgan, and Richardson 2018, 500; Serrat 2017, 695). Thus, the solution that emanates from the SI should be of benefit to the participating citizens and address their service delivery or basic needs. The time, effort, and contributions that citizens will invest through their participation in and adoption of an SI must, therefore, be integrated with the services they use in their everyday lives (Seyfang quoted in Dietrich et al. 2016, 1956). Subsequently, if citizen's participation will not yield benefits that result in meeting a service delivery need, it could deter their participation.

The second factor that could enhance citizens' participatory capacity in SI is shared leadership, which appears to be consistent with changing governance systems. This was highlighted earlier as an element underpinning the conceptualisation of SI (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Serrat 2017, 695). According to Karlsen and Larrea (quoted in Estensoro 2015, 531), shared leadership implies that absolute hierarchical power, which is associated with administrative hegemony and a closed governance system, is replaced with the sharing of the leadership process between participating actors and municipalities when SI is used. Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz (2015, 31) highlight that shared leadership is embedded in the collective creation, invention and outlining of new rules between government and citizens. This is supported by Serrat (2017, 696) who contends that to enhance participation in SI, it is fundamental to create suitable "leadership and structures" aimed at rewarding social innovators, as well as to develop structures promoting this (Serrat 2017, 696). Shared leadership is fostered during the participation of citizens in the governance of services, which also empowers them to act (Biljohn and Lues 2019, 146; Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Serrat 2017, 695). Creating leadership structures that would aid in enhancing citizens' participatory capacity could facilitate citizens' empowerment. This highlights the third factor, namely participation in SI structures, which could enhance the participatory capacity of citizens.

Serrat (2017, 697) is of the view that an environment should be created that encourages citizen participation in innovation and, in particular, in SI. This means that existing governance systems will have to be changed to accommodate and encourage citizen participation in SI, a notion which, as mentioned earlier, is consistent with one of the commonalities underpinning the conceptualisation of SI (Biljohn and Lues 2018, 160; Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Serrat 2017, 695). The commonality is concerned with the need to change governance systems so that they allocate goods and services in a way that will meet the needs of citizens (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Serrat 2017, 695). Such an environment can be created by putting in place structures, such as innovation laboratories and incubators, that promote and coordinate SI while simultaneously encouraging the pioneering of new ideas through support and advice (Serrat 2017, 697). Through incubation, new ideas and proposed solutions can be tested in real societal settings or in practice, and learning across a community of citizens and social innovators can be facilitated (Serrat 2017, 697).

The fourth factor that is critical to enhancing citizens' participatory capacity during SI implementation is the collaborative sharing of strategies and solutions. This factor is important to attain common goals, meet basic needs or find an improved way of solving societal challenges (Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz 2015, 31; Moulaert, MacCallum, and Hillier quoted in Estensoro 2015, 531). As regards collaboration, McGuire (2000, 278) and Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2011, 14) contend that the purpose of collaboration is to collectively achieve desired outcomes that cannot be achieved separately. Citizens' input during the collaborative sharing of strategies and solutions in relation to service delivery challenges should therefore be recognised as invaluable to the use of SI (Serrat 2017, 693). Collaboratively sharing strategies and solutions and striving to attain common goals so as to find improved ways of solving societal challenges appear to render this factor consistent with another commonality highlighted earlier as underpinning the use of SI, namely changing governance systems in order to allocate goods and services to meet needs (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Serrat 2017, 695). Solutions that have the potential to address societal challenges are enriched by the participation and contribution of citizens with diverse backgrounds and concerns who are involved in negotiating the advantages and risks of such solutions as well as taking part in their testing (Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 153). These contributions of citizens can be regarded as important and even invaluable in terms of the joint ownership and implementation of new solutions (Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 153). Joint ownership of new solutions is attained through the development of a common understanding between citizens and other participating actors concerning the motives behind new innovative solutions that could mitigate resistance against implementation, and the collective mobilisation and exchange of resources (Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 153).

