THE ANGST OF THE DEPRIVED: INTERROGATING HUMAN SETTLEMENTS-RELATED PROTESTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has witnessed an upsurge in human settlements-related protests that often turn the streets into perennial spaces of contestations. Using archival data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) from 1997 to 2017 and other sources, this study analysed the ramifications, frequencies and trend of human settlements-related protests and compared indices of service delivery efficiency between South Africa and other African countries. Findings showed that human settlements-related protests have increased in the democratic era, with metropolitan areas forming the epicentres. Indices of service delivery efficiency are higher in South Africa than in other African countries, indicating that protests may not reflect the service delivery situation. Since human settlement-related issues often transcend the purview of local and municipal authorities, an alternative service delivery model that involves communities, local, provincial and national governments is required to bridge the service provision gaps and stem escalating human settlements-related protests.

Keywords: Human settlements, service delivery, public protest, municipal services, post-apartheid South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Civic protests are worldwide phenomena and have remained a veritable and effective way of exacting response from governments to the myriads of challenges confronting the citizens which range from economic, political or service delivery problems. However, the trend of civic protests in post-apartheid South Africa has been alarming, with a considerable number of these protests being or turning violent (Allan and Heese, 2004; Burger, 2009; Davis, 2018; Municipal IQ, 2018). Although civic protests in South Africa cut across different domains, ranging from a hike in consumer prices to political solidarity rallies, the dominant cause of civic protests in post-apartheid South Africa has remained the sheer lack of or inadequate service delivery in human settlements. The term "service delivery protests" has been used narrowly to describe protests that are rooted in inadequate local or municipal services provision or tardiness in service delivery, the responsibility for which lies with the municipalities (Allan and Heese, 2004; Burger, 2009; Kanyane, 2014; Municipal IQ, 2018). Whereas service delivery protests are essentially human settlements-related protestations and contestations, it is important to note that human settlements related protests have wider ramifications and sometimes transcend the functional purview of municipal authorities. Other service delivery issues lying outside the constitutional mandates of the municipalities such as education, housing delivery, safety and security are all related to human settlements. In effect, protests and riots in human settlements, unlike service delivery protests, cut across all tiers of governance and must be viewed against this backdrop. Extant empirical and theoretical works on service delivery in South Africa have mostly cast the problems as municipal service delivery issues, thereby missing the multidimensionality of the problems (Kanyane, 2014; SALGA, 2015; Municipal IQ, 2018), with exception of a few (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Since settlements are the realistic space within which humans live, move and eke out their livelihoods, there is a form of emotional and psychological attachment to this life-dependent space, and hence, issues bordering on the efficient functioning of this activity space usually generate lots of emotions. This explains, in part, the passion, emotion and sensation that attend most human settlement-related protests.

Although the roots of service delivery protests predate the democratic era, governments at all levels in post-apartheid South Africa have been liberal in their promises of a good life, living and livelihoods to the people during and after the apartheid era. The ability of these political office-seekers to deliver on such promises upon election have been constrained by the limited and progressively dwindling resources to meet the already heightened expectations of the people. The inexorable outcome of this mismatch is the frequent outburst of frustration expressed in the form of protests and riots which are often violent (Nembambula, 2015), leading to loss of lives and valuable property on the part of individuals, government and private organizations. The Municipal IQ report released in 2018 noted that 94% of the service protests in the year were violent, raising concerns about the economic, social and environmental costs of civic protests (Municipal

IQ, 2018). The costs of civil protests in South Africa are alarming. Apart from the unenviable characterization of the country as the global capital of civil protests (Baryshev *et al.*, 2014; Nembambula, 2015; Runciman, 2017), the loss in person-hours due to disruption in individual and business activities, wanton destruction of property, injuries and deaths connected with civil protests are enormous.

Civic protests and riots have elicited deserved attention from academics, professionals and policymakers alike. Globally, scholarly efforts have been directed at providing theoretical understanding and empirical evidence on the motivation for civic protests as well as the ramifications and consequences (Gibson, 1991; Battaglini, 2016; Fraser, 2016; Bohler-muller *et al.*, 2017). In the context of South Africa, a substantial body of theoretical and empirical studies that investigate the causes, trends and consequences of public protests exist and the number continues to grow (Allan and Heese, 2004; Burger, 2009; Twala, 2014; Morudu, 2017; Lancaster, 2018). Although a significant number of these studies addressed one area of civic protests or the other, their rather parochial view of the subject from a municipal perspective robs such studies of the opportunity of capturing the equally important aspects of human settlements service delivery that lies outside the constitutional purview of the municipalities. For instance, the quarterly analysis report on service delivery protests produced by Municipal IQ usually excludes national and provincial concerns surrounding policing, higher education and job creation (Municipal IQ, 2018) while focusing on the issues of water, sanitation, markets, refuse removal, and land management. However, protesters are uninterested in whose responsibility it is to provide the services. To them, governments, regardless of their tier and the responsibilities, are to provide life-supporting services. To capture and fully understand human settlements service delivery problems and the associated protests, a broader perspective of the problem that cuts across services provided by different tiers of government becomes necessary. Even for services that are often regarded as municipal responsibility, it is sometimes the case that intergovernmental collaboration is required for the effective delivery of such services.

