

# **Insurgent citizenship, class formation and the dual nature of a community protest: a case study of Kungcatsha**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter examines a case of community protest in a single town, which we call Kungcatsha<sup>1</sup>, which was rocked by two weeks of violent community protests in the second half of 2009. The protests started when a mass meeting of residents in the local stadium decided to call for a stay-away in protest against the town council's failure to explain to the community what had happened to a missing sum of R30 million. Violence flared up when the police were called in and attempted to disperse protesters with teargas and rubber bullets. Barricades of burning tyres were set up. During the protest, a councillor's house, a community hall, and a library were torched, and the council offices and a new community centre were partially destroyed.

We explore the internal dynamics of the protest movement and its relationship to internal contestations within the local ANC and town council. In brief, we find that the protest movement in Kungcatsha has a dual nature, combining an internal power struggle in the local ANC with a mass movement of aggrieved township residents protesting against corruption, joblessness and the failure to provide municipal services by the local town council. Once the demand of the protesters for the 'recall' of the mayoral committee had been met, the crowds dispersed and the protest leadership were reabsorbed into the ANC, leaving no durable organisation of civil society to continue representing the interests of residents. The protest movement itself is shaped by complex process of class formation and class contestation within the local community and various sites of power, such as the ANC and the town council.

The trajectory of the protest movement in Kungcatsha provides a dramatic instance of the way in which the ANC remains the hegemonic political and social force at a local level, occupying both the political space structured by town-level politics and the broader social space beyond the political domain, preventing the emergence of an autonomous civil society at a local level. These findings are similar to those of Patrick Heller, who ascribes them to the attitudes and orientation of the ANC – namely, its commitment to centralised control and technocratic domination of the state and development, and the autocratic and insulating tendencies derived from its dominant party status. However, our focus on the internal dynamics of protest and the ANC reveal the ways in which this domination over civil society is constructed from below by the agency of local elites and subalterns, rather than by instructions from on high.

Thompson and Tapscott argue that social mobilisation in the global South tends to be oriented towards the attainment of socio-economic rights, and this has become the key dimension 'in the struggle to realise citizenship rights in the South'. In support of this, we draw on James Holsten's work to argue that the protest movement constitutes a form of 'insurgent citizenship' for socio-economic rights against the deprivations of 'differentiated citizenship', but identify a darker side to insurgent citizenship, constituted by xenophobic attacks, patriarchy, patronage networks and

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<sup>1</sup> Kungcatsha is a pseudonym for this town in order to maintain the confidentiality of our informants, given the sensitive and controversial nature of the information they shared with us about corruption and power struggles in this town.

popular violence. Insurgent citizenship, as Holsten argues, does not necessarily struggle only for a democratic expansion of socio-economic rights, but may endeavour to reconstitute differentiation and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion on a new basis.

This chapter concludes with the argument that community protest is shaped by processes of class formation through which a new elite emerges while an expanding class of the unemployed and the poor remains marginalized and excluded. These processes explain the dual nature of the protest movement, the instability and paralysis of the ANC, as well as the way protest movements disappear, leaving no durable organisational legacy, when the protest leadership is reabsorbed back into the ANC.

It is important to note that this case study forms part of a wider study of collective violence in eight different research sites in South Africa, and that these dynamics are similar to those investigated in several of the other sites – to such an extent we believe they can be described as broader trends, notwithstanding considerable local variation. In Kungcatsha, in-depth interviews were conducted over a period of six months with key informants, such as protest leadership, community leaders, the youth, local priests, union members, local councillors, and the mayor, and researchers spent time in taverns, on street corners, in parties and celebrations, and at by-elections observing interactions and engaging in informal discussions.

## **The sequence of events**

### ***The grievances***

A central grievance of the protest movement concerned a sum of R 30 million that was alleged to have been embezzled by councillors and municipal officials sometime before 2008. As one young protester explained, 'What made us fight is we wanted to know how it got lost, who ate it. Whoever ate it must be arrested. So we fought as the community.'

