



Impartial Report

Stakeholder Engagement

Knysna Integrated Strategic Development Framework

(Phase 1: Status quo)

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Reporting structure	3
2.1. Dashboard	4
2.1.1. Is there balanced participation in meetings and discussions?	4
2.1.2. Is information being shared and understood?	4
2.1.3. Are communication channels open and people participating and learning?	5
2.1.4. Is mutual trust and respect being developed between stakeholders?	5
2.1.5. Do participants accord with a shared goals and vision?	6
2.1.6. Are there obvious winners and losers?	6
2.1.7. Is the process responsive, flexible and adaptive?	6
2.1.8. Is conflict being resolved?	7
2.1.9. Are enough resources and time allocated to public participation?	7
2.1.10. Is there integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes?	7
2.2. Principles	8
3. Limitations of the report	8
4. Reporters profile	8
5. Status Quo Milestone Report	9
5.1. Assessment Criteria	9
5.1.1. Is there balanced participation in meetings and discussions?	9
5.1.2. Is information being shared and understood?	12
5.1.3. Are communication channels open and people participating and learning?	13
5.1.4. Is mutual trust and respect being developed between stakeholders	14
5.1.5. Do participants accord with a shared goals and vision?	15
5.1.6. Are there obvious winners and losers?	15
5.1.7. Is the process responsive, flexible and adaptive?	15
5.1.8. Is conflict being resolved?	15
5.1.9. Are enough resources and time allocated to the public participation?	17
5.1.10. Is there integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes?	17
6. Summary	17
7. Conclusion	19
8. References	20

1. Introduction

Integrated strategic development planning is gaining momentum as authorities are beginning to understand the complexities of sustainability and seeing a need to coordinate multiple plans, strategies and information. The characteristics of SDFs are: coherent vision; innovative and long term planning approach; active community participation and reflective of community needs and values; holistic and integrative of different sectors of the socio economic structure; considering multiple influencing factors, aligned at local national and international levels and has measurable deliverables.

The stakeholder engagement aspect of modern-day planning is particularly challenging and fraught with pitfalls. The potential for conflicting views and clashing objectives increases with an escalation in the number of actors and issues. Conflict, if left unresolved, undermines the credibility of the process. Mutual trust has been shown to be of crucial importance, especially in multi-cultural societies such as that of Knysna. It is therefore important to continuously keep track of and reflect on factors which might influence the integrity of the process. This would enable planners and implementers to receive early warnings when there are signals that trust and credibility is being compromised.

'Impartial brokers' who act as independent observers who can objectively comment on the integrity of the process play a key role throughout stakeholder engagement initiatives. There are, however, few examples where independent commentary has been part of the process, and the Knysna ISDF presents an opportunity to pioneer this approach. Academic institutions, especially when they use their own funding without being on the 'payroll' of any of the immediate role players, are ideally placed to provide such a service. There is potential for mutually beneficial partnerships where authorities, consultants and communities could benefit from free access to impartial assessments by reputable individuals; and academics which could promote innovation and at the same time gain valuable research and teaching information.

The Sustainability Research Unit of NMMU www.nmmu.ac.za/sru (NMMU-SRU) is to play the role of impartial reporter of the process by periodically providing objective assessments and commentary on the integrity of the process. The emphasis will be on monitoring, on-going reflection and adaptation. The assessment will therefore be based on on-going reflection, learning and adaptation by role players rather than being judgmental in its approach.

2. Reporting structure

There is a difference of opinion regarding what makes "good" public participation. Researchers have offered various criteria for assessment for example acceptance criteria, process evaluation criteria and outcome or effectiveness criteria (Abelson and Gauvin 2006; Rowe and Frewer 2000; Rowe and Frewer 2004; Webler and Tuler 2001; Webler, Tuler and Krueger 2001; Barnes 2008). Most examinations of public participation in public administration and planning are routed in normative debates and democratic and administrative theory.

From a complex systems approach we propose the use of an easily understandable 'dashboard', using recognized peer reviewed indicators of fair and equitable stakeholder engagement. We have adapted criteria put forward by three prominent scholars of public participation processes: Annette Bos and Colleagues from Monash University in Australia, published in the highly respected journal *Global Environmental Change* (Bos et al. 2013); criteria for participation used by (Clark and Clarke 2011) and published in the acclaimed journal *Land Use Policy*; and a set of monitoring indicators used by Dr Georgina Cundill and Prof Christo Fabricius, published in the journal *Ecology and Society* (Cundill and Fabricius 2010).

Using these sources and our own on-going work in adaptive governance, we have identified 10 criteria or key issues that should form the basis for reflection: 1) balanced and fair participation; 2) communication and information sharing; 3) learning and reflection; 4) trust development; 5) shared goals and vision; 6) win-win solutions; 7) responsiveness, flexibility and adaptation; 8) conflict resolution; 9) resources allocated; and 10) vertical linkages.

