



**NDA**

National  
Development  
Agency

# REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFORMING THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

## POLICY BRIEF

DECEMBER 2020



**TRANSFORMATIVE DYNAMICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL  
SOCIETY**

**COMPLETED**

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**DEVELOPMENTAL, CAPABLE AND ETHICAL STATE  
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## TRANSFORMATIVE DYNAMICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

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## 1. SUMMARY

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This policy brief explores the transformative context of civil society in South Africa to facilitate debate and consultation between the state and civil society in advancing a common agenda of social justice. Drawing on a literature review, key expert interviews and Varieties of Democracy data, this policy brief presents key findings on the transformative dynamics of state and civil society in a South African context. Specifically, the policy brief engages critical themes of state and civil society relations, the political context of South African civil society, gender dynamics and transformation within civil society, and the challenges and opportunities of transformation within South African civil society. Key findings show that firstly, although South Africa's civil society political context is relatively open in relation to free speech, there are serious concerns that the state is becoming more arbitrary in the interaction with civil society. This is driven by an increasingly non-responsive and unaccountable state, which, in turn, shapes a more confrontational relationship with civil society at certain levels of society. Secondly, gender representativity and gender inclusiveness remain a challenge within civil society, most notably concerning marginalised gender identities such as the LGBTQI community. Thirdly, there is a lack of consistency in how different levels of government interact with civil society, thus highlighting a need for a model of good practice built on democratic principles to facilitate a collaborative state/civil society relationship. Fourthly, there are vast sectoral differences within civil society, which in turn, also determines the nature of interaction with the government as well as what issues government prioritises. This has had a negative impact on deliberative and participatory democracy in South Africa. There is a need for consistency in how government, regardless of the level of CSO and type of issue, engages with civil society.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

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The South African National Development Agency (NDA) sought an exploratory study to engage the transformative context of South African civil society to facilitate debate and consultation between the state and civil society in advancing a common agenda of social justice. Specifically, the NDA sought to explore transformative dynamics and requirements within South African civil society, including how to promote a fairer gender balance among organisational and sectoral leadership, how to better to capacitate civil society for enhanced sectoral coherence and coordination, funding sustainability, effective advocacy, accountability and in-built checks and balances, and to facilitate the development of norms and standards for civil society to improve self-regulation that all help build trust with social partners and funders.

The study employed a deep case-study analytical approach using expert interview research methods. This approach requires a small sample size, and as such, this policy brief presents findings of key academic experts that specialise in South African civil society. While qualitative interviews generally focus on individual experiences and perspectives, expert interviews highlight the "...individual relevancies of experts...[as] individual perceptions and orientations of experts are seen as essential for shaping social practices in a field of action" (Döringer, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for a "...broader understanding of expert knowledge that goes to technical data and facts by highlighting the implicit dimension of expert knowledge" (Döringer, 2020). Given that the focus of the study is on the transformative dynamics of South African civil society, the expert interviews focused on the following themes:

1. The political context of South African civil society, which included questions on the ability and rights of citizens to organize and act towards the collective public good, including the dynamics that shape the relationship between the state and civil society in South Africa.
2. Key opportunities and challenges for civil society to engage the government in bringing the voice of the ordinary citizen

3. Key challenges for civil society to engage government, including internal dynamics within South African civil society, and relationships and collaboration between different CSOs and CSOs and government
4. Gender dynamics, inclusion and representativity within South African civil society,
5. Key interventions to invigorate state-civil society relationships

In addition to expert interviews, the Varieties of Democracy's Core Civil Society Index, Civil Society Participation Index, and the Women Civil Society Participation Index was analysed. The Core Civil Society Index measures the robustness of civil society understood as "...one that enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals, however, conceived" (V-Dem, 2020a). The Civil Society Participation Index measures to what extent policymakers routinely consult CSOs, the level of public involvement in CSOs, and whether women are prevented from participating (V-Dem, 2020b). The Women Civil Society Participation Index measures the ability of women to express themselves and to form and participation in groups. This is measured by looking at the level of open discussion women enjoy on political issues, participation in CSOs and representation in ranks of journalists (V-Dem, 2020c). To supplement the Women Civil Society Participation Index, we also engaged V-Dem data on women's participation in CSOs, freedom of discussion for women, and the women's political empowerment index, which focusses "...increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency and participation in societal decision making" through fundamental liberties, open discussion of political issues and participation in CSOs as well as the formal representation of women in formal political positions (V-Dem, 2020d).

### **3. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIC SPACE**

Analysing state-civil society relations depends on how the concept of civil society is constructed. If one draws on a Gramscian perspective, civil society is seen as a "...realm of contestation, where organized social actors challenge the power of the state and other social forces" (Bernhard *et. al.* 2015). From a Tocquevillian perspective, "...civil society is the very integument of democracy...an engaged and organized citizenry [that] enables more egalitarian, mass-based forms of rule" (Bernhard *et. al.* 2015). Therefore, there are two contending views of civil society. The Gramscian perspective sees civil society as a space for contestation and challenge, while the Tocquevillian construct regards civil society as a space for dialogue and collaboration. These views of civil society are not mutually exclusive, and one may find a more nuanced conceptualization of civil society as a space of both dialogue and contestation.

Conceptualising civil society in a South African sense remains difficult due to a variety of political cultures that shape state-civic relationships, and by default, political connectedness to the state as well as relationships with donors, constituencies, and overall advocacy and lobbying capacity. One also has to consider the political context of a dominant-party state where one political party enjoys electoral and governance hegemony.

One cannot negate the influence of the United Democratic Front (UDF) on South Africa's political culture. Born in 1983, the UDF was a non-racial and largely non-violent means of resisting the apartheid regime. It had sought to mobilise communities along the lines of key daily issues that affected their members' quality of life under the apartheid regime. In this sense, the UDF had:

reframed the struggle by using local issues to mobilise apolitical groups and build a broad base of support through non-violent tactics. The move to non-violent forms of resistance led to a beneficial form of 'ungovernability'. Ultimately, the shift from violence to non-violence, and the localisation of issues, became an inclusive strategy that allowed all South Africans to fight against apartheid (Katz, 2008).

