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Cover photo: *Voters at the ballot box on election day* Photo credit: *The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)*

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ABSTRACT

The 2016 local government elections were perhaps the most significant elections to be held in South Africa at any level since 1994. Despite pre-election turmoil, the elections themselves were conducted without major incident. The dominant party, the African National Congress (ANC), lost considerable support, dropping from 62% to just over 54%. The loss was most severely felt in the large metropolitan municipalities. The ANC had previously led seven of the eight metropolitan municipalities, but retained control of

only four after the election. The opposition Democratic Alliance (DA), with an outright majority, or in coalition, or as a minority government with the tenuous support of the relatively new, populist party, the Economic Freedom Front, took control of the remaining four, placing it in a position of enormous influence. The elections have been described as “the point at which South Africa changed course,” but it remains to be seen just how significant the change is.

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THE 2016 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS: THE POINT WHERE SOUTH AFRICA CHANGED COURSE?

ANDREW SIDDLER

INTRODUCTION

The recent local government elections in South Africa have been described as the most important elections to be held at any level since the first democratic elections for the national and provincial governments in 1994. The elections came at a time of turmoil in the country. Whilst it might have been hoped that the focus would have been on local issues, the political climate was such that they tended to be overshadowed by national issues. As such, the elections came to be seen as a test for government as a whole. It is not surprising, therefore, that whilst significant consequences of the elections will be felt at the local level, they have had, and will continue to have, ramifications in national politics as well. The outcomes of the elections were predicted in some respects, but were surprising in others. The general consensus is that the political landscape has changed to an extent which was not anticipated, presenting new opportunities as well as a range of difficulties which will demand political skill and maturity of the kind that has hitherto often been lacking.

This paper aims to provide an understanding of the outcome of the elections and of some of the crucial issues which will dictate how local governance will play out in the future. To assist in this aim, it will be useful first to spend some time examining the environment in which local government functions and the conditions in which the elections took place.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK

South African local government operates in a framework which, on the face of it, reflects all of the elements which one might associate with a decentralised system. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the local

sphere of government consists of municipalities, which must be established for the whole of the territory of the country. The Constitution also provides that the executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its municipal council. Municipalities are given extensive powers and functions in terms of the Constitution and subsidiary legislation.

There are three types of municipality in South Africa. First, there are the metropolitan municipalities, which have been established in the major urban areas. They perform the full range of functions provided for in the Constitution. The next type of municipality is the local municipality, and the third type is the district municipality. The latter two types are located outside of the biggest urban areas, and have concurrent geographical jurisdiction and complementary functional jurisdiction with each other. There are at present 257 municipalities: 8 metros, 205 locals and 44 districts.

Councils in metropolitan and local municipalities are elected in accordance with a combined proportional representation system and ward system, in which some councillors are elected to represent wards, whilst others are elected from party lists according to the share of the vote which each party receives. In district municipalities, a combined system of direct proportional voting and appointment by constituent local municipalities is used. Local elections are held on a nationwide basis every five years, and the electoral cycle is such that they are held two years after the national and provincial elections (which are also held every five years).

The size and significance of municipalities varies enormously. Rural municipalities are often sparsely populated and have small budgets, although they sometimes cover vast geographical areas. Most of the metropolitan municipalities, by contrast, are massive institutions and manage budgets of tens of billions, serve populations of

millions, and have staffs of thousands. South Africa, like many developing countries, is undergoing a process of urbanisation, and the role of metropolitan municipalities continually increases in importance. It will be readily seen that control of a metropolitan municipality brings with it the opportunity to wield enormous influence and to dispense patronage on a grand scale.

THE PLAYERS

The African National Congress (ANC) has been the dominant political party in South Africa since 1994. It has since then held the majority of seats in the national parliament, and for most of the time, it has controlled all of the provincial governments. It has long been viewed as the political home of the greater part of the population, was widely viewed as the party of liberation, and it likes to think of itself as the agent of the “National Democratic Revolution.” It has, however, been bedevilled for many years by factionalism, corruption and perceptions of indifference towards the demands of good governance. In more recent years, its leader and the president of the country, Jacob Zuma, has been at the centre of a series of scandals.