2.1. Dashboard

The criteria used to assess the process have been presented in the form of a dashboard reflecting three different ratings. A green rating meaning that the criterion has been satisfactorily achieved, amber meaning the criterion is a matter of concern and might develop into a problem and red meaning the criterion is a problem warranting urgent attention.

2.1.1. Is there balanced participation in meetings and discussions?

All role players have an opportunity to air their views and be heard	Some key role players are not participating	General lack of participation, key role players are excluded, looming dissatisfaction
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Balanced participation speaks to Rowe and Frewer's (2000) criterion of representativeness which states participants should be representative of the population affected. It also talks to Webler and Tuler's (2000) meta-principle of fairness which stipulated the need to provide necessary opportunities for action by stakeholders. The issue of balanced participation focuses not only on accessibility to means or platforms by which to engage but also in terms of having access to the deliberation process taking place. Stakeholders should be able to attend and be present, to participate in dialogue and even initiate discourse by making statements. They should be able to ask for clarification, challenge, answer and argue and be a part of the decision making through resolving disagreement (Webler and Tuler 2000). The issue is also about how communication is conducted and whether this privileges groups or enables dialogue between community members from different social positions (Barnes 2008).

Stakeholder engagement should begin as soon as it is reasonably practical or as soon as value judgements become salient (Rowe and Frewer 2000). Unless citizens are involved in the plan making process their participation will lack understanding of the scope of issues and range of opportunities selected for the final plan (Bordy et al. 2003).

No single method used to facilitate stakeholder engagement will suffice on its own and in most cases hybrids of traditional methods work best (Rowe and Frewer 2000). The more types of meetings and means used the more stakeholder groups participate (Brody et al. 2003). For example a website has the potential to influence participation positively enabling citizen involvement and working towards overcoming the size dilemma faced in stakeholder engagement where administrative states are large and complex and where numerous groups and individuals need to be accommodated (Roberts 2004). A website can become one of the conduits to distribute information but cannot be the sole method used as it also exacerbates the socio economic bias (Weber, Loumakis and Bergman 2003).

To fairly represent all stakeholders in a community a large sample size is required (Rowe and Frewer 2000) and this can be represented in the quantity of persons who have participated and can also serve as a proxy to evaluate the ability of the consultants to engage with the community (Brody 2003). Even though involvement of all is impractical it is still important to understand non-participation on a micro scale (individual level) as personal circumstances and social characteristics can influence participation (Moon, Marshall and Cocklin 2012). Public apathy towards planning could be a result of a sense of cynicism, disenchantment, or lack of trust and the belief that authorities or agencies don't acknowledge, hear or honour what the public have to contribute (Lachapelle et al 2003)

2.1.2. Is information being shared and understood?

Information is easily available, accessible and understandable	Some important information is unavailable, accessible and/or difficult to understand	Information is frequently unavailable or inaccessible
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Access to information involves making it available through a diversity of means (accessible copies online or at the library) as well as being accessible to a diversity of participants from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds and being provided sufficient time to consider the information for informed decision making. Restrictions on information and other resources will impact the quality of the participation process (Rowe and Frewer 2000).

Supplying information and including different means to transfer the information is crucial in ensuring meaningful outcomes (Gudowsky and Bechtold 2013). It fosters the internal legitimacy of processes in solving complex problems (Roberts 2004) and empowers participants to contribute constructively and to play their role in the process (Brody et al. 2003; Rowe and Frewer 2000). The more complete the stakeholder information, the more informed the stakeholders are (Brody et al. 2003). Rowe and Frewer (2000) however, warn against information overload in respect of too much information and suggest concise summaries of information, free of jargon, which can increase participation significantly (Brody et al. 2003).

The more diverse techniques employed to provide information encourages participation (Brody et al. 2003) as the educational divide among participants continues to be a challenge in public participation (Roberts 2004). Providing the same information to all participants can exclude certain sectors as not all participants are the same in terms of motivation, education, knowledge and even in their ability to uptake different modes of presentation.

2.1.3. Are communication channels open and people participating and learning?

Communication channels are open and people participate in discussions and share information, make compromises & are willing to adapt	Communication is somewhat restricted. Some people are unable to participate in discussion and some information is being withheld or ignored, role players cling to strongly held views	Lack of communication is evident and little participation in discussion occurs. Most role players keep their cards close to their chests, polarization and stereotyping dominates
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This criterion speaks to the flow of information between stakeholders and evidence of learning taking place. If stakeholder engagement only involves one way communication and is seen as educating or informing the public the opportunity for officials to learn from the public is lost (Barnes 2008). The learning must be a two way process where officials need to be open to learning and actively listening to the community and the community provided an opportunity to learn and develop themselves. For the community this means increased knowledge and understanding, enhanced capacity to participate, increased sense of self-esteem and worth in the knowledge that their contributions are valued (Barnes 2008). Smaller groups (under 12) is said to be generally more useful as in larger groups dialogue breaks down where only a few engage while the rest remain silent (Schieffer, Isaacs and Gyllenpalm 2004).