While the UDF was disbanded in the early 1990s and many activists joined the ranks of the ANC, a

lasting impact of the UDF is the notion of people’s power and localised community struggles. To this effect, the narrative of rights of the local communities in their daily struggles for survival was not removed from the discourse of liberation – as such, liberation had to occur first for communities’ rights within a non-racial democracy to be realised (Suttner, 2004). It is within the ambit of the UDF social movement structures that the conceptualisation of a future participatory South African democracy emerged (Suttner, 2004).

The idea of a participatory and democratic political culture was written into the Constitution. Furthermore, local government is the sphere of government where democratic participation and participatory is most strongly rooted given that this level of government is the closest to people. Here, the notion is that communities should engage their representatives through the ward committee structures and influence policy and developmental plans. This has remained an elusive ideal, however. However, post-apartheid ANC has taken on an increasingly hegemonic role; as such, participatory democracy is often reduced to a ‘feedback’ workshop in which party officials inform communities what policy and development directives will be. The voice of communities is limited in that they are not able to influence policy and developmental directives directly. As a result, community-based organisations are increasingly emerging. Much like the UDF, these organisations mobilise their communities around local issues that directly affect their daily lives. These organisations take up issues with which the state should be concerned, such as HIV/Aids; education; empowerment initiatives; and skills training and adult basic education. In addition, peoples’ power is an ongoing theme of these organisations.

Citizen-centred governance is at the core of participatory and deliberative democracy in South Africa. It draws on the notion of inclusive governance, social justice, political efficacy, and constitutionalism in measuring to what extent the exercise of political power facilitates the expansion of social and political citizenship. Therefore, within the constitutional and legislative domains, civil society is constructed in the Tocquevillian sense whereby the state and civil society collaborate and engage in order to deepen democracy (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Overview of Legislation for Citizen-Centred Governance**

<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Main Purpose</b>
Constitution	Public Participation is an inherent right
S. 59 – NA; S. 72 - NCOP	Local government with regard to public participation. Some of the key responsibilities of local government include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage (i.e. must) encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in local government (section 151 (1)(e))</li> <li>• To provide a democratic and accountable government for local communities (section 152)</li> <li>• To encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government (section 152)</li> <li>• To publish annual reports for public comment (section 162(1)(3))</li> <li>• To conduct council meetings and related business in and “open manner” (section 160(7))</li> <li>• To ensure (i.e. must) that council sittings take place in public (section 160(7))</li> </ul>

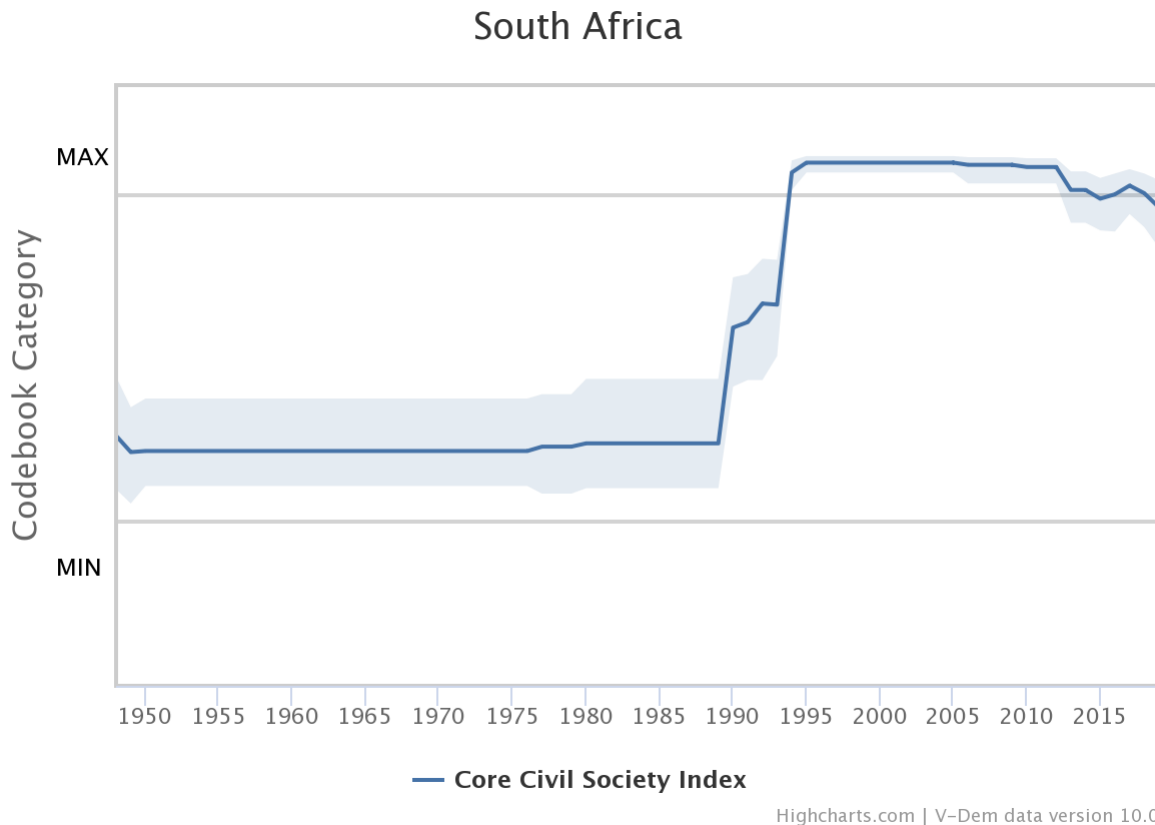
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure (i.e. must) that budgetary processes promote transparency and accountability (section 215)</li> </ul>
Local Government Structures Act, 1998	Key piece of legislation for public participation at the local government sphere. The Act, in section 152, calls for the establishment of ward committees in all municipalities to (section 72.3) “enhance participatory democracy”.
Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000	Important in legislating the parameters of public participation at the local government level; emphasizes the need for community participation in governance processes; and sets out various methods and responsibilities for municipalities in facilitating engagement with the communities they serve
Local Government Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001	Sets out several key regulations for public participation at the local government level. Section 15 stipulates that communities should participate in monitoring, measuring and reviewing municipal performance; Section 1(a) legislates that in the absence of another structure for public participation, the municipality must set up a forum for community participation; Section 1(b) states that the local community must be invited to identify representatives, including from ward committees, and that these (c) must be representative of the composition of the local community. Section 15(2) calls for regular meetings and 14 days of consultation prior to such meetings.
White Paper on Local Government, 1998	<p>As voters: to ensure maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote.</p> <p>As citizens: who express, via different stakeholder associations, their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible.</p> <p>As consumers and end-users: who expect value-for-money, affordable services and courteous and responsive service.</p> <p>As organised partners involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via for-profit businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions.</p>

One notes a strong focus on government inclusion of citizens in decision-making, government rationale for policies geared to reducing inequality, government upholding citizens’ rights, and representation, financial administration and government response to citizens’ demands. These policy

initiatives supported by other constitutional civil and political liberties work to institutionalise a democratic and open civic space<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4. SOUTH AFRICA'S POST-APARTHEID CIVIC SPACE: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

At the dawn of the South African democracy, the South African civic space was reimagined to be one of collaboration and engagement, drawing on the Tocquevillian tradition of civil society.