But the anger about corruption was associated with other grievances. Young protesters complained about the declining state of recreational facilities such as parks, the soccer stadium, the swimming pool and the library, corrupt tenders that failed to deliver to the community, the shortage of houses and the lack of jobs, and nepotism in the allocation of what jobs the council was able to offer. The stadium was more like a grazing patch for cattle than a soccer ground, and the mayor had closed down the swimming pool. 'We can't even play soccer. That's why we have turned to drinking,' a group of young men involved in the protests explained. There had been no progress or development in the town since the advent of democracy, and even the amenities that they had enjoyed as children, such as swings in parks, had disappeared.

Kungcatsha is the centre of a farming district, but used also to boast a sizeable textile industry. Both COSATU and the local Democratic Alliance described how the major companies in town had closed operations, leaving high levels of unemployment. Some of the protesters acknowledged their involvement in crime: 'We have nothing to do, that's why we get guns and carry out stick ups,' said one participant.

These grievances suggest the nature of differentiated citizenship, as it is experienced by the residents of Kungcatsha: income poverty is exacerbated by the lack of amenities and housing. In contrast, the elite is able to display its wealth conspicuously in the form of cars, clothes and dwellings. Allegations of the embezzlement of public money serves as a lightning rod for popular frustration. There is a gender dynamic to differentiated citizenship as well. Young men complained about their inability to achieve the ideals of hegemonic masculinity

I want to get married, but I cannot afford lobola because I'm not working.

I hate that guy [a counsellor]. He took my girlfriend. He has money and I don't have money. You can't find a girlfriend if you don't have money.

Their sense of marginalisation was exacerbated by the insults of the mayor, a woman – she had publicly dismissed the protesters as unemployed, unwashed dagga-smoking boys.

### ***The organisers of protest***

About six weeks before the protests, a group of young ANC Youth League activists started planning to mobilise the community in protest about the missing R30 million from the town council. Of the three leaders were interviewed, one was an executive of the SACP and the Youth League, second was a trade unionist and ANC activist, and the third was an engineer who runs a small company in the area. These three leaders played a central role in mobilising the community to protest about the forensic investigation instituted by the provincial government in 2008 into allegations about R30 million that had been embezzled by councillors and municipal officials. The forensic report was never made public or shared with the community. However, for reasons connected to infighting between the mayor and the speaker, the report was leaked, allegedly by the speaker, to members of the ANC Youth League (the truth of the allegations remains murky, as the investigators were unable to find any evidence that the sum actually existed, according to the report). According to one of the protest leaders: 'This was long overdue. We had been talking about service delivery since 2007. Comrades deployed in local government are failing us.' The group met regularly to plan the protests against the mayor and the council, and then started calling public meetings.

About a month after this group started calling public meetings, the municipality introduced a credit control policy to get residents to pay for services, and began cutting off their electricity supply to the houses of defaulters. On a Sunday when the group was addressing a community meeting at the local stadium, the provincial MEC for local government, having heard that there was a possibility of community protest, paid a visit to the town. First, he visited the mayor and promised to assist in getting the municipality's affairs into order. Then he met with the protest leaders, who left the public meeting and went to a community hall to hold discussions with him. While they talked, the people in the stadium were getting restless. According to one of the protest leaders: 'They felt we took too long. They marched to the hall to demand water and electricity.' At this stage, the MEC went back to the mayor and instructed that the electricity should be restored. However, when he reported back to the people in the stadium, 'They felt they couldn't wait, and called for a stay-away and for barricades to be erected, but no burning'.

But the violence started the same day, after the police were called in. The protest leaders placed the blame for this squarely at the door of the police. As one protest leader puts it: 'People would

converge in public; the police would fire teargas. It made the people wild. Then the cops started shooting some and arresting others. That made people angry.' As a result, the library, a community hall, a municipal office, and the house of a senior councillor were burnt down. A man was shot dead looting a shop behind the library, some say by the police and some say by the Asian shopkeeper.