But whether the frequency and the level of violence that characterize civic protests in South Africa are a reflection of the state of public service delivery remains a debatable issue, especially when protests data in South Africa are compared with other African countries with far less efficient service delivery records. In 2017, a report by Statistics South Africa showed that 84% of the population were connected to the electricity grid; 88% had access to water while 81% of the population could access improved sanitation (Afrobarometer, 2017; Statistics South Africa, 2017). Some scholars, however, believe that grievances, together with the violent outbursts, bordering on service delivery and other issues in South Africa are not linearly related to the efficiency of service delivery in the country (Nembambula, 2015). Rather, they opined that the current civic reactions are direct consequences of the grand, but sometimes unrealistic promises made by politicians during anti-apartheid struggles which are currently falling apart in the face of realistic conditions. Although increased service delivery protests are seen as an indication of a failure of local government, evidence has shown that the reverse is often the case (Allan and Heese, 2004). Rather, municipalities with

rapid economic growth and efficient service delivery attract more population leading to an increase in the population of unemployed and invariably remain the epicentres of service delivery protests. A large proportion of service-related protests are traceable to the ever-growing, poorly serviced or unserviced informal settlements in large metros which are home to armies of unemployed or sometimes employed but poorly paid migrants who were initially attracted by the booming economy of such municipalities.

While the hitherto unreached areas may have benefitted from the service extensions of the post-apartheid era as indicated in a recent service delivery survey (Statistics South Africa, 2017), the quality of service, consistency of supply and uneven spatial distribution of the basic services remain a critical defining factor in human settlements related protests. As Booysen (2007) noted, the improvement in service rollout has not obviated the realities of uneven and often insufficient delivery to disadvantaged communities. This aptly explains why most service delivery protests located in the informal settlements and townships where services are either lacking or delivered in insufficient quantity and quality.

The availability of geographically referenced conflict and civic protests data globally like the ACLED and Municipal IQ's data for South Africa provided an empirical basis for a more rigorous interrogation of protests and riots to gain deeper insight into their occurrence, location, frequencies, actors, goals, motivations and consequences of these protests. Such insights could on the location, spatial and temporal periodicities of civic protest could inform appropriate strategies that can in the prevention or containment of this societal discontent. This study, therefore, attempts to interrogate the socio-spatial dimensions of human settlements service delivery protests in South Africa to analyse the trend, frequencies, ramifications, spatial pattern and the basis for the persistence of protestations in and around human settlements.

PUBLIC PROTESTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Public protests are worldwide practices that allow citizens to ventilate their grievances about certain actions, inactions, decisions and policies by the state or private citizens that affect their lives. In the context of South Africa, public protests, often described as service delivery protest, have become vexed issues as the frequencies have escalated and increasingly becoming violent with concomitant escalating fatalities. To provide a systematic understanding of the concept, origin, frequency, pervasiveness, causes and consequences of public protests, a mass of scholarly works have emerged in the past two decades (Alexander, 2010; Kanyane, 2014; Twala, 2014; Nembambula, 2015; Pointer, 2015; SALGA, 2015; Reddy, 2016; Lancaster, 2018). The origin of public protest in South Africa has remained a contentious issue as many scholars see it as an offshoot of the apartheid era struggle(Friedman, 2013)while others regard it as a post-apartheid expression of disappointment with the political establishment who have failed to match their promises with performance (Booysen, 2007; Pithouse, 2007; Alexander, 2010).

Although the public protests in South Africa cut across every sphere of the national life, a large proportion of the scholarly works on public and civic protests have focused on the service delivery sub-sector (Madzivhandila and Asha, 2012; Motsamai and Munyati, 2012; Afrobarometer, 2017; Morudu, 2017). A critical issue that public protests studies face in South Africa is the appropriate description of the protests. While most scholars prefer to focus on service delivery protests which are essentially driven by the failure of municipalities to provide basic services like water, sanitation, waste removal and electricity, it is increasingly realised that the scope of public protests transcends the issues of municipal service delivery as these only represent an integral part of the larger problem. Hence, nomenclatures such as community protests(SALGA, 2015; Alexander *et al.*, 2018), the rebellion of the poor (Alexander, 2010), and public protests (Nembambula, 2015) to broaden the scope of protestations beyond municipal service delivery and civic protests (Chigwata, O'Donovan and Powell, 2017). As noted by Alexander (2010), service delivery protests are subsets of a broader rebellion of the disadvantaged segment of society. A holistic view of public protests in South Africa as activities that take place within the context of human settlements will provide a robust basis of why citizens protest and the consequences of such protestations for more often than not, motivation for the protest is unclear (Chigwata, O'Donovan and Powell, 2017).