**Figure 1: South African Core Civil Society Index, 1948 – 2019 (V-Dem, 2020a)**

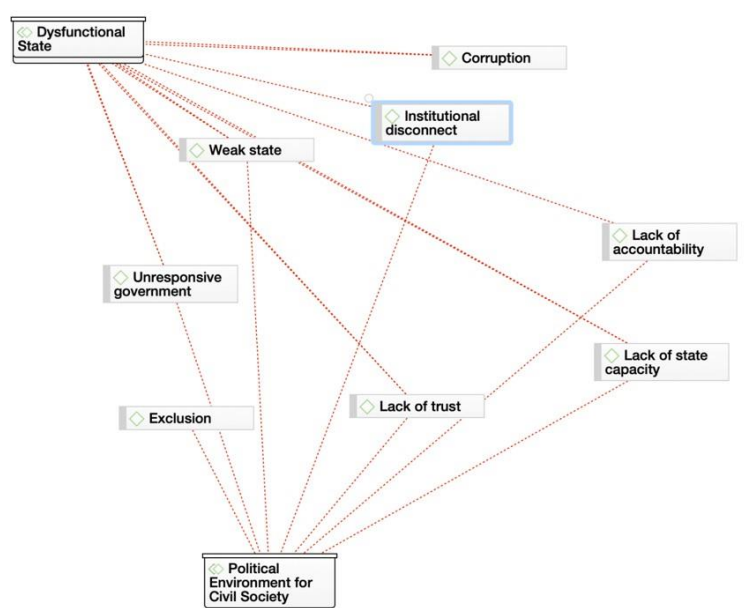
Figure 1 demonstrates that between 1948 and 1989 South Africa's civic space was characterized by repression and limited autonomy. Indeed, the civic space became more restrictive between 1976 and 1980, which is not surprising given the escalation of resistance to the apartheid state. With the political unbanning of liberation movements in the late 1980s the civic space in South Africa became a little more open and autonomous. As South Africa progressed through its historic negotiations to end apartheid and install democracy, as well as the development of new legislation, saw the transformation of South African civic space from restrictive to more autonomous. Figure 1 demonstrates that from 2013 onwards we note a constriction of South Africa's civic space. This period aligns with the Zuma administration and an increasingly autocratic approach towards South African civil society. The general decline in press freedom, coupled with increased measures to curb accountability for state capture during the Zuma administration, as well as subverting political institutions for personal protection and gain, saw a climate of autocratisation or democratic backsliding in South Africa.

When asked to reflect on the political context of South African civic space, there was overwhelming agreement that while the institutional and constitutional structure facilitates agency as part of citizens' rights, South African civic space, however, is constricting due to an increasingly strong and adversarial response from the state. Indeed, one interviewee observes



The civil society space is pretty open in the sense that you can say more or less anything you want, and that people are quite free to organize and mobilize and do, but the state is becoming increasingly weak. And as it weakens, particularly, the security becomes less responsive... in particular the security forces become more arbitrary and their response to things. So, if you do march, for example, if you do protest like most people do because you have no other means of accessing and getting the state to come to you, the only way to do it is through to do it is to protest...it seems to me that the state has become more and more unpredictable and arbitrary as the quality of the policing has deteriorated...So, it's the sense that it's still a lot of political freedom, but the state is becoming less and less predictable and more and more generally less responsive and more and more part of the unpredictability is that it can respond arbitrarily and violently and especially in poor areas. I think people know if you protest you take a chance because if the state comes it can often respond to that way (NDA-1-14-10-2020).

Common themes that emerged from the expert interviews on a constricting civic space in South Africa relates to dysfunctional governance (see figure 2).



**Figure 2: Dysfunctional Governance: Created with Atlas.ti.**

Figure 2 demonstrates that interviewees flagged several factors that impact on the political environment for civil society to operate that relate to state dysfunctionality. Due to corruption and state capture, coupled with a lack of accountability, has laid the foundation for a weak state, an unresponsive government, and an overall lack of state capacity. This, in turn, results in feelings of exclusion, a lack of political trust and overall exclusion.

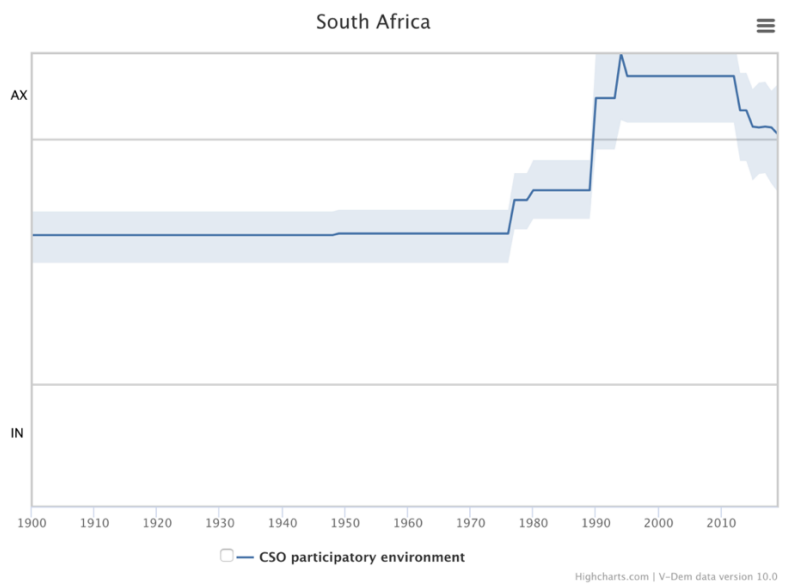
Another key factor is that of institutional disconnect between the various levels of government and civic organisations. Institutional disconnect finds expression in the manner in which there is a lack of consistency in how government at all levels engage with civil society as well as varied experiences that civil society has when engaging government. One interviewee noted:

But I have seen examples of where there is still cooperation, but it tends to be limited within where you build an alliance with a particular person or group of people within government. So, for example, with, I did like an evaluation of a civil society network in Phillip that was working on gender-based violence in Phillip that has been quite a success. One of the reasons is that they've got a very strong ally in the police force, who has opened the door to working with other officials and departments. Therefore, that group of civil society organisations has been

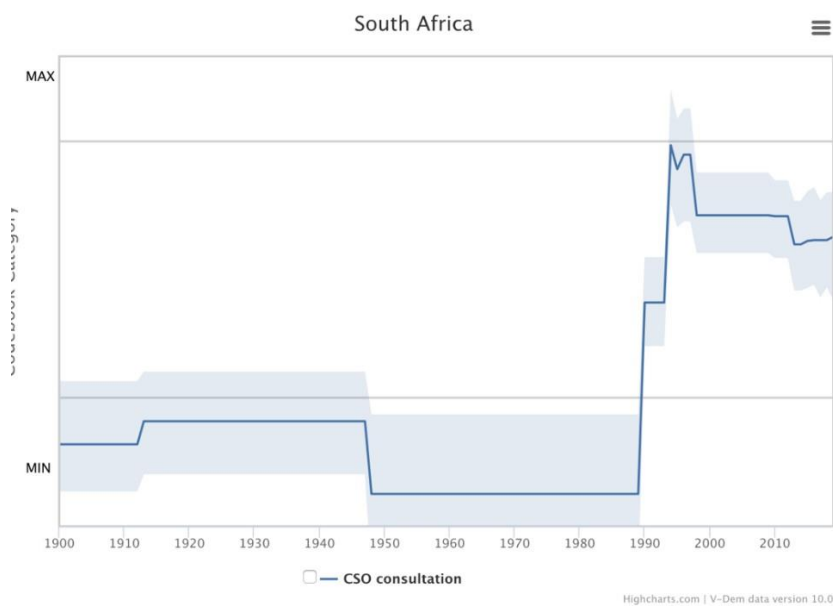
able to make significant progress. Now that doesn't mean that it won't be reversed, but, you know, there are still examples of that. I don't want to sort of condemn the entire system, even though I think there are lots of examples of heavy-handed, anti-democratic, corruption within government as well. So, I don't know. I'm not really giving you a very clear answer (NDA-22-09-2020-02).

There is thus a need to build a model of good practice and consistency for all levels of government in their engagement with civil society and civic organisations. A model of good practice needs to ensure that the principles of democratic participation are sufficiently upheld to facilitate collaborative, citizen-centred engagement with civil society in South Africa.

The expert interview data correlates with the Varieties of Democracy Index findings that the consultative and openness of the civic space in South Africa has declined (see figure 3 and figure 4).



**Figure 3: CSO Participatory Environment: South Africa (V-Dem, 2020).**

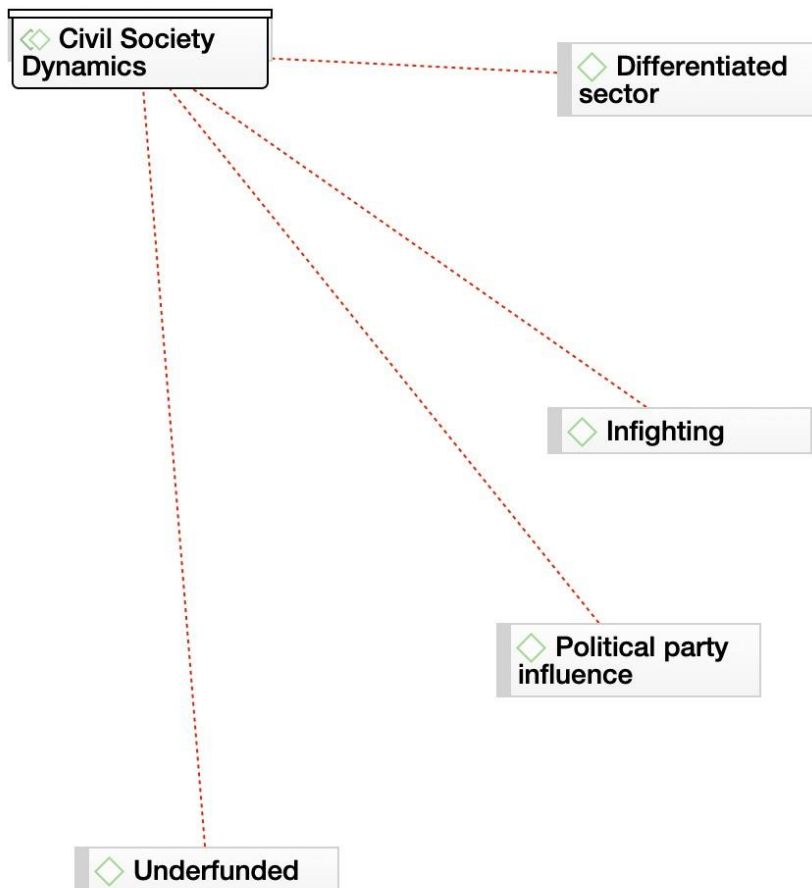


**Figure 4: CSO Consultation: South Africa (V-Dem, 2020).**

It is thus evident that over the course of South Africa’s democratic history, the democratic gains made by civil society has reduced. Both V-Dem data and the qualitative expert interview data flag a constriction of the political context in which civil society operates, as well as highlights worrying trends in the development of state-civil society relations. A central theme in the contraction of civic space is the nature of a dysfunctional state underpinned by challenges of corruption, patronage, unresponsiveness, and a lack of sufficient capacity which leads to a lack of trust and feelings of exclusion, resulting in a somewhat adversarial interaction between state and civil society. However, this is not the case across all levels of government and would depend on which issue as well as which level of government one is analysis in determining the nature of state-civil society engagement.