The other major party is the Democratic Alliance (DA). It is the official opposition party in the national parliament, and since 2009, it has been in charge of the Western Cape provincial government. Justly or otherwise, it was long viewed by many as the party of “monopoly capital” and privilege, and has struggled to make inroads into



An Independent Electoral Commission official waits for the next voter to hand a ballot to at a voting station in Hammanskraal, Gauteng. Photo credit: Diana Neille

the broader electorate. It has nonetheless managed to portray itself quite successfully as the “party of good governance” and it recently elected a new leader, Mmusi Maimane, who was expected to give it wider appeal.

The third largest party is the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a radical, populist party which was formed in 2014 by a former leader of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, who had fallen out of favour with the ANC leadership. Despite being a new party, it made an impressive showing in the 2014 national elections. Perhaps fuelled by personal animus on the part of its leader, the EFF has been scathing of the ANC, and in particular, of the president, Jacob Zuma.

There are several smaller parties. Amongst the more significant of these are the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which was once a major (if only regional) force in KwaZulu-Natal province, but has since declined in influence; the National Freedom Party (NFP), a breakaway party from the IFP; the United Democratic Movement (UDM), a breakaway party from the ANC, whose power base (such as it is) is confined to the Eastern Cape Province; the Freedom Front Plus (FFP), a conservative grouping; the Congress of the People (COPE), also a breakaway party from the ANC; and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). These parties have generally been experiencing declining fortunes over the years. Then there are literally dozens of very small parties of little significance. A total of 206 parties were registered to participate in the elections.

At local level, until the latest elections, the scene was dominated by the ANC. An exception was the Western Cape Province, in which most municipalities were controlled by the DA, either alone or in coalition. In KwaZulu-Natal Province, a few municipalities were controlled by the IFP, and a few others were controlled by the NFP, in coalition with the ANC. Municipalities in the other seven provinces were almost entirely dominated by the ANC; a total of only three municipalities in those provinces were controlled by the DA.

Importantly, all but one of the eight metropolitan municipalities were controlled by the ANC, the exception being Cape Town. Following the 2006 local elections, the DA managed to put together a coalition with a number of smaller

parties to take control of Cape Town from the ANC. This was the first example of a significant coalition arrangement in local government in the country. Several other smaller municipalities in the Western Cape were run by coalitions. In the 2011 local elections, the DA gained sufficient votes to govern Cape Town on its own, and the coalition arrangement came to an end in that city, although coalitions continued elsewhere in smaller municipalities.

The performance of the major parties, based on share of vote, in the national and local elections from 2004 to 2014 is shown in table 1 below:

The table shows a general decline in support for the ANC, and incremental increases for the DA in most, but not all, elections. The first elections contested by the EFF were the 2014 national and provincial elections, which were held in the same year in which it was formed. Despite the EFF not having contested previous local elections, there was widespread interest in how it would perform in the upcoming elections; and it lost no time in predicting that it would cause a major upset by tripling the 6.4% vote it received in the 2014 national elections.

THE PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

When the new local government system was introduced in 2000, there were great expectations of what this sphere of government would do. It was supposed to be at the forefront of the country's developmental agenda, and it was supposed to play a major role in righting the inequalities of the past. It soon became evident, however, that many municipalities were not up to the task. They lacked administrative, financial and technical capacity. Many of them become fiefdoms of the local elite, who moved swiftly to capture them for their own ends; corruption and inefficiency

were rife; service delivery was often haphazard, and sometimes, virtually non-existent; relations with local communities, whose expectations had been raised by promises of development, only to be disappointed, were fraught. Confidence in local government as an institution and in individual councillors plummeted. It was clear that, although there were several examples of well run-municipalities, local government as a whole was perceived to be largely in a dysfunctional state. This had characterised local government ever since the inception of the new system, but the curious thing was that voters seemed reluctant to bring about change at the local level. With the exception of the Western Cape, municipalities tended to remain in the same hands, election after election. If change did happen in a municipality, it was more likely to have been due to intra-party factional shifts within the ANC rather than the wholesale replacement of one party by another.