A week into the protests, residents of Kungcatsha marched from the township into the town to present a memorandum to the council. Some protesters started to smash the windows of municipality offices and tried to set cars belonging to the council alight. The police fired at the crowd with rubber bullets, and protesters ran amok, looting street vendors' goods, throwing stones and missiles at the police and barricading roads with stones and dustbins. After this episode, groups of youths took to erecting barricades across the regional road that bypasses the township, "tolling" the road by demanding R 20 from each motorist.

Violent clashes continued between young men and the police for about three weeks, with scores injured and others arrested for public violence. According to young men who had participated in the violence, it was the police conduct that angered them, and persuaded them to demand that all councillors stand down. The protests ended when a team of senior ANC leaders arrived in the town and announced that the mayor and her mayoral committee would resign .

Protesters saw themselves using the destruction of property to communicate their grievances to those in authority beyond the town: 'Actually, when we fought, we were sending a message to the top, to Nelspruit (the provincial capital) that they must come and address our problems'. This comment suggests that collective violence is seen by the protestors as a means of forcing the powerful office bearers to acknowledge the dignity and legitimacy of the powerless and hear their collective demands.

Insurgent citizenship in the Kungcatsha protests was defined by its claim for work opportunities and housing, for an improvement in municipal services, and to be heard and recognised. The repertoires of protest in Kungcatsha resemble those that were used in the struggle for full citizenship rights against the racially closed citizenship defined by apartheid, and the protesters in post-apartheid South Africa explicitly claim the rights of democracy and citizenship.

### ***Divisions in the ANC***

The protest movement in Kungcatsha arose in the context of a deeply divided local ANC. The division between the mayor and the speaker of the council ran deep, to the extent that they no longer spoke to each other. According to several informants, it was the speaker who had leaked the forensic audits into the missing R 30 million to the protest organisers. According to members of a Fraternal Committee of community elders who attempted to persuade the national head office of the ANC to intervene, the tension between mayor and speaker had paralysed the ANC at local level, making it unable to respond to the protests.

The tension was not simply a personal matter. One of the protest organisers said that it was clear the speaker wanted to oust the mayor: "He was planning that, once she is out, I'm in as a mayor. He was using people, making promises: 'I will give you tenders, jobs.' Unfortunately for him, the anger was directed towards him in particular." In fact, the speaker's house was burnt down in the protests. The speaker in turn alleged that his house was burnt down by "comrades [who] are positioning

themselves for elections in 2011".

The speaker was not the only councillor associated with the protests. Another was a man who, in the 1980s, had headed a local vigilante group sponsored by the apartheid security forces to disrupt and target the popular anti-apartheid movement. He was clearly a powerful figure in the community, as he became an independent councillor and then joined the ANC. He had played a part in generating discontent with the mayor, and a focus group of young protesters made clear their allegiance to him:

He is the only councillor we won't harass. Some people said during the protests that we must also burn down his house. We said no. He is our guy. They won't touch him. There is nothing he should be punished for.

But according to the mayor's bodyguard, it was this man and his former fellow vigilantes who were the main problem in the ANC:

They no longer had influence in the community so they decided to join ANC. The goal was to take over the ANC, to take over government. People were dreaming of riches.

Although the protest leadership ultimately appeared not to be aligned with the two councillors, they were themselves members of the ANC and the ANC Youth League, and one was a member of the SACP. They represented a distinct grouping within the ANC which stood in opposition to the mayor, the speaker and their allies. There was also a history of ANC Youth League mobilisation in protest against the leadership of the town council – we were told such protests had taken place in 2006, 2007 and 2008, and that the forensic audit simply added ammunition to an ongoing campaign. Whether previous protests had been led by the same group as organised the 2009 protests is not clear; but other activists noted that some of the protest organisers, and in particular Mokoena<sup>2</sup>, had been very much 'part of the gang' running the council, profiting from tenders, until they had had a fallout of some sort. Mokoena himself, member of the ANC and the SACP, and one of the sharpest dressers in town, was unabashed about his ambitions:

I go into people's offices and demand something. I force my way in. I am a loyal and dedicated member of the ANC. I am not after positions. I am not an opportunist. I will defend the National Democratic Revolution. But I also believe I am entitled to a portion of the country's wealth.