## 5. CIVIL SOCIETY DYNAMICS: A CURSORY GLANCE

The second theme explores the internal dynamics of South African civil society and the transformative needs that emanates from civil society sectoral dynamics. Figure 5 presents a key overview of internal civil society dynamics that characterise the civic space in South Africa identified through the expert interviews.

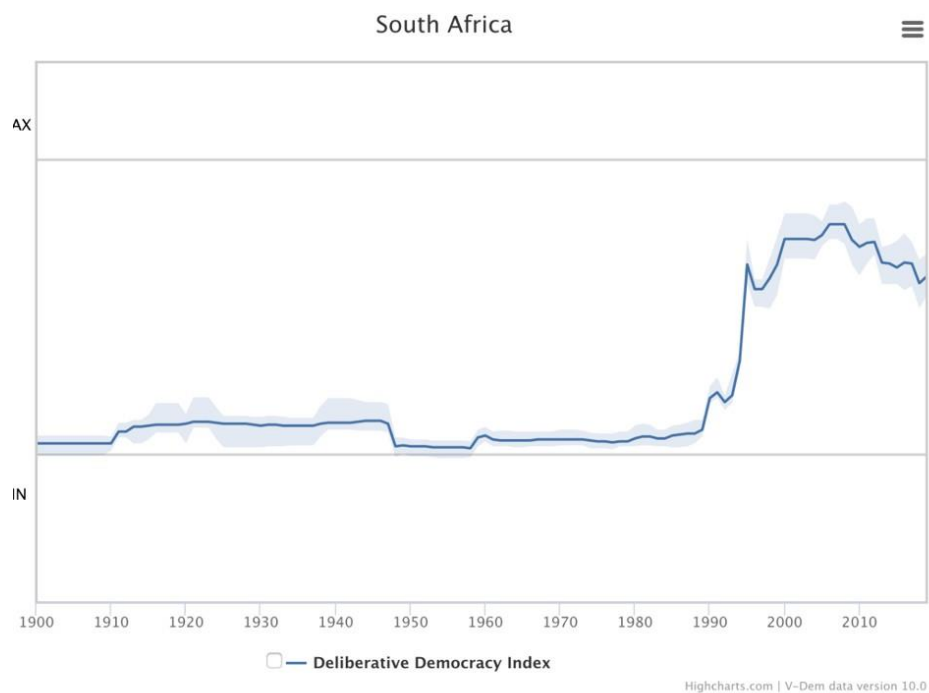


**Figure 5: Civil Society Internal Dynamics (created with Atlas.ti)**

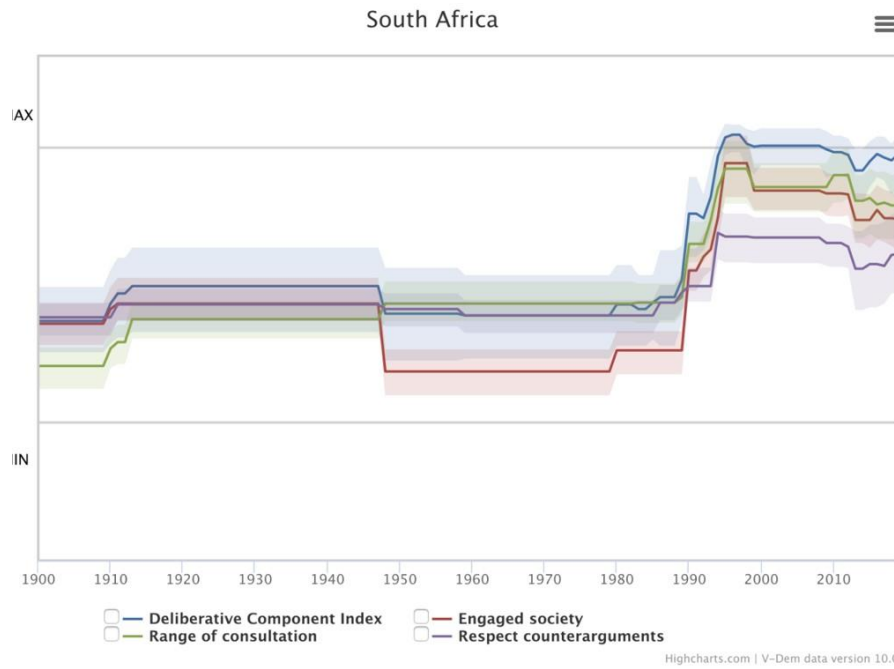
Key factors that shape internal civil society dynamics relate to issues of infighting, underfunding of CSOs, political party influence, and a high degree of differentiation within the civil society sector. Interviewees highlighted that when looking at South Africa’s civic space one needs to distinguish what is conceptualized as the professionalized NGO sector, community-based organisations, and a more

localized and politicised type of organization that compete for political influence within communities. Internal civil society dynamics are thus characterized by a number of caveats that may impact on civil society effectiveness. Questions of representation, access, ability to successfully engage the state as well as the nature of engagement impact on civil society effectiveness. Key to understanding civil society dynamics would be to distinguish between the type and level of civil society organization the state will engage. Key experts distinguished between what is constructed as a more professionalized civic organization, however, these organisations are seen as having limited reach and generally work to influence policy. Another level of civil society is found in associational life, most notably churches, but can also include social and sports clubs, as well as stokvels. These organisations may, however, have deep community reach, but remain largely apolitical. A third distinction is found in what is seen at a more localized level to mediate development and basic service provision. These organisations are highly politicised and often open to competing among each other to become the representative voice of the community. Therefore, sectoral differences within the sector, as well as the level of government with which different CSOs engage with, and the type of issue and whether a specific issues is a priority area for government impact on civil society effectiveness.

When engaging V-Dem data on civil society effectiveness, responsiveness, as well as the V-Dem Deliberative Democracy and the V-Dem Participatory Democracy Index, we note a decline in civil society effectiveness as well as quality of engagement between state and civil society. Figure 6 demonstrates that the quality of deliberative democracy in South Africa has declined.