Citizen Participation in Service Delivery through Social Innovation: Its Significance for South Africa

Alleviating poverty, “allaying the frustration” of minority groups, addressing the lack of or exclusion from opportunities to improve living conditions, “tapping into societal capacity for social action,” and “optimising knowledge” are among the global societal challenges of the twenty-first century (Moulaert et al. 2014, 2; Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 6; Serrat 2017, 691–92). These challenges are experienced in various degrees of intensity within “communities, towns, provinces, regions and countries” worldwide (Serrat 2017, 691–92), and South Africa is no exception. Finding solutions to these challenges obliges public sector organisations to rethink and transform how they engage with society and how public sector service delivery is governed (Pepper and Sense 2014, 874). Implicit in this transformation is that public sector organisations, including municipalities, are compelled to facilitate participation opportunities for citizens. Among these opportunities are (i) influencing service delivery decision-making processes and (ii) influencing resource allocation to direct and shape individual development as well as the collective future development of communities, cities, and towns (Moore and McKee quoted in Farmer et al. 2015, 65; Bekkers, Edelenbos, and Steijn quoted in Matei, Săvulescu, and Antonovici 2015, 6; The Presidency 2011, 292). Citizen participation, which could be considered a direct consequence of addressing societal challenges in the twenty-first century, has become a requirement in contemporary governance systems (all levels of government but more specifically municipalities) to remain responsive to citizens’ service delivery needs. Therefore, public sector organisations have developed a growing interest in using SI for the purpose of making the governments in developing countries more responsive, strengthening the interface between government and citizens, and understanding and identifying citizens’ preferences and expectations regarding the governance of services (Bhatt, Ahmad, and Roomi 2016, 29; Guillo 2013, 2; Matei, Săvulescu, and Antonovici 2015, 8). It is believed that the participation of citizens during the use of SI results in the development of practices, strategies, actions, and processes that aid in offering satisfactory solutions to what is often a lack of public sector or municipal responsiveness to societal challenges and service delivery needs.

Interest in SI has grown and it is attracting the attention of public policy-makers around the world (Kim et al. 2015, 170) who deem SI suitable to facilitate more direct, active and continuous citizen participation in the governance of service delivery (Guillo 2013, 2; Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 6). Contrary to the global interest in the use of SI, its utilisation as a sustainable solution appears to be still unexplored in South Africa’s national government policy documents and the service delivery practices of the country’s municipalities. This lack of interest is disconcerting considering (i) the societal challenges confronting South African citizens, (ii) the lack of government and municipal responsiveness to citizens’ service delivery needs, and (iii) the need to enhance South African citizens’ capacity to participate in service delivery. Given the need for municipalities to strengthen and enhance citizen participation in and

consultation about service delivery (Mayekiso, Taylor, and Maphazi 2013, 187; Mofolo 2016, 231), exploring SI as a sustainable solution could be significant for South Africa for three reasons.

The first reason relates to the development of an active citizenry as highlighted in the NDP (The Presidency 2011, 26). The use of SI in the South African context to develop an active citizenry could be considered consistent with the development of a socially cohesive environment as highlighted in the NDP, which identifies an active citizenry together with leadership and effective government as fundamental to the country's development (The Presidency 2011, 26). Additionally, the NDP emphasises the importance of developing critical capabilities that are needed to transform society (The Presidency 2011, 26). It could therefore be reasoned that citizen participation is underpinned by (i) having access to participatory opportunities created by government or municipalities and (ii) having the capacity to participate meaningfully. Conversely, the optimal use of SI in service delivery requires the meaningful participation of citizens, which will only be achieved if citizens have the capacity to participate. In this regard, municipalities play a critical facilitation role to enhance this participatory role of citizens when SI is used in service delivery. This is based on the premise that municipalities (i) are the primary providers of services that will meet the basic needs of citizens and (ii) are responsible for developing the geographical area or territory they govern (Ndevu and Muller 2017, 13, 14; Reddy 2016, 4). Hence, municipalities should act in collaboration with citizens to advance development within their territories (The Presidency 2011, 37).

The second reason relates to South African citizens' discontent with municipal service delivery as expressed through service delivery protests since 2004 (Mayekiso, Taylor, and Maphazi 2013, 187; Nene 2016, 20; Twala 2014, 159, 161). These protests about the lack of or poor delivery of basic services highlight the slow pace of service delivery reform, citizens' discontent about not being listened to, and complaints from citizens that municipalities are not responsive to some of the societal challenges that citizens experience (Nene 2016, 20; The Presidency 2011, 37; Twala 2014, 163). The feelings of discontent appear to be exacerbated by participatory service delivery processes that have become mere formalities and are driven by achieving legislative compliance. Citizens are excluded from meaningful participation and develop an over-dependence on government in general, and municipalities' capabilities to deliver services diminish (The Presidency 2011, 275; Tshoose 2015, 18).