It is clear from these interviews that the Kungcatsha town council, and the ANC which dominates it, form power centres around which local elites circle, seeking access to the resources, in the form primarily of salaried jobs and business tenders, that enable self-enrichment and feed patronage networks. In other words, the ANC and the town council forms sites of class formation, where a new black elite can access the resources that signify status as well as enable them to engage in petty accumulation. The opportunities for upward mobility are necessarily somewhat limited in a small town, especially one in which industry is in decline. The result is an intense competition within the elite for access to these opportunities, and the power to dispense them to associates. Some, such as the former vigilante, are able to reinvent themselves in order to gain access to the opportunities. The cost of failure is high: the mayor, who had always lived in an RDP house, was in the process of building a five room double story home when she was deposed. It is unlikely she will

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<sup>2</sup> This is a pseudonym to protect the identity of this informant

be able to complete the building. The intensity of competition, the importance of the stakes, and the consequences of failure, may explain the instability of networks and alliances, and may also explain the high levels of violence that attends these struggles.

These struggles within the elite played no small part in the mobilisation of protests against the town council. For some factions within the ANC, community protest provided an opportunity for engaging in struggle within the ANC to reconfigure power relations and gain access to council resources. Such dynamics are absent from the analyses of Heller and accounts of social movements in post-apartheid South Africa and, we suggest, provide a different perspective on relations between social movements, civil society and the state.

### ***Protest leaders and the mobilisation of the community***

Amongst the protest leaders there were diverse motivations, with some regarding protest as an opportunity to oust their opponents in the town council and reconfiguring power relations in the ANC so as to gain, or regain, positions of power and access to lucrative council business, while others appeared to be genuinely concerned to challenge corruption and incompetence. Protest leadership were mobilising popular anger, and there was a tension between the subaltern crowds who were protesting against corruption and for improved material conditions and services by attending mass meetings and marches, and engaging the police in street battles, and those in the leadership who were pursuing their own agendas. The subaltern crowds were well aware of these agendas. In the words of some of the protesters:

It is not service delivery, but people are just fighting for tenders, but using the community to do so.

Some of the leaders were angry that they were no longer getting tenders and then they decided to mobilise the community against the municipality.

This cynicism about the motivations of the leadership did not undermine popular mobilisation, however; as one participant said: 'I have never seen such a big march in the history of the township—everyone was there'. This shows that the protest movement was constructed through the agency of both the protest leaders – what Tilly calls 'political entrepreneurs' – who use community members to fight their political battles, and the protesting crowds, who strategically use political entrepreneurs to present their grievances to relevant offices because of their access to local politics. The protest movement in Kungcatsha thus had a *dual character*, representing the struggle of an ANC faction to shift power relations and gain access to the opportunities and resources of the town council, and simultaneously a mobilisation by the poor over their grievances about corruption, local amenities, municipal services, housing and jobs. This dual character created a tension at the heart of the protest movement, shaped by contrasting processes of class formation – on the one hand, intense competition over access to positions within the rising elite, and on the other the struggles of an expanding class of poor against their marginalisation from both wage income and the public goods represented by municipal amenities and services.

### Is this ***Aftermath***

The aftermath of violent protest is as important for understanding the protests and the social forces that shape them, as the origins and dynamics of the protests themselves. In Kungcatsha, after two

weeks of violent protest during which the ANC resisted calls from the community to intervene, a high profile ANC national team arrived and announced the recall of the entire six-member mayoral executive. Three weeks after the this announcement three ANC members, drawn from the organisers of the protests, were sworn in as replacements for the three proportional representation PR councillors who had stepped down.