Nonetheless, signs of potential meaningful change were starting to emerge. In the 2014 national and provincial elections, voting patterns, although they showed constant or even increasing support for the ANC in the less urbanised areas and especially in the deep rural areas, gave a clear indication that in a number of metropolitan areas, support for the ANC was declining. This may have been due to a number of factors, including a growing dissatisfaction with ANC rule, the emergence of the EFF, a greater acceptance of the DA as a political home for urbanised voters, and an increasing stay-away factor amongst disgruntled ANC supporters. The notion that the ANC could lose control of at least one more metropolitan municipality in the next local government elections began to gain currency.

A number of governance issues at national level had begun to emerge well before the 2014 national and provincial elections and continued to escalate afterwards. These included a deeply em-

Table 1

Year	Level	ANC	DA	EFF
2004	National	69.69%	12.37%	Not contested
2006	Local*	65.7%	16.3%	Not contested
2009	National	65.9%	16.66%	Not contested
2011	Local *	62.9%	24.1%	Not contested
2014	National	62.15%	22.2%	6.4%

* Aggregate country-wide percentages for the proportional representation component are shown for local elections

bedded perception of widespread corruption and the misuse of state funds by the political elite for personal benefit; state capture by influential individuals; financial and other mismanagement at government departments and state owned enterprises; a series of court judgments which severely criticised and overturned improper administrative actions by the national government; reports on investigations by the Public Protector into government malfeasance which were similarly critical; ill-advised policy decisions, and policy paralysis; detachment on the part of the government from the needs of the citizens; high unemployment and a generally faltering economy; political machinations, infighting and factionalism in the ruling party; and growing calls for criminal and political action against the president of the country, who was seen to be at the root of much of what was going wrong. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the approaching local elections came to be dominated by national issues, which no doubt played a large part in the eventual outcome. Purely local issues, such as service delivery failure, although they were somewhat overshadowed, nonetheless remained a factor.

THE RUN-UP TO THE ELECTION

The Constitution provides that elections for councils must be held within 90 days of the expiry of their terms. This meant that the elections could have been held as early as 18 May 2016. But, perhaps because of a barrage of unfavourable public-



The demographic make-up of the voter line at Capital Park Primary School was encouragingly rich in variety of age and race, as Tshwane residents queued patiently to make their mark. Photo credit: Diana Neille

ity which had erupted following a court ruling regarding the bringing of criminal charges against the president, the announcement of the election was delayed. The date for the elections was eventually announced as 3 August 2016, barely two weeks before the end of the allowed period.

Parties had, of course, been campaigning for a long time, even before the announcement of the election date. The main parties adopted mostly predictable manifestoes, with the ANC depicting itself as the party historically responsible for the improvement of the lot of the people, and the DA promising more effective service delivery and clean government. The EFF put forward an agenda that was largely populist, promising a range of radical changes to local government processes and service delivery.

The period leading up to the election day did not augur well for a peaceful election. It was marked by protests which were often violent. The underlying reasons for the protests and violence were varied – dissatisfaction with municipal demarcation processes, service delivery issues, and dissatisfaction with choices for candidates for councillors and mayors.

At one point, there was some doubt that the elections would be held at all. Here the issue revolved around the registration of voters and the recording of their addresses by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which is responsible for running all elections. Legal action to enforce proper registration, something which would have been practically impossible to achieve throughout the country in the available time, threatened to derail the elections. Fortunately, the matter was resolved following a judgment of the Constitutional Court. To add to its woes, the IEC, which had hitherto enjoyed a reputation for flawless election management, had recently developed image problems. Its chairperson had been forced to resign following a procurement scandal, and her replacement was widely viewed as a political appointee whose independence was questionable. Many feared that in such circumstances, the IEC could not guarantee free and fair elections.

On top of that, as the election day approached, and opinion polls suggested that the ANC was likely to lose support, concerns were raised that it would not yield power gracefully if it lost elections in important centres, and would resort to

legal chicanery to contest election outcomes.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the country went into this crucially important election with considerable trepidation and a sense of foreboding.

ELECTION DAY

As it happened, and despite all the concerns, the elections went off quite smoothly. There were few incidents of note. No-one was prevented from voting. There were a few complaints of procedural irregularities, but these were mostly insignificant. There was hardly any reported violence. By late evening on election day, the results started trickling in, a process which continued for several days, whilst returns were processed, verified and collated.