The whys and the wherefores of the public discontent in South Africa remain as diverse as the protests themselves. Vally (2009) produced a long, almost exhaustive list of reasons for public protests which include demand for a wage increase, solidarity, dissatisfaction with high crime rate, resistance to government policy, mobilising of the masses in sympathy with oppressed, service charges, among other reasons. Similarly, Burger (2009) identified dissatisfaction with the delivery of basic services especially in the informal settlements, unemployment, high levels of poverty, inadequate housing, perception of corruption within the governance structures among others as the cause of protests. In his study of why public protests are going violent, Nembambula (Nembambula, 2015) surmised that poor or lack of service delivery, maladministration and political rivalries are the cause of public protests. Adding to this, Atkinson (2007) has cited poor maintenance and management of these services as a major cause of public unrest. Alexander (2010) has argued that in addition to service delivery issues, protests are vehicles that the citizens use to convey their disapproval against uncaring, self-serving, and corrupt leaders of municipalities. While this argument remains valid, it is clear that a large number of protests are directed at governments at other levels, depending on whose responsibility it is to address protesters' grievances. It then follows that misgovernance and corruption at the various tiers of the government are critical drivers of public protests. The lamentations from one of the protestors in the Grahamstown protests of February 2011 captured succinctly the frustrations of the ordinary South African and the reasons for unending protests:

> *Half of Grahamstown does not have toilets 17 years into democracy. Unemployment is at around 70%. The jobs that do exist are allocated on the basis of party political loyalty. There are*

no lights on our streets. There is an attack on women and girls in Grahamstown. There were around 40 cases of rape in December alone and a number of killings.

In various empirical analyses, researchers have had to draw on protest data from diverse sources, each with its limitations and strengths. The commonly used data in public protest research in South Africa include data from the Centre for Civil Society (CSS) based in the University of Kwazulu Natal, MunicipalIQ Hotspots Monitor, Crowd Management Incidents archived by South Africa Police Service (SAPS), South African Local Government Briefing (SALGB), Centre for Social Change (CSC) in the University of Johannesburg, Civic Protests Barometer (CPB) and Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED). Alexander et al (2018) provide a detailed review of these sources especially in terms of focus, scope, unit of analysis, nature, coverage and limitations of each of the sources and it is not the intention of this study to repeat this.

Based on different data analysed, several scholars have described the rate of public protests in South Africa as very high. It is questionable, however, whether the current rates of public protests are true reflections of service delivery performance in South Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection
This study relies principally on the archival data from ACLED civil protests data that span 20 years from 1998 to 2017 (ACLED, 2017). Although other sources of protest events are available locally and have been used in different studies (Alexander, 2010; Nembambula, 2015; Alexander *et al.*, 2018), the ACLED data appear to be the most robust and comprehensive as it provides georeferenced information about the event location and other important attributes. Other sources such as the Centre for Civil Society in the University of the KwaZulu Natal, Centre for Social Change (CSC) in the University of Johannesburg and the Municipal IQ data focus more on municipal service delivery protests only, the scope of which is narrower than the human settlement related protests being investigated in this study. These data sources have their strengths and weaknesses due to differences in definitions and methodologies used. These strengths and limitations have been adequately highlighted elsewhere (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Other archival data used in this work include the map of South Africa obtained from the Open Data source website. Also, the protests events data for a selected group of countries in Africa were extracted. This set of data together with selected indicators of human developments obtained from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) were used as a basis for comparative analysis of service delivery situations between South Africa and selected African countries.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated, freely available conflict analysis and crisis mapping project

(Raleigh, 2005). It contains the civil protests data around the world as a subset of the general crisis events data. The civil protest data for South Africa was filtered out from the data for Africa. The ACLED started active coding in 2012 and employed 'back coding' methodology to produce data before 2012 (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). The implication of this is that data before 2012 may be undercounted. The data contain important attribute information on civil protests such as the event type, actor, country, city, locality, fatalities, geographical coordinates of the event's location, the source of the information and detailed 'notes' that describes the event. From the event description, it is possible to sieve out information on nature, level of violence and the duration of the protests. However, there is no categorisation of the data based on type (whether it is electricity, water and sanitation or housing) and whether the event is peaceful or violent. Nevertheless, these pieces of information are available under the "notes" field in the data. Since the data recorded events on daily basis, it becomes difficult to identify and track events that persisted over time. The implication of this is that a single protest that persisted over some days are reckoned as multiple protests, a situation that can bring about an exaggeration of the frequency of the protests. However, this has been adjudged appropriate as a protest that persists for many days may change in size, location, level of disorder, demands (Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

Data Processing and Analysis

The ACLED data were sorted using the country field to filter out the records that apply to South Africa, the study area for this study. A total of 7,763 events covering a wide range of protests and riots were extracted from the ACLED's Database from 2008 to 2017. The textual data in the 'notes' field were content-analysed to bring out salient attributes such as the nature of protests (peaceful or violent), type (education, transport, service-related, safety and security, socio-economic, xenophobic attacks, labour-related protests) which are important to the achievement of the objectives of this study. Service delivery encompasses municipal service issues such as water supply, waste and sanitation, electricity supply, waste removal, among others. Safety and security categories incorporate all protests relating to insecurity, attack on perceived offenders, confrontation with security agencies, protests against the persistence of certain crimes in a community and so on.