The NDP (The Presidency 2011, 55) points out that, given the service delivery protests, the state has the responsibility to create platforms that are more accessible to citizens for raising their concerns. In practice, however, there appears to be a disconnection between what is proposed in terms of an active citizenry in the NDP and the current interface between citizens and municipalities in respect of citizens' participation during the stages of the service delivery cycle (i.e. planning, design, delivery, and evaluation). In light of this, the use of SI in service delivery offers municipalities a mechanism to

facilitate opportunities for citizens to raise concerns prior to the initiation of service delivery actions and decisions, in that way strengthening the interface between municipalities and citizens. Having these opportunities allows citizens to act in partnership with their municipality in understanding and identifying solutions to citizens' service delivery needs. Using SI in service delivery therefore appears to promise a sustainable solution (a notion that is supported by Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015, 5) that could address South African citizens' concerns regarding municipalities' lack of responsiveness to their service delivery needs. Moreover, it is the application of SI to real societal challenges experienced by citizens through social change that contributes to its suitability and sustainability as a solution (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010, 49).

The third reason why the use of SI in service delivery is of significance to South Africa is that citizen participation in service delivery is fundamental to municipalities' operations as they are the custodians of developing their territories. In this regard, Ndevu and Muller (2017, 20) highlight the importance for municipalities to engage communities in their jurisdiction concerning issues pertaining to service delivery. This engagement is inherent in developmental local government, which, according to the 1998 South African *White Paper on Local Government*, aims to find sustainable solutions to the material, economic, and social needs of citizens (Kahn, Madue, and Kalema 2016, 306; Mayekiso, Taylor, and Maphazi 2013, 187). The use of SI by municipalities is thus a tool that could be applied to encourage collaboration between municipalities and citizens in finding sustainable solutions. Through the use of SI, citizens' capacity to exercise control over development in their area is enhanced (Van Dyck and Van den Broeck quoted in Estensoro 2015, 530).

Hence, from a territorial development perspective, which would apply to municipalities, the foci of the use of SI appear to be threefold (Estensoro 2015, 529). In the first place, SI would be aimed at satisfying the basic needs of citizens (Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Gonzalez, Moulaert, and Martinelli quoted in Estensoro 2015, 529; MacCallum et al. 2009; Moulaert and Ailenei 2005; Serrat 2017, 695). In the second place, SI would result in the collective empowerment of citizens and local actors, which culminates in the development of a collective vision that propels change and development in an area (Gonzalez, Moulaert, and Martinelli quoted in Estensoro 2015; Jessop et al. quoted in Estensoro 2015, 529; Garcia and Haddock, 2016, 400; Moulaert and Nussbaumer 2008). Lastly, the nature of social and power relationships among citizens and between citizens and government or municipalities is transformed, which results in new governance relations that are more open (Estensoro 2015, 529-30; Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Hilvert and Swindell 2013, 250; Serrat 2017, 695). These three foci appear to resonate with the three commonalities underpinning the conceptualisation of SI as highlighted earlier in this article (Biljohn and Lues 2019, 146; Garcia and Haddock 2016, 400; Marques, Morgan, and Richardson 2018, 500; Serrat 2017, 695; Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 843). It could be reasoned that these foci should become the drivers of the facilitation role that municipalities would assume when using SI to develop the capacity of citizens to participate in service delivery.

A Facilitator Role for South African Municipalities

The facilitation role of municipalities appears to commence with the mobilisation of citizens and other societal actors when SI is used in service delivery (Moulaert, MacCallum, and Hillier quoted in Estensoro 2015, 530). A recurring theme highlighted in the literature is the participation of citizens when SI is used to meet basic needs (first focus area) and to address societal challenges through service delivery. Citizens, together with other societal actors, are therefore indicated as relevant stakeholders with whom a municipality interacts in respect of service delivery (Bason 2010; Draai 2016, 147). The participatory capacity of citizens in respect of service delivery is influenced by whether the municipal administration perceives them as customers (in accordance with the theory of new public management, which limits active citizen participation) or partners in the co-production of services (in accordance with the theory of new public governance, which is the current public administration theory) (Linders 2012, 451). Based on this reasoning, it is apparent that the perception of citizens as partners collaborating with the municipality to co-produce services and meet their basic needs sets the tone for their collective empowerment. Collective empowerment therefore becomes a critical factor in developing the participatory capacity of citizens (Bhatt, Ahmad, and Roomi 2016, 36; Leach quoted in Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2011, 14).