The remaining three vacancies were for ward councillors, which required that by-elections be held. In terms of the law, by-elections need to be held within 90 days, but this process in Kungcatsha took more than four months as there was a power struggle over candidates nominated by the protest leadership and candidates who were seen as representatives of the previous council. In the end the protesters won as their preferred candidates, some of whom had led the protests, won the nomination contests. On the day of the by-elections, one of the protest leaders told us: "Today is like the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994. The people of Kungcatsha are happy to come and vote for their leaders. This is the democracy that we fought for". This is a powerful statement for this protest leader to compare the by-elections with the first democratic elections ever held in South Africa, in 1994. He said,

Look there, look that side. It is early in the morning, but people are already queuing. This is massive comrade. The people of Kungcatsha have come out in numbers to choose their leader.....The masses have spoken through their mass action last year and now they will exercise their democratic right to vote for their leader.

There was a massive turnout on the day of by-elections. It seemed as if the protests had raised the political consciousness in this community. Some interviewees made reference to the Bill of Rights, including the right to protest and to get services, such as access to clean water, housing, electricity, health and education. Overall, the elections were seen as a triumph for the protest leadership as all their candidates won. 'The masses have spoken', said one of the interviewees. In many of the interviews, there was a sense of collectiveness, oneness, pride, excitement and happiness that the will of the people had prevailed. Interviewees drew on both human rights and democratic discourses to justify their violent protests against what they considered to be an incompetent and corrupt council.

You see the protest has paid off that we are now here voting for own people

Yeah, we are happy to be voting for our own leaders.

However, the interviewees asserted that, 'it is not guaranteed that violence would not happen again'. The protestors' hopes were that the new leadership would fulfil all their election promises, but they would resort to violence if they fail to do so. An important aspect to be noted here is that many members of this community (especially the youth) now felt that the use of violence was a solution to all their problems. One participant said, "Violence is the language that this government knows. Look we have been submitting memos, but nothing was done. We became violent and our problems were immediately resolved. It is clear that violence is a solution to all problems".

### ***Civil society***

Many commentators have hailed the wave of recent 'service delivery protests' as a sign of the re-energisation, or re-emergence, of civil society. The reality in Kungcatsha contradicts this optimism. The protests were profoundly ambiguous, combining mobilisation by protest leadership whose goal was to reconfigure power relations in the ANC and the council, with a mass movement galvanised by popular grievances such as lack of housing, water, jobs and so forth. Once the protests had achieved success with the disbanding of the mayoral committee, the crowds disappeared, re-emerging as queues of voters in the by-elections, while the leadership was reabsorbed into the ANC, where it engaged in fierce struggles to ensure its candidates were the ones who filled the vacant council positions.

The protest movement, which had appeared so vibrant and broad-based, rapidly disappeared, leaving no durable popular organisation which could occupy the space of civil society and continue representing the concerns and grievances of the poor and marginalised residents of the township. Put another way, the protest movement did not give rise to a social movement.

After the by-elections, a bitter struggle ensued amongst leaders of the protest movement as some were absorbed into the council while others were excluded. Some among the excluded protest leadership feel that they were used by those who were able to enter the council at the end of the community protest. One said, "We are planning a second war against this council because like the previous council they are failing our people".

### ***Class formation***

The transition to democracy has unleashed profound and violent forces of class formation that are shaping much of social life in communities, generating dislocation, contestation over status and hierarchy, fundamental instability in the ANC, undermining and weakening the local state, and producing a 'precarious society' characterised by embedded cycles of violence.

Local community life is marked by the formation of two major active classes—the rapid formation of a new elite which monopolises positions of power, privilege and control over resources in the state and local business, and the formation of a precarious class of the poor composed of those who have been expelled from work or have never experienced work, those engaged in informal survival activities, as well as the working poor in the growing zone of casualised and precarious work.

At the other end of the class spectrum is the rapid formation of the new elite. Local (and other levels of) government provide the primary base for elite formation, because the combination of political power with control over considerable resources makes a transaction between political status and commercial profit relatively easy. Salaries from high-level jobs in the local town council, the power to distribute both high- and low-level council jobs, as well as the opportunities for business with council, and the patronage networks that link the two, are key mechanisms in the formation of the elite, especially in small towns such as Kungcatsha with limited employment opportunities.