2.1.4. Is mutual trust and respect being developed between stakeholders?

Acceptance of diversity in opinions, needs and aspirations, sense of togetherness	Early indications of disregard for some views	Stereotyping, enemy or "us and them" perceptions, name calling, judgementalism
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Trust building should be an integral component of planning processes where community engagement aims to build trust between stakeholders. Without trust between stakeholders relationships cannot be build which creates a significant barrier to effective planning.

In their review of over 43 case studies involving the impacts of trust on interpersonal behaviour in an organizational setting, Dirks and Ferrin 2001 found that trust promotes knowledge sharing among stakeholders and has a positive impact on attitudes and perceptions towards the process and other stakeholders. It promotes satisfaction with decisions made and with those involved. A lack of trust results in stakeholders holding the information and decisions made within the process with suspicion. Dirks and Ferrin 2001 also offer a moderation model of the impact of trust and posit that trust has more of a moderating effect depending on the strengths of the situation. For example groups with high levels of motivation focus on group goals in high trust conditions but in low trust conditions the focus moves toward individual goals.

Building trust can be created by treating people fairly within the process, which contains rules to ensure this occurs (Lachapelle et al 2003). Trust and commitment can also be fostered by acknowledging stakeholder contributions (Schieffer, Isaacs and Gyllenpalm 2004).

2.1.5. Do participants accord with a shared goals and vision?

Common goals are articulated and agreed upon. Compromises, reconciliation are evident	Uncompromising goal setting, signs of irreconcilable or divergent goals – Little accordance with a shared goal or vision is evident	Widely divergent and conflicting goals dominate. No accordance with a shared goal or vision is evident.
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It is often thought that diversity in a group inhibits reaching consensus in decision making and reaching a shared vision with shared goals. This however is not the case. In the organizational learning literature it has been shown that even though people may hold different perceptions of a reality they can still agree on the way they frame the perceptions. In other words a group can simultaneously agree and disagree and in fact it is necessary for collective learning to take place (Fiol 1994).

Having a shared vision contributes positively toward attitudes of knowledge sharing (Chow and Chan 2008; Li 2005) and can assist groups in having constructive discussion and focusing the group on a common set of goals while still maintaining their individual perspectives (Broome 2004).

2.1.6. Are there obvious winners and losers?

Acknowledgement of power differences. Efforts to close the gap between winners and losers. Balanced participation	Power differences are not readily acknowledged. Some interest groups are more vocal and dominant than others	Powerful interest groups take over and dominate processes and inputs
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Power relationships between stakeholders can influence the process (Bond, Thompson-Fawcett 2007) where the more equal the power between stakeholders the greater the consensual, cooperative behaviour is experienced and more effective and collaborative outcomes are forthcoming (Roberts 2004). Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation despite its age is still relevant in defining the degree of citizen participation in community engagement, placing it on a ladder of power ranging from non-participation and manipulation at the bottom of the ladder to the top of the ladder where citizen control and power dominates.

Power comes in a diversity of forms and can simply be the power of numbers, or power of knowledge and education as well as capacity to engage fully. It can also mean a stakeholder holding more control in the process. The diversity of means by which the process engages with the community helps to reduce the power gap between stakeholders. Individuals and groups who have been previously excluded and experienced powerlessness respond to opportunities for engaging and articulating and developing their experiences before they will expose themselves to opportunities where they would find themselves deliberating with people in power (Barnes 2008).

Roberts (2004) points out that it is not just how much power a stakeholder has but the power distance between stakeholders. Individuals and groups who have been previously excluded and experienced powerlessness respond to opportunities for engaging and articulating and developing their experiences before they will expose themselves to opportunities where they would find themselves deliberating with people in power (Barnes 2008). Evaluation of stakeholder engagement processes needs to consider how the different positions of power occupied by stakeholders may affect the process. It can for example affect the weight given to their perspectives (Barnes 2008).

2.1.7. Is the process responsive, flexible and adaptive?

Responsiveness, adaptation and reflection characterizes the process	Early signs of rigidity and unwillingness or inability to be flexible in the process	Most of the processes and methods are cast in stone, little adaptation despite early warning signs
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Flexibility to respond to challenges that emerge in the process is required in managing complex and dynamic systems. Strategic flexibility requires the ability to identify changes in the external environment, being able to quickly divert the necessary resources to address the challenge and then to be able to recognize when those resources need to be re diverted or halted. Barriers to achieving strategic flexibility include 1) a lack of sensitivity to feedbacks where the challenges are not identified timeously nor is action taken fast enough to address the challenges; 2) the reluctance to admit mistakes and therefore to address the mistakes and 3) future uncertainty where it is difficult to predict outcomes with confidence (Shimizu and Hitt 2004).