Essential to the collective empowerment of citizens (second focus area) is that the municipality should facilitate mutual learning between citizens and participating actors and should constructively manage mutual learning by developing collective skills and new capabilities among actors for collaborative purposes (Moulaert, MacCallum, and Hillier quoted in Estensoro 2015, 530; Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 852). The facilitation and coordination of mutual learning entail a facilitator being the custodian of knowledge management during the participation of actors. Such knowledge management is crucial for (i) creating, (ii) storing and retrieving, and (iii) sharing and applying knowledge (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2011, 16; Alavi and Leidner quoted in Estensoro 2015, 531). Public sector organisations, such as municipalities, should incorporate knowledge creation as fundamental to the use of SI in order to address citizens' service delivery needs (Bekkers, Edelenbos, and Steijn quoted in Matei, Săvulescu, and Antonovici 2015, 6).

Srivastava and Shainesh (2015, 249) contend that knowledge could comprise the "competencies," "skills" and understanding shared between government (service provider) and citizens (service users). During the use of SI, facilitators are therefore seen as enablers of the creation and co-creation of this knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi quoted in Estensoro 2015, 531). Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2011, 16) identify knowledge as an important element underpinning the participatory capacity of citizens for joint action and they describe knowledge as the "currency of collaboration." Knowledge as such is also recognised as social capital that consists of the deliberated, "processed, and integrated values and judgements" of all participants (Agranoff quoted

in Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2011, 16). This notion is also emphasised by Srivastava and Shainesh (2015, 249). Against this background, mutual learning, which underpins the collective empowerment of citizens, could therefore be deemed as another factor critical to developing citizens' participatory capacity.

Further to the above regarding mutual learning and the collective empowerment of citizens is how the use of SI could contribute to fostering willingness among citizens to participate in service delivery as well as to building a trust relationship between citizens and the municipality. A direct link seems to exist between citizens' willingness to participate and their trust in municipalities (Lawton and Macaulay 2014, 76). Trust is therefore indicated as another factor critical to developing the participatory capacity of citizens. High levels of trust are associated with citizens' positive experiences of municipalities' performance in meeting service delivery needs (Draai 2016, 159). Citizens will trust municipalities if they perceive that municipalities respond to their service delivery needs. Thus, in building a relationship of trust that could enhance the participation of excluded as well as participating citizens, it is important to sustain and enhance trust between actors through the creation of informal interactions of a social nature (Westley quoted in Kim et al. 2015, 173).

The use of SI in municipal service delivery creates an environment in which collaboration could be used to stimulate interactions among citizens as well as between citizens and the municipality. Apart from informal interactions, trust can also be established, sustained, and enhanced through the development of a "common frame of understanding" among actors by exchanging knowledge, creating mutually accepted definitions of key ideas, as well as through "joint fact-finding missions" (Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 860). A facilitator should mediate and resolve disputes to ensure constructive problem-solving between actors (Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 860).

Conceptual Framework to Develop Citizens' Capacity to Participate in Service Delivery through Social Innovation

The author of this article has developed a conceptual framework that could be significant in developing the participatory capacity of South African citizens by harnessing critical capabilities that will enable them to contribute to the transformation of society within their immediate municipal environment. If citizens' participatory capacity is developed at a municipal level, they will be able to influence the development agenda within the broader context of South Africa, which is a key priority of the South African NDP (The Presidency 2011, 26). Hence, this conceptual framework (presented in Figure 1) considers drivers that should underpin a municipality's use of SI in service delivery, the facilitator role of municipalities, and factors underpinning citizens' ability to take part in and to adopt an SI, as discussed earlier.