### ***The ANC: instability and paralysis***



The rapid class formation of the new elite and the fierce internal struggles this entails, take place around and within the ANC as the dominant political organisation and the one which mediates relations between society and state. The result is a profoundly unstable ANC which at the same time exists in a state of profound paralysis. In the struggle for power and access to resources, networks and factions form, compete and reform.

Instability is reinforced by the duality between the ANC in government and its continued existence as a powerful force outside of government retaining some of its vibrancy as a liberation movement. This duality plays as well into ambiguous government authority structures. While the mayor of Kungcatsha, was senior to the speaker and the town manager at the local level, they outranked her politically in the ANC through their membership of higher structures. At the same time, it was rumoured that the mayor had been put in place, and was protected, by an MEC at provincial level. The result was an organisation with multiple centres of power, paralysed by the interlocking nature of these centres of power and the accommodations and compromises between them, and by the struggles and alliances between different factions at different levels. The ambitions of the protest leadership, both before they gained access to the council and afterwards, exacerbated this instability and paralysed the local state even further, which in turn may reproduce or deepen the inequalities of differentiated citizenship, providing a stimulus for further insurgent citizenship mobilisation, and reproducing cycles of violence in the town.

The ANC constitutes the primary site for local class formation and the struggles it generates. This can be a brutal and vicious process. In Kungcatsha, the first mayor elected in 1995 was assassinated shortly after his election; the man chosen by the ANC to replace him was killed on the day of his nomination. A former mayor claims to have survived a number of attempts on his life. The recently deposed mayor, with the longest record of service at six years until she was ousted in the protests, survived 13 attempts on her life according to her bodyguard. Violence appears to have become endemic in the internal struggles over council positions. The counsellor whose house had been burnt down threatened revenge against those who he believed were responsible. Another candidate during by-elections reported getting threats like “is your house insured”.

## **The darker side of insurgent citizenship**

There is a tendency in the literature to adopt a fairly narrow focus on social movements as formal organisations with formally articulated demands directed towards the state, and on this basis assume that the conception of citizenship manifested by such organisations is a progressive and democratic one. Our research into the more inchoate and informal dynamics of protest movements, and at the ‘crowds within crowds’ suggests that the conceptions of citizenship finding expression through them are more ambiguous and contradictory, echoing the work of **Holsten**. We identify a darker side to insurgent citizenship, one that includes hostility to women, the assertion of patronage networks, xenophobia, and the reproduction of cycles of violence.

### ***Marginalization of women leaders***

In Kungcatsha, the mayor who was recalled was a woman. It is official ANC policy to increase the number of women in leadership positions in government structures. However, some of the young male protesters were adamant that they could not be ruled by a woman, because women made poor leaders, being incapable and 'stubborn'. These young male protesters related angrily how the mayor had publicly dismissed them as 'unemployed, unwashed boys who smoke dagga' and so her removal as the mayor was justified.

Threats of violence were also directed at other women in leadership. For example, the woman councillor elected in one of the ward by-elections was unpopular with the protest leadership because of her association with some member of the previous council. Several informants, especially young males, expressed very sexist views in relation to her: *Asibafuni abafazi* (translation- we don't want women).

The female councillor's daughter mentioned: "Girls and women are scared to go to ANC meetings due to high levels of violence in some of the meetings". As argued above, differential citizenship is clearly shaped by differential experiences of gender, masculinity and power: many of the male informants told us that women easily get jobs in the council by having sexual relationships with male councillors, and they also complained bitterly about male councillors who drive flashy, expensive cars, have money and as a result, are able to attract their girlfriends. They expressed a sense of envy and powerlessness due to lack of job opportunities to achieve the ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

Insurgent citizenship in this context provides an avenue for disempowered young men reassert their power against elite women and men. Insurgent citizenship makes claims that expand the realm of democratic rights while at the same time reproducing gender oppression in its expression of sexist and misogynistic views which belittle the role of women in public spaces. In this case, insurgent citizenship attempts to overcome one form of differentiation while simultaneously entrenching another form, discrimination against women. This is not surprising, considering the way current forms of differential citizenship undermine the masculinity of young men by denying them the prospect of starting a family; insurgent citizenship then constitutes – among other things – an assertion of masculinity in response.