Socio-economic issues cover protests on poverty, unemployment and consumers' price increases. Political/ governance issues relate to protest on political marginalization, human and economic rights, corruption, boundary adjustments, political party protests, election-related protests among others. Protests relating to unclassified land matters, religion and other matters that cannot be easily classified under the existing categories were classified as 'others'. Education issues composed of protests by students and pupils across tiers of education and protest by teachers (if these are not related to contractual matters). Transport-related protests cover all protests on the transport situation, fuel price hike and road conditions. Labour/Union Matters encompasses all matters relating to the employer-employee relationship, labour policy, wage increases and anti-labour activities. Xenophobia Issues are protests against

foreign nationals perceived to be taken up economic opportunities meant for citizens.

These attributes were combined with the existing ones in the data such as fatalities and geographical coordinates to form inputs into the mapping of human settlements protests and the statistical analysis. The coordinates of the protest events were plotted using ArcGIS 10.5 software to show the spatial pattern of human settlements related protests. The frequency of protests by time ad province was run to summarise the data. The 'Notes' column of the ACLED data was content analysed to tease out information on the types, nature (violent or non-violent) and the probable cause of the protests. Keywords such as violent, non-violent, clash, hauling, destroy, shoot, were used as search words to determine if a protest event is violent or not. The selected events were further randomly checked to ascertain the representational accuracy of the search results. It was discovered that over 95% per cent of the events were correctly classified as violent or non-violent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

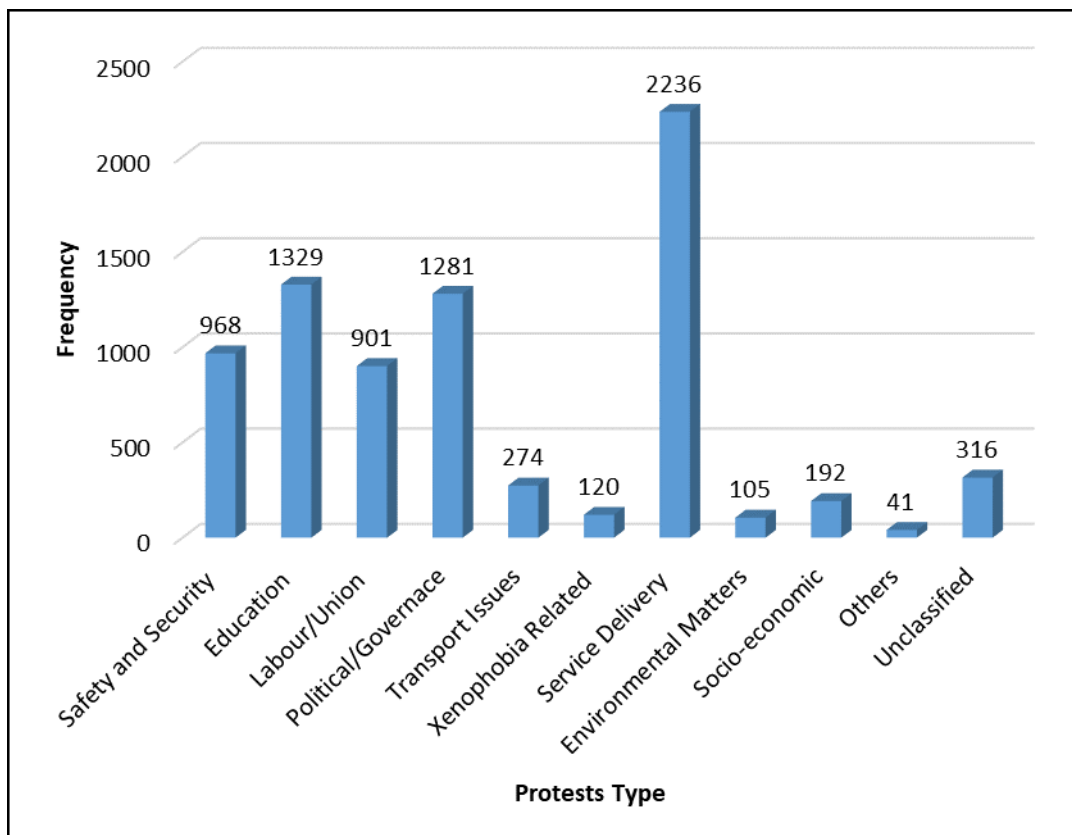### Typologies of Human Settlements Related Protests
Human settlements related protests vary in their forms and it is often difficult to group them into tight compartments. It is evident from Figure 1 that protestations within and in the context of human settlements transcend municipal service delivery issues. As shown in Figure 1, though service delivery issues such as water and sanitation, waste disposal and electricity supply account for the largest share (28.8%) of the public protests between 1998 and 2017, other categories, particularly, political/governance issues (16.5%), education-related protests (12.5%), and labour/union matters account for the significant proportion of public protests within the period under study.