The final result showed the major parties having obtained the following shares of votes across the country (based on the proportional representation component):

- ANC: 54.49%
- DA: 27.02 %
- EFF: 8.25%

The IFP, which previously seemed destined to disappear into obscurity, made something of a come-back, with 4.27% of the vote, although it was restricted to KwaZulu-Natal province.

Of particular interest was the situation in the metropolitan municipalities. The focus of the election effort by all of the major parties had throughout been on the metros, to the exclusion, to some extent, of the more rural areas. These municipalities represented the big prize. The table below shows the percentage of the vote won by the main parties in each of the eight metros:

Table 2

	ANC	DA	EFF
Johannesburg	44.99%	38.4%	10.94%
Tshwane	41.48%	43.10%	11.64%
Ekurhuleni	48.44%	34.13%	11.10%
Ethekwini	59.11%	27.54%	3.63%
Nelson Mandela Bay	41.5%	46.66%	5.03%
Buffalo City	59.86%	23.45%	8.25%
Mangaung	56.77%	26.20%	8.84%
Cape Town	24.52%	66.75%	3.12%



A young woman casts her ballot at a voting station in Hammanskraal. Photo credit: Diana Neille

Overall, although the ANC received the greatest number of aggregate votes across the country, its share declined drastically from that which it had obtained in previous elections. For the first time, its share of the vote dropped below the 60% mark. Whilst a drop had been expected, the extent of the decrease came as a surprise to most. The outcomes in the metropolitan municipalities were especially disappointing for the ANC. Whereas previously it controlled seven of the eight metros, now it held the majority in only three; and of those in which it no longer held the majority, three in particular were painful losses: Nelson Mandela Bay, which had long been the heartland of the ANC; Tshwane, home to the executive capital of the country; and Johannesburg, the economic powerhouse of the country. Cape Town had long been lost for the ANC, but its minority status in that city was reinforced by the loss of even more voter support there.

But simply because the ANC had lost its majority in some of these municipalities did not mean that any of the other parties necessarily held a majority. Four of the metros (Johannesburg, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela Bay and Ekurhuleni) and 23 of the local municipalities were hung, with no single party holding a majority.

THE ERA OF THE COALITION?

Many governments in Europe are or have been run by coalitions, but in South Africa, such governments, whilst they are not unheard of, have hitherto been relatively rare at any level. As was shown earlier in this paper, Cape Town was the

first major municipality to be run by a coalition government, following the 2006 election. Whilst it had the slimmest of majorities, and was made up of a collection of parties with widely differing agendas, it fared relatively well. The leading party, the DA, acquired an aura of good governance that appealed to voters to the extent that it was able to gain a clear majority in the 2011 elections, a position which was strengthened in the 2016 elections. But whilst Cape Town's coalition was artfully managed, some of the other coalition governments in the same province were unmitigated disasters. A senior official in the Western Cape Provincial Government who was responsible for local government oversight remarked that whilst it should not be assumed that coalition governments would inevitably fail, it was noteworthy that municipalities in that province that had serious problems were without exception run by coalitions.

Be that as it may, the outcome of the elections showed that some form of cooperation in a number of municipalities, including four of the eight metros, could not be avoided. By law, new councils of metropolitan and local municipalities are required to hold their first meetings (amongst other things, for the purpose of electing mayors and other office bearers) within fourteen days after the confirmation of the election results, by which point coalition arrangements would have to have crystallised. The period immediately following the election was one of frantic activity as parties courted each other assiduously. Two things became clear very soon. The first was that the EFF was obviously the kingmaker in some key municipalities. It could cause a major shake-up if it decided to work with the DA. On the other hand, it could extract policy and budgetary concessions, perhaps even at national level, from the ANC in return for agreeing to collaborate with it at local level. The second thing to emerge was that neither the EFF nor the DA was eager to form coalitions with the ANC. The EFF and ANC had been at loggerheads in the National Assembly since the 2014 national elections, and the EFF announced that it would not form any coalition with the ANC unless Jacob Zuma, the president of the country and leader of the ANC, were to be "removed" – clearly a condition that was unlikely to be met. This meant that some sort of align-

ment between the DA and EFF was a possibility. But the EFF has also had sometimes acrimonious relations with the DA and other opposition parties. And ideologically, the DA and the EFF are worlds apart. But while the ANC may be closer to the EFF in terms of its policy positions, the DA and the EFF shared a common goal to dislodge the ANC's dominance, which seemed perhaps to override all other considerations. And so it was speculated that the DA and the EFF, the unlikelyst of bedfellows, but having a common determination to deal the ANC a blow, would form coalitions in two, or even three, of the metros.