Shimizu and Hitt (2004) suggest several strategies to avoid system rigidity traps. These include 1) measuring and monitoring decision outcomes, 2) stimulate decision making processes by incorporating a devil’s advocate approach 3) creating dynamic mechanisms to gain new ideas and perspectives, 4) recognize the limitations of static governance systems, 5) do not narrowly focus on one decision, consider decision portfolios, and 6) analyse and measure learning that can be used in the next step.

2.1.8. Is conflict being resolved?

Conflicts are acknowledged and actively managed, facilitators have good conflict management skills	Conflicts are swept under the carpet or unrecognized	Conflicts are left to fester
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Conflict in relation to stakeholder engagement processes commonly sees administrators being accused of co-optation and manipulation and citizens with over dramatization. If stakeholder engagement is used to manipulate then dissatisfaction will increase resulting in instability and distrust between stakeholders (Roberts 2004). Lack of trust is a significant barrier to effective participation and can overwhelm those involved in the process (Lachepelle et al. 2003). The results of this can be manifested in various forms, including lack of participation, animosity, distrust, appeals, litigation and even threats and violence (Lachepelle et al 2003).

The reporting of conflict can be influenced by the evaluators’ view of the roles assumed by both citizen and administrator (Roberts 2004). For example the confrontational tactics employed by some citizens is consistent with advocacy and interest group politics where citizens compete with other interest groups. Within the context of advocacy and interest group politics acting within a pluralist system but not necessarily in a paradigm where the role of citizens is as a subject to an authority system where it would be consider inappropriate (Roberts 3004). Sometimes a disjuncture between the type of system and the role taken by participants can create misunderstandings and the development of mistrust.

Engaging in dialogue can promote understanding and trust and can assist in building relationships. By moderating debate rather than mediating negotiations which causes “opponents” to develop arguments, identify crucial or missing information and clarifying difference and weakening relationships; whereas mediating negotiation works towards finding solutions collaboratively (Forester 2006). Furthermore independence (which fosters trust) can be demonstrated through the appointment of a steering committee on conditions its members are from a diversity of entities (Rowe and Frewer 2000).

2.1.9. Are enough resources and time allocated to public participation?

It is possible to slow down where necessary to enable all key interest groups to make input	Some processes move too fast for role players to stay abreast, some role players lag behind	The process proceeds too fast for most role players to participate, public participation is ‘quick and dirty’
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By dedicating sufficient resources to a process a more successful engagement with the public can occur (Brody et al.2003) as the community will be able to fulfil their role and brief in the process (Rowe and Frewer 2000). Resources required to enable public participation include information resources such as summaries of pertinent facts relevant to the decision making required. Sufficient human resources are also required and this includes enough people to run the process effectively an access to experts and relevant knowledge holders. The material resource required includes venues for meetings and information displays as well as projectors, whiteboards and even stationary. Providing enough time resources is critical, stakeholders need enough time to process information and to make decisions. If there is a deficiency in any of these resources the quality of the process will be compromised (Rowe and Frewer 2000).

2.1.10. Is there integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes?

Efforts are made to ensure compatibility with provincial and national plans and global trends. Provincial and national role players are consulted and make input	Some incompatibilities are evident, provincial and national role players are acknowledged but are not involved	There is little or no evidence of vertical linkages
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Multi level networked participation is necessary to build adaptive capacity in social ecological systems which includes having three key components, namely a linked institutional environment, inclusivity in decision making at various levels and deliberation. These components together facilitate co production of knowledge and adaptive capacity which is not within the group but is dependent on the linkages and the engagement between the actors (Robinson and Berkes 2011).

A linked institutional setting means having vertical and horizontal linkages which influence the system. The upward linkages can be a conduit by which funds, resource and innovative thinking can flow. The downward linkages in particular enable changes on the ground to be effected. Inclusion in decision making is required for important local and expert knowledge to be incorporated so as to contribute to quality decisionmaking. Without inclusivity in decision making the linkages become less effective. The third key component is deliberation which helps to shape opinions and create consensus. Without deliberation interests, positions and knowledge remain fixed and no learning can occur (Robinson and Berkes 2011)

2.2.Principles

The academic team will cover their own costs, using university funds, and will not receive funds from any of the interested and affected parties. The agreement and trust of the Knysna Municipality and consultants, and their acceptance of the bona fides of the NMMU-SRU team is important for the success of the project. The following principles of engagement will guide the NMMU-SRU reporting process:

- Primarily focused on the process and not the outcomes and decisions made within
- the process so as not to duplicate any part of the process and the mandate of the
- consultants
- An impartial relationship with all stakeholders, where any misdirected comments or
- communication with NMMU will be immediately redirected to the consultants and
- the municipality
- Strongly independent and impartial reporting without influence from any
- stakeholders or the public
- Accurate and fair reporting`
- Non-judgemental or accusatory reporting.

3. Limitations of the report

The focus of this report is on the Integrated Strategic Development Framework stakeholder engagement process itself and not the findings or the content of discussions taking place in the process. The process begins with the appointment of the consultant, includes all the public engagement and ends with the final outputs of the process and how the public feel their contributions were included. This particular report focuses on Phase 1 of the process, namely the formulation of the status quo as of the 4th of November 2013. The Status Quo Expo was the last event included in this Phase 1 report. Any actions or events taking place thereafter do not fall in the ambit of this report and will feature in the Phase 2 report.