Discounting electricity supply which is clearly outside the constitutional remit of the municipalities, the number of service delivery protests is likely to reduce appreciably. This result aligns with the previous findings that service delivery, though important in explaining public protests, does not singly account for the mounting frequency and pervasiveness of public protests in South Africa (Alexander, 2010). It clearly shows that, though quite important, municipal service delivery issues are not only the dominant drivers of protests in post-apartheid South Africa. Rather, other existential issues such as access to education, safety and security and political cum governance issues – which Booysen (2009) referred to as "national-level responsibilities" – account for significant proportions of the public protests in South Africa within the period under study.

This negates the reductionist view of some previous studies which view public protests in democratic South Africa through the narrow spectrum of service delivery and thus, hold the municipalities responsible for the outbreak of the protests. The recent education-related national protests like the *#feemustfall*, *#Rhodesmustfall*; the often violent taxis riots; the Abahlali baseMjondolo shack

dwellers protests in 2010 and the Zuma must Fall protests in 2017; are clear examples of the rising culture of protests which are unrelated to municipal service delivery.

Source: Authors' Analysis from ACLED Data

Figure 1. The Categorisation of Public Protests in South Africa

Trends in Human Settlements Related Protests (1998-2017)

The result of the time series analysis presented in Table 1 shows a progressive increase in the incidence and fatality of public protests in South Africa between 1998 and 2017, with 2007 and 2012 being the turning points. With 7,763 incidents in two decades and fatalities of 186, the country averages 388 protests and 9.3 fatalities per year. The total number of protests, and by implication, the yearly average may have been understated as the ACLED data used in this study underreported events before 2012 due to the 'back coding' methodology it employed (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). The average protests figure over the two

decades is much greater than 94 protests per year which the Municipal IQ's service delivery protests report found between 2004 and 2016 (Municipal IQ, 2017). This understandable as the Municipal IQ report focused essentially on the service delivery protests which represent grievances that border on water supply, waste and sanitation, electricity supply, waste removal. The wide gap in the average protests per year between the Municipal IQ's findings and that of the current study clearly shows that protests arising from municipal service delivery only represents an integral part of the drivers of public protests in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Table 1. Distribution of Public Protests by Province

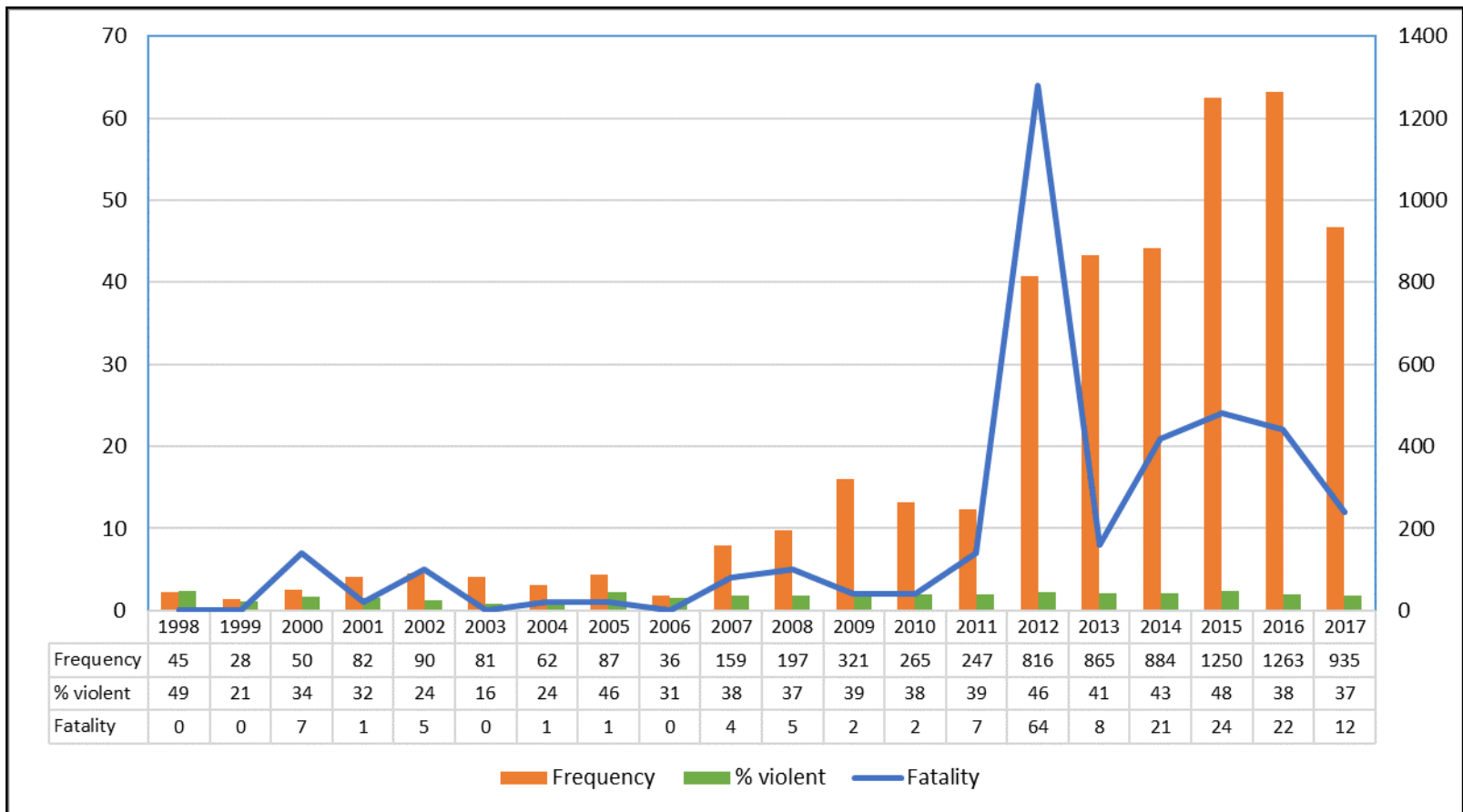| Province	Protests Frequencies	Number of Fatal Protests	No of Deaths	Death/1000 Protests
Eastern Cape	1254	8	11	8.8
Free State	152	4	5	32.9
Gauteng	2125	35	49	23.1
KwaZulu-Natal	1124	13	22	19.6
Limpopo	426	13	16	37.6
Mpumalanga	225	6	10	44.4
North West	378	13	55	145.5
Northern Cape	104	1	2	19.2
Western Cape	1975	13	16	8.1
Total	**7763**	**106**	**186**	**37.7**