As it happened, what transpired was something of a surprise. Many EFF leaders were concerned that their supporters would view participation in a coalition as a merger with one of the big parties, or endorsement of the other party's leadership or policies. So, apparently determined to keep its identity distinct, and in what has been interpreted by some as a sign of political maturity and a victory of principle over expedience, the EFF announced that it would not join coalitions with any party. Instead, it would vote, on a case-by-case basis, with the DA against the ANC in council meetings, because the former was the "better devil." Thus the EFF would not participate in any executive structures, but would vote in support of the DA's nominees for mayor and other positions. Such circumstances of course create conditions which can lead to very precarious administrations; the EFF could change its mind at any time and vote against a mayor, or against a budget, or against any key motion before council. In effect, the result is a minority government led by the DA, with a precarious and easily revocable undertaking of support by the EFF. But it was enough to assure support, at least initially, for DA mayors to be appointed in Tshwane and in Johannesburg. The election of the mayor in Johannesburg was particularly interesting: although the ANC did not have a majority, it did have a plurality, but the combined vote of the DA and the EFF was enough to unseat the ANC. In Nelson Mandela Bay, the DA was able to create a formal coalition with a number of smaller parties without having to rely on the EFF, and duly put its nominee in the mayoral seat, with members of the smaller parties taking executive positions. In Ekurhuleni, the ANC was able to put together

Table 3

ANC			DA		
Majority	Coalition	Minority	Majority	Coalition	Minority
3	1	0	1	1	2

a coalition with several smaller parties. In the remaining metros, the DA retained sole control of Cape Town with an increased majority, and the ANC retained sole control of Ethekwini, Mangaung and Buffalo City, all with reduced majorities. Table 3 above summarises the position regarding control of the metros:

Several local municipalities in the Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Northern Cape and North West Province acquired coalition or minority-run councils. The number of local municipalities controlled by the various parties, with outright majorities, or in coalitions or as minority governments, is shown in table 4 below:

As at the time of writing, one hung local municipality council still had not held elected its mayor and it was not clear which party would take the lead.

As the table shows, the previously moribund IFP seemed to have undergone something of a revival. The EFF, despite having won a not insignificant share of the vote and having won a respectable number of wards, did not control a single municipality.

The ANC controlled the great majority of district municipalities, with only 5 being controlled by the DA, all in the Western Cape, and 2 being run by IFP minority governments in KwaZulu-Natal.¹

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

A commentator² declared that “in years to come, the 2016 local government elections will be seen as the point where South Africa changed course.” That prediction may or may not prove to be accurate. Certainly, the elections produced a result that until recently would have been unimaginable, and were hailed as a breakthrough for the opposition, but the question is whether this will translate into something of lasting consequence, both at local and national levels. The DA’s growth has been incremental, and has been ascribed in part at least to a better voter turnout in its traditional areas of support than the turnout in the ANC areas. There certainly was a significant stay-away factor in those areas, and the ANC was undeniably badly hurt by voters who traditionally supported the party in the past but decided to withhold their votes in these elections. Thus doubts have been expressed as to how much further the DA can grow. In fact, in some parts, support for the DA actually declined; in four of the more rural provinces – Free State, Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga, it lost support, along with the ANC, where by contrast, support for the EFF grew. It is obvious that the EFF played a major role in reducing the ANC’s share of the vote in much of the country, and some argue that this party is likely to increase in strength even further. But the EFF’s performance, impressive though it was for a relatively new party, fell far short of its own predictions and it may well be that it has reached, or is rapidly approaching, its ceiling.