4. Reporters profile

In the interests of transparency and accepting the fact that no research is ever bias free this profile of the reporter and compiler of this report is offered. In her capacity of a Phd Student of the Sustainability Research Unit under the guidance of Professor Christo Fabricius, Bianca Currie is the primary reporter of the ISDF process. Her interests in the process from an academic perspective are linked to her current research which focuses on public participation in water management using the Knysna and Swartvlei systems as case studies. Bianca uses a complex systems lens with the aim of improving the resilience of systems.

Bianca has a Masters in nature conservation where she conducted a resource economics study involving a cost benefit analysis of water catchment rehabilitation against water gains and tourism benefit. She also has a B

Tech in nature conservation, all of which have been obtained through the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University at their George Campus.

Bianca lectures several subjects, namely communications, environmental education, conservation development and social impact assessments for the School of Natural Resource Management, nature conservation and game ranch management programmes. She has run small courses and workshops in a range of topics including biodiversity stewardship and extension.

As an impartial reporter of the ISDF stakeholder engagement process Bianca strives to transcend any biases she may have and to treat all views fairly. She aggressively and continually challenges her own perspectives and pursues a diversity of opinion from others. She accepts the professional obligations and limitations and realizes that her words and actions can damage the public's opinion of the ISDF process and the appointed consultants. She endeavours to always present the truth as completely as she can tell it.

5. Status Quo Milestone Report

This report marks the end of the first phase of the Knysna Integrated Strategic Development Framework (ISDF) community engagement process. Phase one was to determine the current status quo in relation to demographic, economic, spatial (including biophysical and man-made elements), human settlement, biodiversity and natural systems, infrastructure and legislative contexts.

The report is based on the observations made at the ISDF launch event held at the temporary Knysna town library on Monday 9th September 2013, a follow up meeting with Patricia Mulder on the 25 September 2013, workshops attended, namely the economic workshop on the 26th of September which was attended by a select few estate agents, property developers and a black business consortium. The SANParks workshop on 1st October was attended by SANParks staff. The Knysna Accommodation Association workshop scheduled for the 30th of September was rescheduled due to miss communication regarding the venue and time. Furthermore this report includes the Expo Café on the 4th of November. The media related to the process has also been observed.

After each engagement participants were interviewed and asked how they felt about the process. Questions such as, "how do you feel about the process"; "do you feel sufficiently informed about the process"; "are you going to attend more meetings" were asked. Other interviews with participants of workshops and meetings not attended where telephonically conducted and non-participants were also interviewed. The data from these interviews is used to substantiate statements made in this report.

5.1. Assessment Criteria

Each assessment criteria will be reported on separately answering three key questions namely 1) what is good about this aspect? 2) where are the areas for improvement and 3) what is the justification for the rating? Quotes obtained through the interviews are used to demonstrate the aspects.

Even through each of the ten criteria are presented separately, it must be noted that they overlap and influence each other. For example the unresolved conflict discussed in 5.1.8 impacts mutual trust developing which is discussed in 5.1.4. A summary of the criteria and there ratings is provided in point 6 of this report and will be used to disseminate the report findings. This will be done through a blog site and the use of popular media (newspapers). Each criterion will now be discussed.

5.1.1. Is there balanced participation in meetings and discussions?

All role players have an opportunity to air their views and be heard	Some key role players are not participating	General lack of participation, key role players are excluded, looming dissatisfaction
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Within the Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement process stakeholders have several conduits by which to have their views heard and to engage in discussion with other stakeholders. These means include:

- The Connection Café: A space with a display providing information about the process at the Knysna Library. Community members can gain information and contribute via a suggestion box. This space is also used to display findings at strategic times and called “Expo Cafes”.
- Workshop Cafés: Workshops with particular groups at diversity of venues including the Knysna Library and for example the SANParks offices. These cafes are conducted with selected and invited participants and any group or sector can request a workshop which will then be arranged.
- Data cafes: These cafes are in essence semi structured interviews
- Online Café: Website providing information and with a “Contact Us” page for email correspondence.
- Road Café: Mobile “we come to you” workshops designed for interaction with the wards and other interest groups.

Representation in developing the status quo relied heavily on workshops with the municipal employees from a diversity of departments from parks, public works technical services refuse management, administration, Knysna Tourism and traffic officials. Valuable findings regarding the status quo was obtained from workshops with the municipal employees. Other representation includes the business sector, the youth sector, Knysna Accommodation Association, SANParks, and the ward structures through the IDP process. The mobile road cafes engaging with the ward structures are assisting in creating an ease of access to platforms and mediums by which to involve themselves. A general willingness to participate is being expressed and in general the community are seeing the process as an opportunity to put their views across.