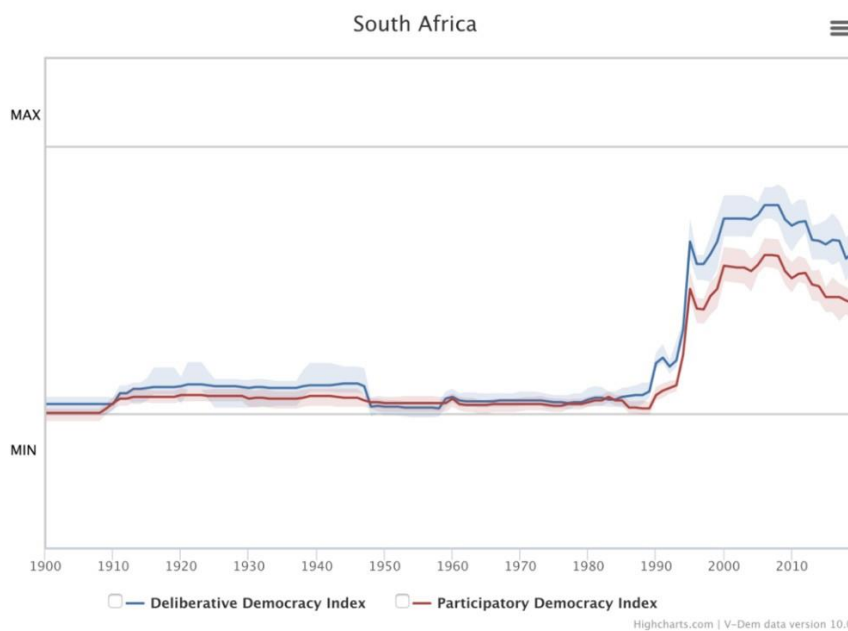


**Figure 6: Deliberative Democracy Index, South Africa (V-Dem, 2020e).**



**Figure 7: Civil Society effectiveness, engagement, consultation, and respect for difference of opinion, South Africa. (V-Dem, 2020f).**

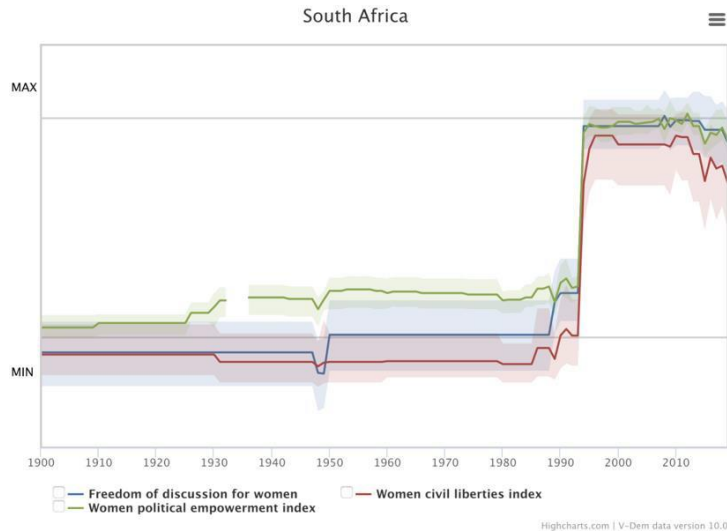
Figure 7 demonstrates that civil society effectiveness is also impacted by a decline in a range of consultation, a decline in societal engagement, as well as a growing intolerance for difference of opinion. Thus, the dynamics flagged by the expert interviewees, most notably a differentiated sector, the level of government being engaged, as well as the nature of the issue of contestation, has a negative impact on the principles of deliberative democracy in South Africa. With a decline in deliberative democracy in South Africa, one also notes a complimentary decline in participatory democracy (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8: South Africa Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Index (V-Dem, 2020g).**

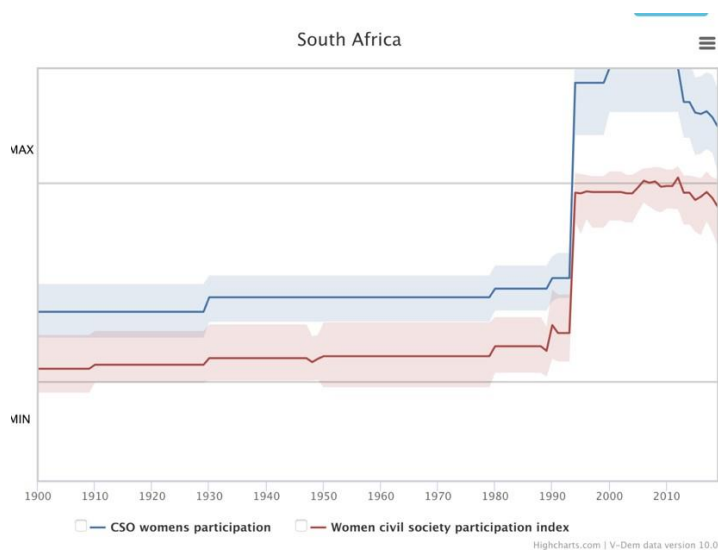
## 6. GENDER DYNAMICS IN CIVIL SOCIETY: REPRESENTATION AND VOICE

A critical theme when engaging transformative dynamics in civil society is that of gender and marginalised gender identities such as LGBTQI communities. V-Dem data demonstrates that the civic space for the inclusion of women’s voices, as well as the ability of women to speak their political minds, is narrowing (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Women’s civil and political liberties, political empowerment and freedom of expression (V-Dem, 2020i).**