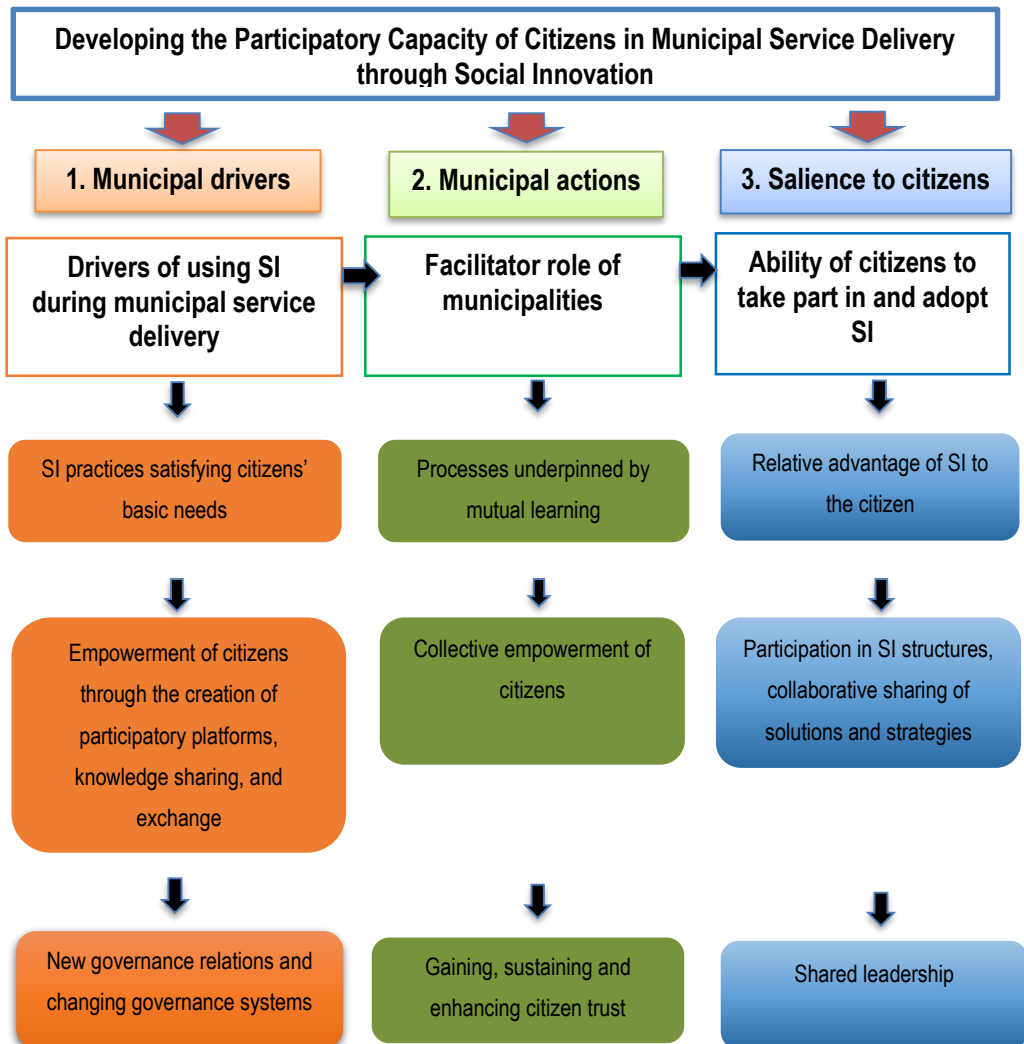


Figure 1: A conceptual framework to develop citizens' capacity to participate in municipal service delivery through social innovation

As illustrated in Figure 1, the drivers that should underpin a municipality's use of SI in service delivery in order to enhance the participatory capacity of citizens should include: (i) SI practices that satisfy citizens' basic needs; (ii) the empowerment of citizens through creating participatory platforms, and sharing and exchanging knowledge; and (iii) new governance relations and a change in governance systems. These drivers require changes within the internal organisational environment of a municipality. It is important to note that these drivers should constitute a municipality's ultimate goals when using SI in service delivery, since they will result in increased opportunities for citizen participation in the different stages of the service delivery cycle. Conversely, these drivers will bring about changes in the governance of service delivery that are

associated with an open governance system in which citizen participation is fundamental to making decisions about service delivery. These drivers should form the foundation of a municipality's role as facilitator to enhance citizens' participatory capacity.