Table 4

ANC			DA			IFP		
Majority	Coalition	Minority	Majority	Coalition	Minority	Majority	Coalition	Minority
158	3	2	17	8	4	6	-	5

¹ A brief discussion of the election outcomes for municipalities participating in the ICLD Municipal Partnership programme is contained in the appendix to this paper.

² Ranjeni Moonsammy in the Daily Maverick, 17 August 2016

The course of events probably depends to a large extent on how the ANC responds to what was undeniably a shock for it in the local government elections. The initial signs do not augur well. In what appears to be an astounding manifestation of denialism, the party seems to be determined not to attribute any blame to the conduct of its leader, Jacob Zuma. There also appears to be little appreciation of the need to be responsive to voter demands. In addition, perhaps befuddled by the outcome, or perhaps because already existing fault lines in the party suddenly became exposed and exacerbated by the election results, its leadership embarked on a display of factionalism and manipulation of state power which, even by its Byzantine standards, was astonishing. It was hinted that the minister of finance, who often appeared to be the only member of the government who was concerned to put an end to corruption (and who was seen to be part of a grouping opposed to Zuma), would shortly be arrested on trumped-up charges. Even as this paper was being written, there occurred in Johannesburg something which was hitherto thought unimaginable: a group of ANC members, disaffected by the performance of the leadership in the local elections, planned a protest march on the party headquarters, only to be met by a band of ANC military wing veterans, many of them armed with guns, who threatened to attack the protesters to protect the headquarters building. Infighting in provincial and local structures have become frequent occurrences, and contradictory statements by senior leaders cause confusion. It is precisely this kind of destructive conduct which no doubt contributed significantly to the party's reversal of fortunes in the elections, yet there appears to be little direction from the party leadership to correct it. But even a firm hand may not suffice. If the ANC's reduced share of the vote is translated into a national poll, its position becomes tenuous, and it has no guarantee of continued electoral success at national level. In such circumstances, it cannot dispense patronage in the form of jobs and largesse the way it used to; those who have hitherto benefitted from their political linkages may look elsewhere as their benefactor suffers diminished power and authority. It has obviously lost support on a huge scale in the urban areas, and it may be not too far-fetched to imagine that in time its

sphere of influence will be limited to the rural areas. It has been speculated that the party will adopt more populist policies in an attempt to lure back voters; this may work in the short term, but at what cost to the country as a whole?

Parties on the ascendant – primarily the DA and to a lesser extent, the EFF – have, on the other hand, been presented with opportunities that previously seemed unattainable. The control of three new metros – ones which happen to be symbolically and strategically important, and endowed with massive budgets (estimated at a combined R 287 billion for the current financial year for these three municipalities) – puts the DA in a position of enormous influence, and gives it the opportunity to put its assertions of being the party of good governance to the test. This was the approach that it applied in Cape Town, using its leadership of a multi-party coalition in 2006 to persuade the electorate of its worth. This led not only to the consolidation of power in the city in the 2011 elections, but also to its dominance of almost the entire Western Cape Province in the 2016 elections. If the DA succeeds in running effective governments in its three new metros, it will be very difficult for the ANC to recapture them; and success in those metros can result in the party taking control of ever more municipalities and making gains in national and provincial elections. So even though the DA's advances in the elections in strictly numerical terms – that is, as a share of the overall vote – might not seem all that impressive, its new standing as leading party in the most important urban centres could result in untold benefits for it.

But in at least two of the new metros, it will not be easy for the DA. Formal coalitions, if they are managed well and the right conditions exist, can succeed, if only because the smaller parties have representation in the executive and have something tangible to preserve by ensuring continued cooperation. The kind of arrangement that exists in Tshwane and Johannesburg, however, is far looser, and the EFF has little to lose in material terms if these arrangements fall apart. In these two councils, potentially every single issue may have to be debated and voted on. If relations become acrimonious, it follows that councils can become dysfunctional. Budgets may be difficult to pass, with the approval of a small party being withheld until its particularistic interests

are accommodated. The positions of elected office-bearers, such as the mayor, will be tenuous from the start. The fragility of the arrangement in Johannesburg has already been demonstrated, when the mayor, shortly after having been elected with EFF support, announced his intention to privatise the city's refuse collection service, only to be told in no uncertain terms that such a course of action would cost him the EFF's support and his job. The privatisation proposal seems since to have been very quickly shifted off the agenda. In a sense, the EFF, by remaining on the outside but dangling the inchoate promise of support, may be in a stronger position than if it was part of a coalition. The relationship will clearly be a complex one, one which requires careful management. At present it is held together primarily by the existence of a common enemy; it remains to be seen whether anything more enduring will emerge.

