

# Role of citizen participation in the formation of city

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Hailed as one of the best examples of collaborative urban management practices between the local government and informal traders. In a post-apartheid South Africa, there was a national desire to transform the old systems of governance, which in Warwick translated to city government institutions making an effort to include informal traders in the policy making and management processes. The main aim was to promote inclusive urban planning and design.

**Keywords:** Citizen Participation, Urban Renewal

### Introduction

This paper is a survey of a successful initiative by city officials that was people-centred and inclusive of all the relevant stakeholders. Using existing literature, it seeks to examine the history of Warwick Junction and the challenges that it inherited as a result of this history. Existing case studies will give a detailed understanding of the processes followed in order to make a success of this initiative. This is a project which has received a lot of attention locally and internationally, it is a current talking point with regards to the role of citizen participation in governance.

The Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project was organized in response to inefficient, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions that developed at the primary transport node located in the South African city of Durban. The need for

the project stemmed from urban management and design issues that resulted from increased taxi and street trading activity.

The project leaders recognized an opportunity to engage the local street traders in developing the redesign. Historically, the street traders were regarded as a nuisance and leaders controlled the situation by exclusion or severe limitation of these activities, using police force when deemed necessary. This was a new approach in management that explicitly sought to include street traders in the redesigning of the site rather than removing them.

Street trading activities are dynamic making them difficult to manage as a homogenous entity. The traders represented diversity in their backgrounds and their needs for space. For example, traditional medicine traders needed concrete to chop their plant products on and mealies (corn on the cob) cooks needed a safe place to have a fire. The diversity of stakeholders required integrated, area-based development in which the management and planning was decentralized. The project was to adopt a sector-by-sector approach.

### Historical Background

#### Group Areas Act

Group Areas Act was the title of the three Acts of the parliament of the Nationalist government in South Africa. The Acts allocated racial groups to different residential and business districts in urban areas in a system of urban "apartheid". Apartheid (in South Africa) was a policy or system of segregation or discrimination economically or politically based on an individual's race. The aim of these laws was to oppress and exclude black people from residing in the developed areas, which were exclusive to the white

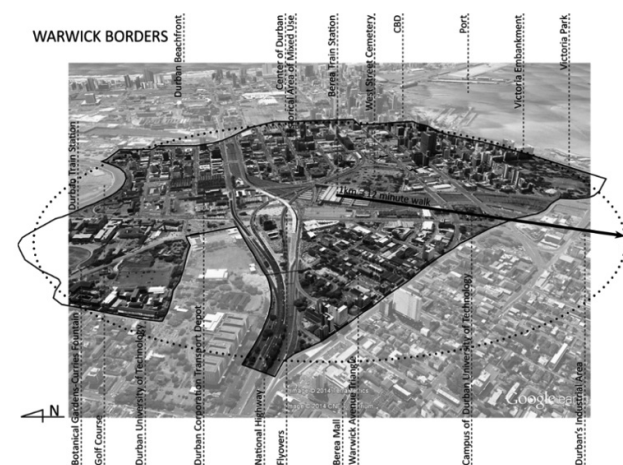


Fig. 1. Site and Surroundings

Reference: <https://africanurbanspace.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/warwick-borders.png>



**Fig. 2.** Black nannies were prohibited from using the “White only benches” in public Areas during the apartheid era  
Reference:<http://www.aamarchives.org/fileview/category/44-aphartheid.html>

population. This resulted in many black people having to commute long distances in order to have access to employment. The black owned buses were not permitted to enter into the inner city of Durban, thus Warwick became the primary transportation and later informal trading node. Many black people were forcibly removed from their native lands and were relocated to smaller areas (forced township settlements such as KwaMashu and Umlazi) in order to allocate the spacious land to the white minority who, in terms of prevailing legislation, comprised a significant part of legitimate land ownership. Pass laws required that black people carry “pass” books (similar to passports) in order to enter the “white” parts of the country.

Historically, Warwick Junction was subjected to marginalization by the Nationalist government, any chance of engagement and deliberation in business between the street traders and the government was severed when the Nationalist government implemented the Group Areas Act in 1950 making it legal to prohibit some people from certain parts of the city based on their race. This was a challenge mainly because the street traders’ livelihood is dependent on access to public space. The Natal Ordinance, introduced in 1973, permitted street traders access to some areas in order to conduct their business but under oppressive conditions. Traders were required to be mobile and were permitted to occupy an area for no more than fifteen minutes each day. They were also restricted to areas that were one hundred meters away from formal businesses.

In 1994, after the first democratic election in South Africa, there was a strong desire for change. The Warwick Junction Renewal Project began during this post-apartheid era. The aim of the project was to address issues such as the lack of services, infrastructure and safety concerns of citizens and traders. This would be achieved through collaborative practices that are centred around the needs and wants of the citizens as well as those of the traders.

## Methods

Although the author herself is very familiar with the site itself and the operations of it within the city, this next section leans heavily on project work carried out by Skinner and Dobson(2009) in response to aggressive moves by the city to obliterate large sections of this market in order to create an inner city mall. This project resulted in the formation of Asiye eTafuleni, meaning “Let us have a round table discussion”, a non-profit and non-governmental organisation that is a platform for deliberation and discussion around the conditions that the traders are faced with as well as plans for sustainable development and good practice in council processes. Through consultative and participative processes. AeT has led various projects and campaigns within Durban to develop informal workers’ working environments and opportunities such as the Inner-city Cardboard Recycling Project and the Markets of Warwick Tour Project, Morris(2015).