### ***Citizenship or patronage networks?***

The mobilisation of protest in Kungcatsha, dramatised a claim to be heard as citizens, and a rejection of corruption. Grievances regarding municipal amenities and services, jobs and housing, as well as the right to protest, expand the concept of citizenship to include social dimensions. However, the ambition of some of the protest leaders to themselves gain access to the town council and opportunities it presents for self-enrichment, carries the danger of undermining a notion of rights-based citizenship by strengthening the salience of patronage networks in relation to politics. Supporters packed ANC branch meetings to ensure that the candidates of the protest movement were elected as councillors. There is little doubt that such supporters would expect to be rewarded in some way, whether with projects, tenders or jobs. Since the resources available to the town council cannot meet everyone's needs, beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of loyalty.

What appears as a struggle for democratic rights and citizen participation may turn out, then, to produce its opposite: the subversion of democracy and participation by practices of patronage and clientism. This is particularly likely if the space of civil society continues to be occupied by the ANC,

preventing the emergence of autonomous citizen organisations.

### ***Xenophobic violence***

In Kungcatsha, shops owned by foreign nationals were burned and their goods were looted during the protest. While we did not explore this aspect of the protests in Kungcatsha, these events were consistent with those in others of our case studies where we did. What is evident is that foreign nationals are seen as easy targets due to their vulnerable and marginalized status. While insurgent citizenship lays claim to socio-economic rights for South African citizens, in some cases it simultaneously deploys violence against foreign nationals in order to exclude them from access to rights and opportunities by enforcing the differentiation between citizens and non-citizens.

Community protests are not the only form that insurgent citizenship takes. In the context of mass poverty and the struggle over livelihoods and resources, a struggle for new forms of differentiation which exclude group seen as competitors—in this case, foreign nationals – may also emerge. This analysis reveals the darker side of the insurgent citizenship too.

## **Conclusion**

This study suggests that class formation was a crucial dynamic shaping the trajectory of protest movement as well as the internal struggles within the local ANC in Kungcatsha. On the one hand a new elite is rapidly emerging, focused on the resources and opportunities presented by the town council; on the other, the long existing strata of the poor and marginalised have been expanding as local industries in the town have closed operations. While the transition to democracy in South Africa has bestowed equal formal citizenship rights on all citizens, these processes of class formation are reinforcing differential citizenship in the form of inequality in access to incomes and public goods. The racial differentiation institutionalised by apartheid is being overlaid by new forms of class differentiation between poor and rich in the community of Kungcatsha.

It is these processes of class formation that explain the dual nature of the protest movement in the town, in which factional struggles on the part of some protest leaders to shift power relations within the local ANC were combined with the struggles of the poor against corruption and for the provision of public goods. There was a tension at the heart of the movement between these two forces, with many among the protesters quite aware of the ambitions and interests of the leaders, but willing to make use of them to address their grievances to powerful authorities beyond the town, just as much as the leaders were making use of mass mobilisation to secure their own positions in the town council.

The dual character of the protest movement became particularly visible in the aftermath of the protest, when the national leadership of the ANC enforced the resignation of the mayoral committee, the crowds dispersed and the protest leadership were reabsorbed into the ANC where they engaged in fierce battles to fill the vacant positions with their own candidates. Sections of the crowd reemerged, then, as a newly recruited mass membership in some of the branches, where they supported the protest candidates, and then as voters in the queues on the day of the by-elections.

The alliance between the protest leaders and the mass of protesters shows itself to be an unequal one, since the mass of the poor lacks an autonomous organisation of its own through which it can continue to press the issue of social citizenship; instead, the protest leadership shift focus onto internal power struggles in ANC and the contest for positions in the council. Nonetheless, the agency and autonomy of the protesters remain visible in the confident threats that they will return to the streets if their new representatives fail to honour their promises.