From 48 incidents in 1998, the incidence of public protests peaked in 2016, with 1,263 incidents. This not only confirms previous findings on the escalating rate of public protests in South Africa (Kanyane, 2014; Twala, 2014; Municipal IQ, 2018), but it also accentuates the concerns which this upward trend has generated. For instance, the incidence of protests recorded more than a four-fold increase from 36 in 2006 to 159 in 2007 and fatality rose from 0 to 4, indicating a concomitant rise in the deaths associated with public protests. This sharp increase aligns with the finding of Alexander (2010), although he used data from a different source for his analysis. Similarly, the frequency of public protests increased more than threefold from a paltry 247 in 2011 to 816 in 2012 and associated fatality snowballing from 7 to 64! The extraordinarily high fatality recorded in 2012 was highlighted by the Marikana Massacre in August 2012 in which 34 protestors were killed and scores injured (Dharmadhikar, 2010). This particular incident and many others underscore the escalating violence of the

state against the citizens which has contributed significantly to the mounting fatality figures recorded during public protests. Incidentally, these two years (2007 and 2012) were two years away from general elections, suggesting that heightened incidence of protests might be the result of widespread frustration arising from unfulfilled electoral promises of the preceding elections. The year 2012 was particularly significant as it was the peak of the *Zuma Must Fall* uprising (Akpojivi, 2018). Although the succeeding years witnessed a decrease in momentum, there appears to be a steady increase as the frequencies of protests peaked in 2015 and 2016 with 1250 and 1263 respectively. These two years jointly account for 32.2% of protests events between 1998 and 2017. The appreciable reduction recorded in 2017 in both frequency and fatality (Figure 2) may be a turning point toward a decreasing trend in public protests.
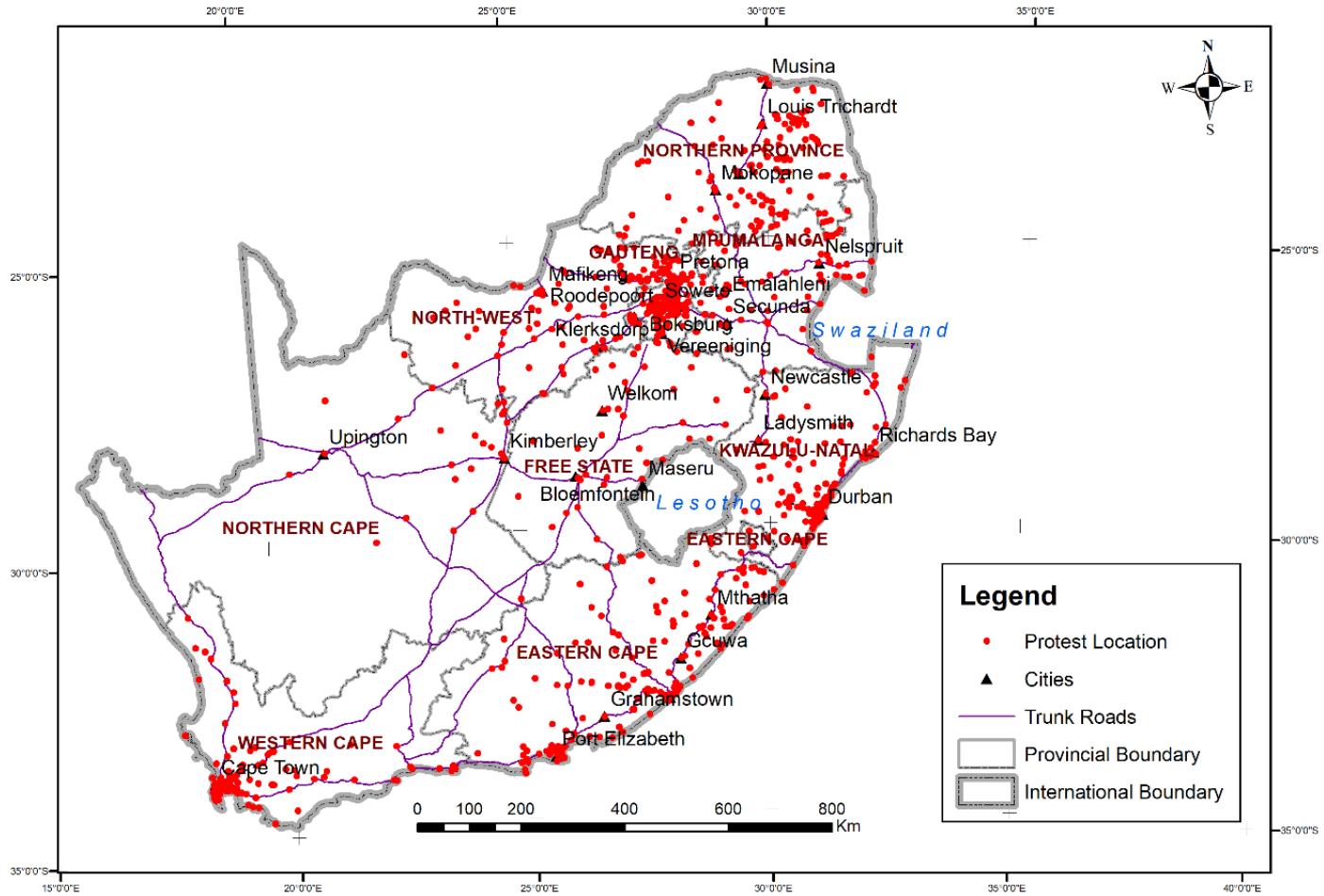
Spatializing the Human Settlements-Related Protests