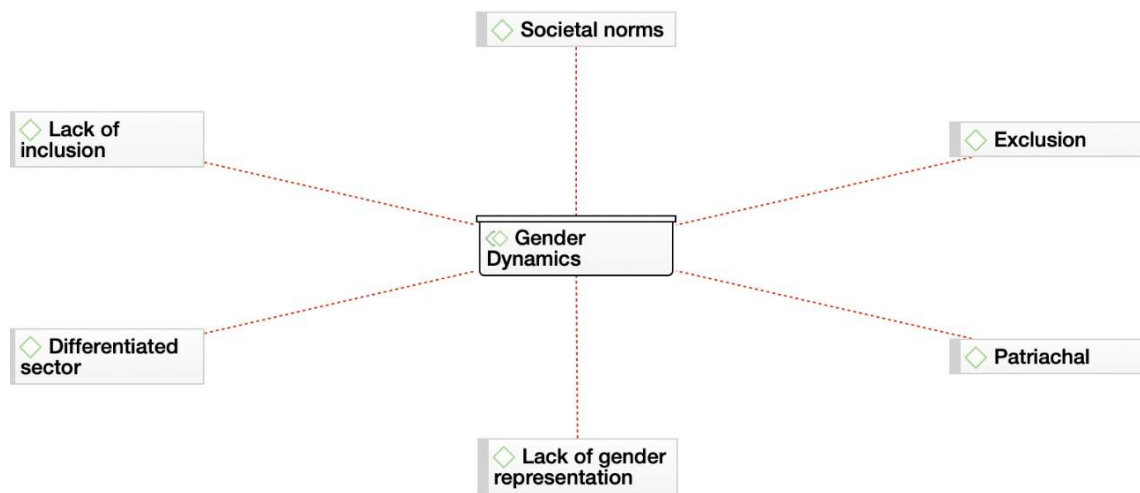
Women’s political empowerment, civil liberties and freedom of expression have declined from around 2009 in South Africa. From 2019, we also noted the narrative of a “war on women” or “Shadow Pandemic” (UNWomen, 2020) highlighting an embedded culture of patriarchy and chauvinism that finds expression in a “structural problem of violence against women” (Moos, 2019). South Africa has one of the highest rates of femicide globally where one woman is murdered every three hours (Khumalo, 2019). This is not surprising given that an enduring legacy of apartheid is inequality, not just racially, but based on gender as well. Civil society is thus a key space to facilitate and include the voices of women as critical issues that affect them have to be placed on the political agenda for transformation. Yet, women’s CSO participation has also declined in South Africa, most notably from under the Zuma administration (see Figure 10).



**Figure 10: Women’s CSO participation, South Africa (V-Dem, 2020j)**

It was thus critical to engage questions of gender and gender representativity within South African civil society with key experts. However, while V-Dem data does demonstrate a decline in women’s political empowerment, there is limited data available on representation, voice, and inclusion of other gender identities such as the LGBTQI community. This is a key caveat that will need to be addressed in order to facilitate a more inclusive and transformed civil society sector. Indeed, as one interviewee noted, there are a number of gender organisations that work on sexual diversity...but I don’t know if that means there is adequate representation in terms of gender for civil society” (NDA-22-09-2020-02).

Key themes that shaped gender representativity in South African civil society included patriarchal societal norms, exclusion, lack of representation, and differences in the sector (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Gender dynamics and factors in South African civil society (created with Atlas.ti).**

Indeed, one interviewee noted,

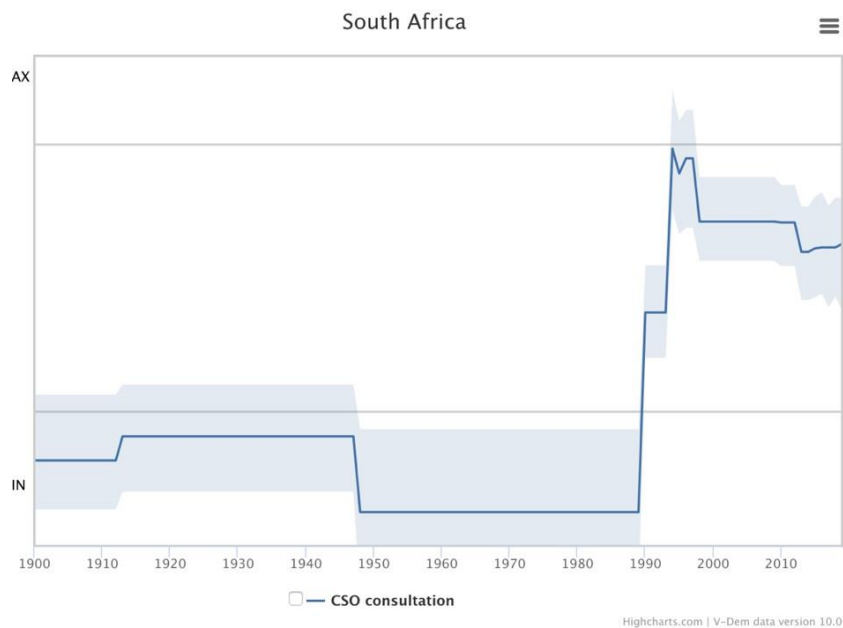
I would maybe just reflect on the one space that for me that has brought some of these questions or issues for me really startling to the forefront and it's in engaging with the Budget Justice Coalition. And, one of the things that have become quite clear in a coalition of different organisations, is that not only is it about the silencing that is societal at this point, you know, it's almost structural and societal, it is also the fact that even within civil society there is still much educating to be done about inclusiveness and equality in relation to gender dynamics, and particularly, as you say, LGBTQI communities. So, one key example is that in developing a position paper on what responsive budgeting looks like and how we would want to engage an entity like the Ministry of Finance and the National Treasury, formulating a clear position of what the exclusions are, is it, are we talking about feminist economics, are we talking about gender budgeting? (NDA-03-08-10-2020).

However, it is also important to note that within younger generations, those traditional gender roles are increasingly being questioned and challenged: “I think there are some aspects of those gender roles which are being questioned more in a younger generation. Not to say that it is all fixed, and much better, but there is maybe less rigid than with older adults or elders or people who are more invested in those delusions... I think there's definitely a lot of pressure coming from young people in terms of lots of areas but also gender norms. (NDA-22-09-2020-02). Therefore, societal norms may

shift towards a more gender-just society, but that may take some time. There is a need to engage in community awareness on gender justice in order to facilitate a transformed society underpinned by a commitment to gender justice, equality of voice, and representation, not just of traditional gender identities such as male and female, but also marginalised gender identities within the LGBTQI community.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: INTERVENTIONS TO INVIGORATE STATE-CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONSHIPS

In order to facilitate a reinvigoration for civil society effectiveness, and by default strengthen deliberative and participatory the country, interviewees flagged some key interventions. Key for interviewees is transforming how CSO consultation happens and the principles that drive CSO consultation. This is not surprising given that V-Dem (2020h) also demonstrates a decline in the quality of CSO consultation (See Figure 12).