“I am coming back and I would like to play a role in this. It’s a starting point and I am feeling positive”

Hornlee male resident

This is a starting point, I am positive and I will be back. I want to be a part of this”

Property developer

“This is a boat that is now leaving the gulf, we have to decide to get on it and try and influence where it is going to go to. Will you get on that boat or not. Initially I will be a passenger personally and I will see how the process is working.” “It’s early days, we are still finding out who must I go to, how I must engage and so on and so on. It’s an opportunity to put some ideas forward” I am not talking about little ideas; I am talking about big ideas.”

Retired Brenton resident

“I see it as an opportunity to get some issues forward that have actually never been taken seriously by any of our municipalities.”

White female resident

“We want to be part of that think tank, I am going to volunteer, I will be there. We will try to be involved as possible. It provides us with an opportunity to put our views across and try and see that it goes to an implementation stage. We are looking for a vehicle to get things done in a positive way. If it has to be that we have to roll up our sleeves, we will be here.”

Single mother

“It’s an opportunity to put some ideas forward” I am not talking about little ideas; I am talking about big ideas. Its early days, we are still finding out who must I go to, how must I engage and so on and so on.

Semi-retired resident

The website is being received well and has the potential to influence participation positively enabling citizen involvement and a primary conduit to distribute information.

“There is a web page running about it, information on the web, with a lot of projects that’s not the case. So you don’t have to be here, you don’t have to attend a meeting, you can get information from other sources and still be involved.”

Involved municipal official

“Things have moved on, now a lot of information is available online which you can look at. You can prepare and raise your questions from home where previously you had to go to the meetings to keep abreast of things.”

Retired white male

There are several areas where improvements can be made. Only targeted groups and individuals are being invited to the workshops which serve the purpose of gathering data to populate a status quo report. The workshop cafes, expo café days allow for a two way exchange of information, discussion and deliberation to take place which encourages high levels of citizen participation. The workshops are open to anyone who wishes to attend but the events have not been advertised or placed on the calendar of events on the website. This has reduced the potential for greater diversity in stakeholders able to participate using the workshop method.

The municipal departments were relied upon heavily to provide information which contributed significantly to establishing the status quo. The civil sector appears to only have contributed solutions and innovative ideas through the status quo development phase and don't appear to have contributed to establishing the baseline by which the process is founded. The lack of diversity of participation in the workshops and contribution to the status quo data could result in administrative and technical knowledge crowding out citizen representation.

Few workshops have been rescheduled due to a lack of attendance for example the Belvidere Workshop where one participant arrived necessitating a rescheduling. The first scheduled meeting with the Knysna Accommodation Association was also cancelled. Some believe the lack of attendance is due to a lack of advertising of the event. One interviewee stated that none of her neighbouring community knew about the meeting until she phoned around. Another non-participating respondent is quoted as saying:

“I have never heard of it, I don't even know what it stands for. I am on four Facebook groups for Knysna and I have never heard of it.”

Young married white women resident

“I registered at the launch and got confirmation of it by email but that's been about it. I haven't heard about all these meetings taking place about the economy and the environment and all these things.”

Semi- retired resident

There is a feeling that the lack of communication about the logistics of meetings and the lack of a larger participation by the civil sector in the workshop cafes is a deliberate strategy employed in order to prevent certain sectors from participating, as reflected in the following quote.

“There was supposed to be a public participation process to the awarding of the tender and the municipality decided to leave out people who might object. So they took the easy route, you cannot not have environmental groups involved in this process. You can't leave these people out.”

Middle aged white male

On the micro scale (individual level) there is also a certain degree of apathy towards stakeholder engagement as a result of the belief that authorities or agencies don't acknowledge, hear or honour what the community have to contribute as reflected in the following statement.

“There have been people who have been trying to fight for this town and the municipality never listen. He has had enough of trying and I think a lot of people in this town feel like this. The general public feel like why bother. They will complain about it over a cup of coffee or whatever but not see them do something about because they all feel it's a waste of time and nothing changes.”

Married young working mother

Several complaints have been received from Sedgefield residents who say they have not had an opportunity to contribute to the process and that very few actually know about the process. One expressed that he found the pamphlet at the municipal offices and he wanted to involve himself but did not know what it was really about and how to go about participating. A further group said they had been informed that the process was taking place but did not know how they could contribute and would need time to find out. Furthermore it is recognised that SANParks are a key stakeholder and their involvement is vital but there is a feeling that the civil environmental groups should also have been included in the data gathering process.

The planned approach provides a diversity of means by which the community can participate which provides opportunity for role players to have their views heard. The lack of communication with the Sedgefield community, the lack of wider broadcasting and involvement of the civil sector in workshop cafés and leaves in question if all key role players participated in the development of the status quo snapshot. The exclusion of certain sectors in at this critical stage could create areas of misunderstanding in future meetings and could also create a sense that voices are not being heard in the process. This necessitates an amber rating representing that this aspect of the process needs to be observed closely.