The geography of public protests in South Africa is rather complex. The spatial distribution of protests events across the country, shown in Figure 3, revealed clustering of protestations around certain locations, with the Gauteng region appearing like the epicentre. This distribution shows that densely populated regions are hotspots of public protests in South Africa and the reasons are not far-flung. Apart from the Pretoria-Johannesburg axis which appears as the nucleus of the protests, the coastal stretch that starts from the Richards Bay in the northeastern part through Durban, Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth and terminating at Cape Town (Figure 3) provides the hotbed for service-delivery protests. Together, these are the economic nerve centres of the country and contain the largest agglomeration of people in the country. Given the spatial distribution of these protests, it may be tempting to hypothesize that some level of associations exists between population density and prosperity on one hand and the incidence of public protests on the other. This is so because the vast expanse of sparsely populated land in the Northern Cape recorded a very low incidence of protests.

The information in Table 1 that depicts the variations in protests incidence across provinces corroborates this finding. Of the nine provinces in South Africa, Gauteng (2,125), Western Cape (1,975), Eastern Cape (1,254) and Kwazulu Natal (1124) are the leading hotbeds of protests, while Northern Cape (104) has the least incidence of protests. Nevertheless, such a hypothesis may not be true, as previous studies have traced the sources of these protests to certain parts of these cities where the living conditions are poor in contrast to the contiguous affluent neighbourhoods. It is this collocation of affluent, well-serviced neighbourhoods with the poor neighbourhood that are either under-serviced or outrightly lacking in service that breeds the discontents around human settlements service delivery.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Frequency	45	28	50	82	90	81	62	87	36	159	197	321	265	247	816	865	884	1250	1263	935
% violent	49	21	34	32	24	16	24	46	31	38	37	39	38	39	46	41	43	48	38	37
Fatality	0	0	7	1	5	0	1	1	0	4	5	2	2	7	64	8	21	24	22	12

Frequency ■ % violent ■ Fatality

Figure 2. Trends in Public Protests (1998-2017)

Figure 3. Spatial Distribution of Public Protests in South Africa

The fatalities associated with protests also exhibit similar spatial distribution with the frequency of protests events, with North West Province recording the highest (55) while Northern Cape has the lowest (2). However, a refined fatality index shows that fatality per protests does not necessarily increase with protest frequency, suggesting that the nature and type of protests rather than share frequency may be determinants of protest fatality. Beyond the dissatisfactions with service delivery, other factors such as political rivalry and escalating insecurity may have contributed to the marked variations in the incidence of public protests. Indeed, the functional orientations of cities and provinces may also prove important determinants of the incidence of protests. Given the fact that the study covers all types of protests, it may be argued that the economic, administrative and educational functions of these cities and provinces may play an important role in determining the concentration of protests in the spatial units. For instance, the city with more educational institutions is likely to experience more educational related protests than those with fewer educational institutions.

Does the Rate of Protests Justify Service Delivery Situation in South Africa?