The facilitator role will include (i) applying processes underpinned by mutual learning, (ii) facilitating the collective empowerment of citizens, and (iii) gaining, sustaining and enhancing citizen trust (see Figure 1). The facilitator role involves key actions to develop citizens' participatory capacity—for which the municipality is responsible—and it is predicated on the municipality establishing rapport with citizens and simultaneously developing citizens' capacity to direct service delivery. Through mutual learning, the development of collective skills and new capabilities could contribute to building the citizens' capabilities to co-plan, co-design, co-deliver, and co-evaluate services. Further, developing citizens' capabilities to exercise agency in service delivery could lead to the development of entrepreneurial skills in co-designing and co-delivering services. However, to develop citizens' participatory capacity, a municipality will need to do more than follow the drivers and adopt the role of facilitator. As illustrated in Figure 1, it is equally important to consider citizens' ability to take part in and adopt an SI. This ability of citizens is premised on (i) the relative advantage of the SI to the citizens, (ii) citizens' participation in SI structures and the collaborative sharing of solutions and strategies, and (iii) shared leadership. Thus, these are predicated on whether participation in service delivery is appealing and salient to citizens.

From this conceptual framework it can be deduced that the use of SI requires (i) *drivers* that will serve as the ultimate aims of the use of SI in service delivery, (ii) *actions* from the municipality (e.g. playing a facilitator role) to instigate citizen participation, and (iii) *salience* (e.g. the importance of the SI outcome to citizens affects their ability to participate in and adopt an SI) to make citizens regard participation in service delivery as important and appealing. According to this conceptual framework, the key requirements aimed at developing citizens' capacity to participate in service delivery through the use of SI must be fulfilled in a specific sequence, and they are interrelated and co-exist. Through implementing this conceptual framework, the interface between citizens and municipalities could be strengthened. As such, the framework proposes a sustainable solution to addressing the discontent of citizens about the lack of services and the poor service delivery by some South African municipalities.

Noteworthy about this conceptual framework is the emphasis on the drivers and actions that form the foundation for the municipality's role as facilitator. The actions highlight that the capacity of the municipality should be optimal to develop the capacity of citizens to participate in service delivery. Evident in this conceptual framework is the emphasis on the role of municipalities to facilitate the creation of an environment that is conducive to citizen participation. Given the often hostile climate within which municipalities deliver services and the apathy of citizens towards South African municipalities due to a loss of confidence in municipal service delivery capabilities, it

is now an opportune time to explore SI as a sustainable solution to strengthen the interface between municipalities as service providers and citizens as service users. By applying the proposed conceptual framework, municipalities can develop citizens' capacity to participate in service delivery through SI. However, the success of the application depends on municipalities' institutionalisation of the framework within their practices.

Conclusion

This article has shown how the role that South African municipalities play in developing the capacity of citizens to participate in service delivery through the use of SI could contribute to the building of an active South African citizenry, which the 2030 NDP indicates as a key priority. The role of municipalities in developing citizens' participatory capacity at a municipal level should not be underestimated. Important to realise is that citizens' participatory capacity depends on the capacity of the municipality to play the role of facilitator. Hence, if a municipality's capacity is inadequate for putting in place the drivers and actions proposed in the conceptual framework, it is highly unlikely that the municipality will be able to use SI to develop citizens' capacity to participate in service delivery.

The aim of this article was to explain the use of SI in developing the participatory capacity of South African citizens relating to municipal service delivery. This was achieved by contemplating the relative advantage to citizens of using SI to facilitate their participation in service delivery, discussing the significance that citizen participation in service delivery through SI has for South Africa, and presenting a conceptual framework for developing citizens' participatory capacity relating to municipal service delivery through SI. This article argued that citizens' participatory capacity appeared to be grounded in drivers of the use of SI, actions underpinning the facilitator role of municipalities, and the salience of municipal services to citizens, all of which a municipality had to consider. This article further proposed that the use of SI in municipal service delivery presented a sustainable solution to developing an active South African citizenry that could contribute to the country's development trajectory in a socially cohesive environment.

It is evident that amidst the myriad of growing societal challenges confronting South Africa's citizenry, municipalities can no longer ignore the use of innovative approaches such as SI in delivering their services. The NDP proposes the use of information communication technology to engage with and deliver services to citizens by 2030 (The Presidency 2011, 196), but the achievement of this goal may be out of reach unless the lack of citizen participation in the different stages of the service delivery cycle is addressed within the practices of municipalities.

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