5.1.2. Is information being shared and understood?

Information is easily available, accessible and understandable	Some important information is unavailable, accessible and/or difficult to understand	Information is frequently unavailable or inaccessible
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In the Knysna ISDF community engagement process a space called the Connection Café has been created for an information display at the Woodmill Walk in the temporary library on Long Street in Knysna. Several specific disciplines have been created to segment the information; these include 1) economic, 2) environment 3) human settlements, urban and rural development 4) infrastructure and services. The segmentation of the information allows it to be better managed and presented as its complexity and volume can potentially overwhelm participants. Satellite maps of the area are also on display and a suggestion box is available.

The Connexion Cafe provides community members with a space where they can gain information and contribute via a suggestion box. This space is also used to display findings at strategic times when called “Expo Cafes”. The first expo displays the findings of the status quo and took place on Monday 4th of November 2013. The status quo report has been made available at the Connection Café and a PowerPoint presentation of the information are also been shown in English.

The online café is a website where information can be accessed about the process and provide a “Calendar of Events”, a “Registration” and “Contact Us” page. The status quo reports and the PowerPoint presentations were posted on the website three days in lead up to the Expo Café. Information is also provided at the workshop cafe using the flip chart mode, PowerPoint presentations and pamphlets which are also made available at strategic places such as the municipal offices and libraries in the municipal area.

There are also areas of improvement. Sufficient effort has been made to provide information introducing the process in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa but the status quo report or its summaries and all presentations are not available in Afrikaans or Xhosa.

I don't have a problem with the information as it is presented because English is my first language but it is not for quite a few people in Knysna so I am just concerned whether we are being inclusive and if this information is available in the other languages.

Retired male Knysna Resident

Strictly speaking they [different languages] should be here [displayed information], there and on the web and in the report, but that's not realistic, that's not going to happen but then you need some kind of method where you have community advisors to take all of this and repackage all of it.

The problem has got to be between the rich and poor. It's kicking into the digital divide, the web is great, it's inaccessible to the 90% of part of population. I think this display is probably inaccessible to a good 60%.

I think the process itself is complex and I think if the communication if it is to reach throughout the Knysna community it must be fair. And for that I think a lot needs to be done. You just have to have a look around this group to gather that.”

Public relations professional

The educational divide among participants continues to be a challenge and is demonstrated in the following two quotes.

“For me you know, it was like a Greek I will say in the manner of the language that has been spoken is somehow more advanced than the standard that I am in right now. ...Where I come from what is

being said here I found that there is a huge gap from the language that is spoken here from my background. This language for me is very new, its foreign really, I am a black man coming from a black community, you find we are living very far away from the approach that has been said here. Very far, very far..... But you will say our people don't care only to find that they don't know about these things.

Young black business owner

"Their information is like kindergarten stuff, it's childish. It's too basic and doesn't provide enough information. I want to see the plans this ISDF is aiming to integrate, where are those"

Single white female

Seeing that the objective of the project is to develop a framework for the Knysna Municipality which incorporates the review, integration and alignment of the Knysna Spatial Development Framework (SDF), the Knysna Integrated Human Settlement Strategy, the Knysna State of the Environment Report and lastly the Draft Local Economic Development Plan. The relevant plans being integrated as laid out in the Terms of Reference can be made available on the website and the connection café as they are not accessible on the Knysna Municipality Website. The listing of workshop events on the calendar page of the website is also suggested. The status quo information together with the various plans needing integration as well as information on when and where to participate are the foundation that enables the community to participate constructively and effectively, so as to fulfil their brief in the participation exercise.

In the Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement process the status quo information has been made available via PowerPoint summaries and the full reports posted on the website and available at the Connection Café but important information is not accessible (plans, meeting logistics), and difficult to understand by the broader community as the status quo reports are only published in English and no summaries are provided in Xhosa and Afrikaans. Finding the balance and providing information at a diversity of levels so as to be taken up by a diversity of participants from different social backgrounds and educational levels is required. This is the reasoning the amber rating is given for this criterion.

5.1.3. Are communication channels open and people participating and learning?

Communication channels are open and people participate in discussions and share information, make compromises & are willing to adapt	Communication is somewhat restricted. Some people are unable to participate in discussion and some information is being withheld or ignored, role players cling to strongly held views	Lack of communication is evident and little participation in discussion occurs. Most role players keep their cards close to their chests, polarization and stereotyping dominates
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Deliberation and discussion was observed in Workshop Cafes and at the Expo Café day. The small size of the workshops contributed to constructive dialogue between stakeholders and having officials involved and present to answer questions and engage in two-way learning contributed positively to constructive and effective participation and learning by all stakeholders. The two-way learning process is demonstrated in the following quotes, one from a project team member and another from a community participant.

"What I find interesting from a project team side, as a so called professional you have got perceptions as what you think is necessary and what should be done and then you get involved in these focus group meetings and you actually hear what the people on the ground want. Often its small things that can make a huge difference. You often think huge projects but it's the small things that can make a difference. You get a lot of valuable information from just listening to them."