The study demonstrates the way in which, in Kungcatsha, the local ANC dominates not only the political terrain, but also the social terrain defined by civil society. This is consistent with the conclusions reached by Heller. But while Heller's explanation emphasises the centralised, technocratic and autocratic character of an ANC which shoulders aside civil society and shuts down the space for democratic participation from below, our study reveals the ways in which both local elites and subaltern groups actively constitute the ANC as a network that fills most social spaces in the township, precluding the formation of an autonomous civil society.

The ANC, it seems absorbs everything, and everything takes place within it. It is the place that the local elite, activists, those with organisational ability, the talented and the ambitious congregate, both because it is the centre for accessing local opportunities and because of its linkages into broader regional and national networks. Likewise, subaltern groups mobilise within and through the ANC and its networks rather than locating themselves beyond it and organising autonomous citizen associations. The struggle between subalterns and elites is located within political society, rather than within civil society – and is therefore absorbed into political society rather than constituting a challenge from without.

The role of popular agency from below in constituting this expanded political society provides insight into the continued dominance of the ANC over local civil society in the post-Mbeki era. Heller's research refers to the period from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, when President Thabo Mbeki was able to consolidate centralised technocratic control over the ANC. Under President Jacob Zuma, centralised control has been shattered by open internal struggles between different factions; if centralised control was what narrowed the space for civil society there would now be considerable potential for a flowering of autonomous associations. Instead, the contestation between factions for power as well as the mobilisation of popular discontent continues to take place through the ANC, reproducing in the process the practices of patronage and clientelism. As Partha Chatterjee suggests, in the postcolonial world political society and civil society may not obey the neat demarcations of Western theory.

This may be a reason why violence remains endemic both in intra-elite struggles as well as in subaltern struggles for voice. Notwithstanding the democratic constitution and institutions, single party dominance means that neither intra-elite struggles nor subaltern challenges are decided at the ballot box. Rather, these struggles are settled by the mobilisation of power within the ANC networks – and violence is one way of shifting power relations.

In Kungcatsha, no local leadership is willing to occupy a space outside the ANC. As a result, the ANC is highly unstable as different factions move in and out of power, and at the same time it is paralysed by the struggles between them. As a further result, this instability and paralysis permeates the town council. The weakening of the council undermines its ability to provide the public goods demanded

by the community, inviting further rounds of protest.

It cannot be said that all ANC cadres and every individual among the protest leadership was concerned only about their own interests and self-enrichment. Several appeared to be genuinely committed to ending corruption and improving the delivery of services and public goods; however, the ongoing cycle of poor performance by the council suggests structural impediments – not only the instability generated by the struggle over access to positions, but also the inadequacy of financial and technical resources in the face of the overwhelming poverty and unemployment of the township and the region. Thus, even where new councillors endeavour to improve performance residents remain frustrated.

As Thompson and Tapscott argue in the case of social movements in the global South more generally, the protest movement in Kungcatsha constitutes a struggle for expanded socio-economic citizenship. We draw on the concept of insurgent citizenship to explore the meaning of citizenship claims manifested by the protest movement. Community protests challenge the poverty, rightlessness and lack of voice of the poor, by claiming rights to work and housing, basic services from the local municipality, an end to the misuse of public money, the accountability of politicians and officials, and the right to be heard. The democratic and human rights enshrined in the constitution are used as reference points. This is the content of insurgent citizenship's challenge to differential citizenship.

However, we argue that its progressive and democratic dimension is bound up with a darker side, in the form of patriarchal prejudices, the reinforcing of practices of patronage, xenophobic attacks that accompany protest, and the reproduction of repertoires of political violence. Such protest movements do not represent only an unambiguous struggle of the poor for democratic rights, but bear as well the weight of local power relations, prejudices and oppressive practices. Popular agency, in other words, may as well be mobilised by local demagogues and violent elites as by progressive forces. Popular protest carries the potential for diverse and contrasting future trajectories.

Endnotes