The election outcomes also have huge implications at an administrative level for municipalities which have undergone changes in political control, and not just those which have coalition or minority governments. This is because the administrations of most municipalities have become profoundly politicised after years of single-party dominance, and are inhabited by political appointees. The notion of an impartial administrative component serving the council of the day, regardless of its political composition, may be long lost in many municipalities. A party aiming to achieve a "clean up" of the administrative level of a municipality, or even just hoping to achieve the cooperation of the administrative component, may find its efforts blocked by officials trying to preserve the old order. This is a task that may be made all the more difficult by its reliance on the support of a party which may not share the same agenda. That said, both the EFF and the DA will probably be eager to expose poor governance by the previous ANC administration (if only for the sake of making political capital), and may find sufficient common ground to support an active effort to restore administrative effectiveness.

A host of other difficulties may have to be addressed. These include potentially fractious relationships with municipal trade unions (the dominant trade union, the South African Municipal Workers' Union, is militant and has not hesitated to cause disruptions in the past, and is



An elderly gentleman casts his vote at a temporary voting station in Soshanguve. Photo credit: Diana Neille

ideologically far removed from the DA); the ongoing problem of the lack of technocratic capacity; the threat (perhaps more imagined than real) that the former political masters of the newly acquired municipalities will do everything possible, including harnessing a sympathetic trade union, to undermine attempts to govern effectively; and the fact that the provincial governments (which are immediately responsible for local government oversight and support) may be controlled by a different party and might not be sympathetic to the new municipal regimes.

CONCLUSION

It is a brave (or foolish) person who makes predictions about how events will unfold in South African politics. As matters stand now, uncertainty prevails and circumstances can change in an instant. But it is clear that the political landscape is now very different. The elections could very well represent a tipping point. And in a reversal of the usual causal chain, events at local level could have (and in fact are already having) very real consequences in the wider political arena. Some commentators are suggesting, albeit very cautiously, that the local election outcome has been so debilitating for the ANC that it could be at risk of losing the next national and provincial elections, due to be held in 2019; that remains to be seen. It is, however, probably true to say that after years of acquiescence or indifference, many South Africans have for the first time gained an appreciation of the power of the ballot box to direct the course of events.

APPENDIX

Election outcomes in municipalities participating in ICLD's Municipal Partnership Programme

At present, there are nine South African municipalities participating in ICLD's Municipal Partnership (MP) programme. This Appendix provides a brief overview of the election outcomes in those municipalities.

As was seen previously, two MP municipalities had particularly significant outcomes. These were the metropolitan municipalities of **Tshwane** in Gauteng Province and **Nelson Mandela Bay** in the Eastern Cape Province. They had been the sites of intense contestation in the run up to the elections and were considered to be particularly important prizes. Following the election, the DA formed minority governments with the voting support (but not the participation in the executive) of the EFF in Tshwane. In Nelson Mandela Bay, the DA managed to establish a formal coalition with smaller parties excluding the EFF.

A third metropolitan MP municipality is **Buffalo City**, also in the Eastern Cape Province. The ANC retained power with a reduced majority. The last metropolitan MP municipality is **Cape Town**, in the Western Cape Province, where the DA retained power with a significantly increased majority.

There are two other MP municipalities in the Western Cape Province: **Winelands District Municipality** and **Theewaterskloof**. The DA retained control of the former with increased representation and narrowly retained the latter, with a one seat majority.

There are two MP municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal Province, namely **Hibiscus Coast** and **Ulundi**. The ANC retained power in the former, and the IFP retained power in the latter.

The remaining MP municipality is Tlokwe, in the North West province. This municipality gained some notoriety in the run-up to the elections by reason of its being at the centre of the dispute over the registration of voters by the IEC which was referred to previously. The ANC retained control of the municipality with a one seat majority.

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