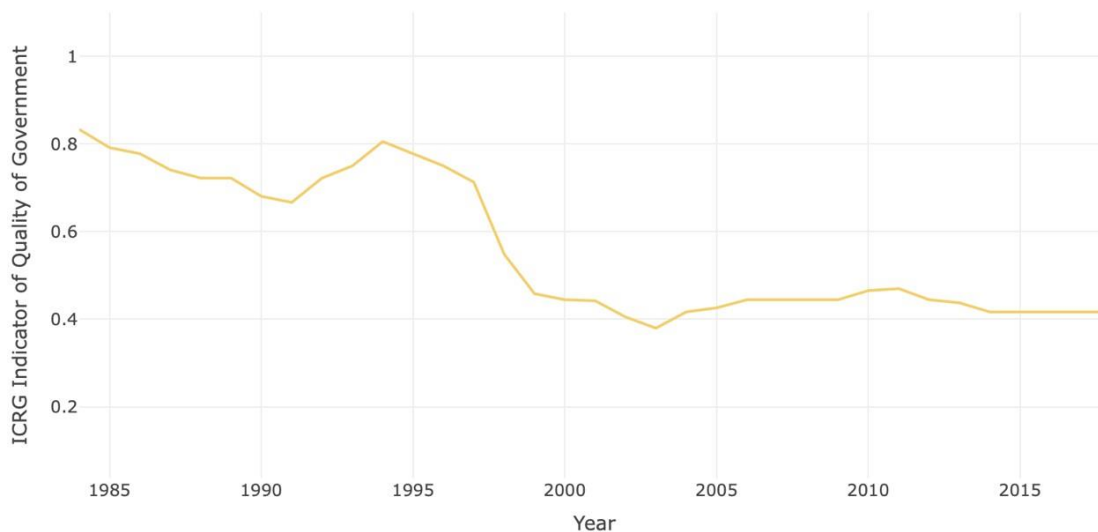
**Figure 12: CSO consultation South Africa (V-Dem, 2020h).**

A critical area for transformation in state-civil society engagement is how co-governance between state and civil society is conceptualised, especially to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups. Indeed, one interviewee noted

you need to find a way to encourage focused, sustained co-governance between civil society and government, and citizens who may not be part of organisations all organised civil society. And, that is more likely to happen where there's a common interest or a shared purpose... There needs to be some kind of, there needs to be an actor that can help to coordinate and help the process move forward. It won't just happen by magic...If you were able to identify champions or supporters within the government who were open to that and saw it as important, you could similarly find counterparts in civil society who had enough trust left to try, and you focus on a problem or area where they are trying to work on, you know, and you had a kind of two-year time frame for what that would look like in terms of what that would look like for co-governance, then I think you could really see some positive results in terms of much more transformative effects of civil society in participating in governance....(NDA-22-09-2020-02).



State effectiveness, quality of governance, as well as government responsive are critical for transformation to facilitate co-governance and civil society effectiveness. This is not surprising, given that South Africa's quality of government has declined significantly from 1995 (see Figure 13).



**Figure 13: South Africa Quality of Government (Dahlberg *et al*, 2020).**

There are number of caveats that will need to be addressed in the socio-political space of South African civil society. Key caveats that impact on the transformative dynamics of South African civil society include a differentiated sector, societal norms, patriarchy, structural flaws in the participatory structure, lack of accountability, disconnect, and dysfunctionality within the state sector. In order to facilitate a transformed civil society towards co-governance, there is a need to engage in a policy review to facilitate quality deliberation as opposed to consultation. A key intervention to curb this democratic disillusionment is to work on creating public participation structures that produce quality interaction.

Boulainne (2018: 7) found that deliberative public engagements can foster and increase trust in political institutions and leaders and may work to increase faith in policy decisions. This, however, is dependent on the sense that people's viewpoints are indeed taken into consideration and increased exposure of citizens to how government decisions are taken (Boulainne, 2018: 7). Further to this, if the political goal is to foster empowerment, then political efficacy will be central (Boulainne, 2018: 9). This means that people perceive that they can influence government. To this effect, in reconceptualising how civic engagement is done, political efficacy and political engagement are key elements that need focus as these are central to building political trust and co-governance. This will entail capacity building programmes for key government personnel, as well as for the communities they represent as well. A key intervention may relate to the depoliticization of engagements with CSOs and a change in view that these bodies do indeed represent diverse community interests. A deeper institutionalisation of the participatory mechanisms in terms of political decision-making may be necessary to facilitate a sense of political efficacy. This may entail a revision of the process whereby government departments will need to demonstrate quality engagement and consultation with communities before decisions are taken. Lastly, to foster political trust, engagement, and efficacy, participatory structures should be adequately resourced, both in terms of monetary needs and necessary infrastructure, as well as softer skills such as communication skills, political engagement, and facilitating quality deliberations.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Development of a national code of conduct for the government at all levels to structure their engagement with civil society to meet the requirements of participatory and deliberative democracy. This will be essential to ensure that there is consistency in how government interacts with CSOs as well as establish a code of conduct based on the constitutional principles of deliberative and participatory democracy.
2. Establish specific engagement offices and advisory support committees to facilitate co-governance across key social and economic departments. Critical public offices would include health, local government, the presidency, and other key departments in the administration that deal with critical issues around the transformation of South African broader society. A dedicated office to engage with key CSOs could establish a structure to facilitate a more nuanced and streamlined approach to state-civil society engagement.
3. Develop, in consultation with CSOs across various sectors, a code of conduct to facilitate co-governance and collaboration. A possible intervention is to call for a national conference where CSOs can develop and agree to a code of conduct to ensure representativity, voice, and inclusion, especially of marginalised groups.
4. Provide training focused on the principles of participatory and deliberative democracy in a South African context and quality deliberations for public officials in their engagement with civil society. Key personnel that engage CSOs may need to undergo training with a focus on softer skills for civil society engagement to facilitate co-governance and collaboration, as well as to build quality deliberations with civil society.
5. Provide training across the spectrum of civil society organisations on the participatory mechanisms for civil society engagement. Given the differentiation and diversity within the CSO sector, there may be a need to provide training for CSOs on South Africa's participatory mechanisms.

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## 9. ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>The civic space is defined as "...the set of legal, policy, and practical conditions necessary for non-governmental actors to access information, express themselves, associate, organize and participate in public life" (OECD, 2018). Further to this, the civic space is seen as a necessary precondition of inclusive development and growth, good governance, including open policies and stakeholder engagement (OECD, 2018).

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