A recurrent question in the protests debate in South Africa is whether the quantum and frequency of protests are a reflection of the service delivery situation in the most industrialized economy in Africa. Table 2 shows some selected indices of service delivery and the total protest figures for South Africa and selected countries in Africa. It is obvious that South Africa towers above other African countries in terms of the proportion of the population that has access to drinking water (87.4%) and improved sanitation (73.1%), number of beds per 10,000 of the population (28), number of physician per 10,000 population (8.2) and the percentage of the population with access to electricity (67.9%). The country also has the least percentage of the population in multidimensional poverty (8.2) and infant mortality per '000 population (11.6).

Given these relatively impressive service delivery indicators, it is natural to expect that the incidence of citizens' expression of dissatisfaction in South Africa will normally be among the lowest in Africa. However, protest statistics belie this view. South Africa recorded 7,763 protest events between 1998 and 2017, more than twice the figure for Nigeria (3,728) which has more than thrice the population of South Africa and almost three times that of Tanzania with a comparable population. It is probably due to these unusually high protests rates that the country was described as the 'protest capital of the world' (Runciman, 2017). Previous studies have identified diverse factors as probable explanations for the unusually high protests rates in South Africa. There is almost unanimity of opinions, however, on the increasingly dwindling quality of municipal service rendering, governance issues that border on corruption and poor accountability at the municipality level and the mouth-watering promises that politician make during electioneering without any reasonable effort to redeem these pledges after they have been elected as probable causes of these protestations (Vally, 2009; Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

Table 2. Comparison of Service Delivery Indices and Frequency of Protest between South Africa and Some Selected African Countries

Items	South Africa	Mozambique	Ethiopia	Kenya	Tanzania	Nigeria	Ghana
% of population with improved source of drinking water[1]	84.7	47.3	39.1	58.5	50.1	67.3	77.8
% of population with improved source of sanitation[1]	71.3	23.6	7.1	29.8	23.5	32.6	14.3
Hospital beds per 10,000 population[1]	28.0	7.0	63.0	14.0	7.0	5.0	9.0
No of physician per 10,000 population[1]	8.2	0.6	0.2	2.0	0.2	4.0	1.0
% of population in multidimensional poverty[1]	8.2	72.5	83.8	38.8	55.3	51.9	28.9
% of Rural population with electricity[1]	67.9	5.0	26.5	39.3	16.9	41.1	66.6
infant mortality per '000 population[1]	11.6	53.1	41.0	35.6	40.3	66.9	41.2
Number of Protests (1998-2017)[2]	7,763	245	1,264	2,734	291	3,728	326

Sources: [1] Extracted from 2018 Human Development datahdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_statistical_annex_all.xlsx

[2] ACLED

Nevertheless, whether these factors are sufficient to justify the sheer quantum of protests credited to the country is a debatable issue as other African countries that recorded far fewer protests numbers have poorer service delivery records as shown in Table 2. Scholars and analysts in this field, though few, have blamed the festering culture of protest in the post-apartheid South Africa (Pointer, 2015) as being responsible for the escalating protests rates, although opinions differ on the origin (in time) of this culture. Yet, others pointed to the failure of the government to bridge the yawning economic gap that exists among the different segments of the population in post-apartheid Africa (Allan and Heese, 2004; Morudu, 2017). Although a significant percentage of these protests are traceable to the marginalized segments of the society, protests, according to Piper & Africa (2012, p. 225) have also become the practice of the 'politically engaged'.

CONCLUSION

Public protests in and on human settlements service delivery form the focus of this study. It is an incontrovertible fact that the ventilation of public grievances on the state and public services has consistently been on the rise as shown in the finding of this study. It has also been shown that the gamut of protests that take place within the human settlements sector is as diverse as the various sub-sectors that make up the human settlement system. Consequently, the idea of reducing public protests to municipal service delivery is not only erroneous but also misleading. For long, the municipalities in South Africa, as in other countries, have had to take responsibilities for the repeated outbreaks and persistence of public protests that result from responsibilities such as safety and security, healthcare delivery, education, unemployment among others that are clearly out of their constitutional remit. A holistic view of the public protests will undoubtedly bring into the picture all the relevant stakeholders that are required to address the festering problem that is fast assuming an insurrectionary status. The municipal service delivery protests, though has the highest frequency, accounted for less than a third of the total protest events in the country in the past decade.

Since the high incidence of human settlements protestations was found to coincide with the period running up to the elections, an indication of sub-optimal performance by political office holders and their inability to deliver on electoral promises, it is important that politicians be modest in their electoral promises so as not to unduly raise the public expectations. After elections, successful candidates should strive to live up to their electoral promises and encourage public participation in decision-making. Beyond the provision and access to services, the government needs to embark on a sustained confidence-building and civic reorientation to counter the growing culture of protest within the South African society and in the human settlements sector in particular. As revealed in this study, despite appreciable progress the country has made in service delivery compared with other African countries, the frequency of public protest remains disquietingly high. The pertinent question will be "how has the service delivery

problem been managed in these countries that they have been able to keep the rate of public protests under control?"

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