The new city administration’s aim was to create a participatory and inclusive environment that works with and not against the interests of the street traders. The variety in products and services offered by the traders meant that it was important to formulate an integrated, area-based intervention. This insured that the solution was not drastic or out of context and would not overlook the needs of the individuals.

The participants from an administrative perspective included urban planners, environmental health professionals and seasoned city officials who had a broader knowledge of the area.

From a citizen perspective, participants included all of the stakeholders in the area: street traders, taxi drivers, landowners, religious organizations, formal shopkeepers, storage companies, cardboard recyclers, and others.

This resulted in the formation of organizations or committees set up by the street traders in order to cater for their specific interests. An Informal Traders Management Board was then founded in order to be the umbrella body that could conduct negotiations with the administrative council and represented specific trader organizations.



**Fig. 3.** Old abandoned motorway repurposed as a “muthi” market

Reference:[http://www.kznia.org.za/sites/default/files/building-images/galleries/Warwick\\_muti-HR-6604-SM%20%5E%5E.jpg](http://www.kznia.org.za/sites/default/files/building-images/galleries/Warwick_muti-HR-6604-SM%20%5E%5E.jpg)

The project adopted a site specific management and local inter-departmental functioning body, in which the participation of all stakeholders at all levels took place. Redesigning the infrastructural components of the market area according to the consultations drastically improved the conditions. It was paramount to create more pedestrian routes, to widen sidewalks, and to alleviate the congestion in the primary trading hubs. The trading areas were paved, trading kiosks with water and electricity were constructed, shelter, storage facilities and ablutions were provided. New spaces for trading were also formulated to cater to the ever growing number of street traders. The infrastructural upgrades and use of existing empty spaces catered to the needs of the traders and contributed towards creating safer, sanitary and less congested public spaces. The participatory and innovative structure utilized in the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project was integral to the success of the renewal of the area and making it an inclusive environment for street traders and the informal economy on the outskirts of Durban's inner city.

The project team was sensitive to the need of creating a market place that is functional for all of the diverse street trader groups. The teams were tasked with site visits in which they would observe the daily activities of the traders. They gathered the baseline data by observing the traders' daily operations, the foot and vehicular traffic and overall process of the market. The teams then consulted the street traders to gain a better understanding of what their needs were and how they operated. The data collected was then used to inform the design teams on the appropriate interventions. Prototyping exercises were performed with life sized models in order to get the traders input before the designs were finalized. These consultations took on many forms, including one-on-one sessions, group sessions, and private sessions for individuals that felt that they could not voice their opinions freely in the company of others. The process was rigorous and a lot of time was allocated to it in order to ensure that adequate input was received.

An example of how these consultations were conducted can be seen in how the mealie cooks and the design team collaborated to lessen the risks associated with building open fires on a crowded sidewalk. Firstly, the project team requested the mealie cooks to demonstrate what the cooking process entailed. Through the use of matchsticks representing firewood, a plastic cup for the large barrels and beans for corn, the cooks simulated their operations. The project team then proposed the use of gas burners because of safety concerns. The cooks were opposed to this idea but were open to performing a demonstration in which they were proven right. This resulted in the design team formulating a better solution which included a safer area to conduct business and a specialized system to contain the fires.

The upgrades in infrastructure ensured that their goods were protected from the elements. They were provided with shelters and access controlled storage facilities which as-



Fig. 4. Warwick Junction, Early Morning Market.  
Reference: everystockphoto.com

sisted them in selling a higher quantity of goods. This strengthened the traders' trust in the city officials that were involved in this initiative.

## Results and discussion

According to the case study conducted by Skinner and Dobson (2009), the administration came together in 2001 and finalized the project and many of the influential people who had been instrumental in seeing this project through left the organization.

In 2004, South Africa was afforded the opportunity to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Many of the street traders were very supportive of this opportunity however this became a challenging issue between the traders and the city officials as most of the street traders were displaced by the city and prohibited from trading in the vicinity of the stadium. This was an effort by the city to "neaten" the image of the city as well as the urban environment prior to the commencement of the event.

Warwick's revitalisation has resulted in economic development and community based tourism opportunities; it continues to create employment and contribute to the local economy. The informal trade turnover in Warwick Junction is said to be R1 billion (approximately 620 million Euros) annually. There are few cases in South Africa or internationally where informal traders have been credited for their participation in revitalizing the city or included in the urban plans and development projects.

The success of Warwick Junction is a clear indication of the importance of involving street traders or citizens in the urban plans in order to promote sustainable livelihoods, address poverty, and unemployment challenges and form democratic, user friendly public spaces that are safer, inclusive and contribute to the vitality of the city as well as urban connectivity.

## Conclusion

1. Warwick Junction has become a prime example of collaborative and "people-centred" governance in South

Africa. The launch of the project in 2001 has resulted in a surge of energy and community activism associated with informal street trading.

2. The “bottom-up momentum”, coupled with infrastructure upgrades like widened sidewalks and storage facilities has resulted in an increase in foot traffic in the markets which is constant due to the number of commuters shuffling through the traders stalls daily. The vibrant atmosphere of the markets has led to more economic development and stability, while also assisting in keeping inner city criminal activities at bay. Although propositions of constructing a shopping mall in Warwick threatened the market in 2009, a number of vigorous local campaigns continue to lobby against such violation and the markets continue to be the preferred alternative, inclusive retail model of Durban.

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