Project team member

"I am trying to learn the language in business, also the "know hows", what concerns our community here. It makes me to become more inquisitive for the future in business in our environment as well. I am looking forward to mix myself with the business people in a way of learning more."

Black business owner in Knysna

At this stage in the process the consultants have gathered information to develop a picture of the status quo so no compromises have been identified at the moment. Compromise will become an issue in the up and coming second and third phases were the engagement process aims for communities to understand and agree to the

evaluation of the information and will need to prioritise issues. Overall there is a willingness to participate in discussions and a general buy in and positive attitude towards the process is evident.

Unfortunately stereotyping and polarisation are occurring between two stakeholders, the Knysna Municipality and the local civil environmental groups. This conflict falls within the ambit of this report as it involves the appointment of the consultant to undertake the community engagement process and will be discussed in detail under Criteria 5.1.8 below. Even though the process is being perceived with scepticism by the civil environmental sector it appears this conflict is not preventing individuals participating in the process as reflected in the following quotes.

“We will wait and give him a chance first.”

White middle aged women

“We feel that we have legal gripes and they are valid, with the municipality on this process and we are not letting up. The process of selecting the consultant, we are not talking about this [ISDF stakeholder engagement] process this is a separate issue. We have got to make the best of what we got as it seems unlikely that the appointment will be overturned.”

Civil environmental forum member

“This is a boat that is now leaving the gulf, we have to decide to get on it and try and influence where it is going to go to.”

Retired white male

The unresolved conflict between the two stakeholders can cause entrenched polarisation and distrust in the process and the consultant which has and will further impact other criteria in this report as well as permeate future processes requiring stakeholder engagement in the area.

At this stage in the process a green rating will be given for this criterion, as communication channels are open and no stakeholders are feeling inhibited from participating but with the polarisation developing between the Knysna Municipality and the civil environmental groups this aspect will need to be closely observed.

5.1.4. Is mutual trust and respect being developed between stakeholders

Acceptance of diversity in opinions, needs and aspirations, sense of togetherness	Early indications of disregard for some views	Stereotyping, enemy or “us and them” perceptions, name calling, judgementalism
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The Knysna ISDF community engagement status quo report released on the 4th of November contains a diversity of views and ideas which were recorded indicating that acceptance of diversity in opinions, needs and aspirations and sense of togetherness is being developed. In the broader project mutual trust is developing especially when stakeholder contributions are seen to be acknowledged which fosters commitment.

The friction between the municipality and civil environmental groups mentioned earlier in this report and discussed in criterion 5.1.8 is a stumbling block to mutual trust developing across all sectors. The civil environmental groups are challenging the fairness of the process itself and an “us and them” perception is developing. This necessitates an amber rating and is reflected in the following statement.

“We can’t let them get away with this”

Civil environmental forum member

“For me I hope it’s not going to be collecting ideas, you write a nice report which gathers dust in some cupboard, I am hoping to see some positive results especially in the growth of Knysna, but it’s doubtful.”

Single black mother

5.1.5. Do participants accord with a shared goals and vision?

Common goals are articulated and agreed upon. Compromises, reconciliation are evident	Uncompromising goal setting, signs of irreconcilable or divergent goals – Little accordance with a shared goal or vision is evident	Widely divergent and conflicting goals dominate. No accordance with a shared goal or vision is evident.
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A diversity of ideas and concerns are being tabled and gathered by the consultants at this stage. Points of agreement include the necessity for change in the social economic setting of Knysna with a focus on encouraging tourism, sport facilities development and even agriculture. The Community Engagement Status Quo Report states noticeable trends and general issues and problems as well as solutions are emerging. It is however too early in the process to state that a shared goal and vision has been reached. Phase two and three of the community engagement process requires stakeholders to agree with the status quo as presented, to prioritise issues and solutions and to strategize implementation where compromises will need to be made in order to develop a shared vision. A green rating is given at this time in the process.

5.1.6. Are there obvious winners and losers?

Acknowledgement of power differences. Efforts to close the gap between winners and losers. Balanced participation	Power differences are not readily acknowledged. Some interest groups are more vocal and dominant than others	Powerful interest groups take over and dominate processes and inputs
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In the Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement process the stakeholder receiving the most attention in the process is the Knysna Municipality who has informed most of the workshops convened for the purposes of gathering data to populate the Status Quo Report. The heavy reliance on municipal officials to populate the report has given the Knysna Municipality more power than the civil groups in this regard. It has allowed the information from the Knysna Municipality to dominate where the process is then seen to merely legitimate decisions already made or to give the appearance of consultation without any intent on acting on other contributions even if this is not intentionally the case. The civil environmental groups have also shown interest in the process but have not been engaged within a workshop setting as of the writing of this report. The imbalances of power in compilation of the status quo necessitate an amber rating.

5.1.7. Is the process responsive, flexible and adaptive?

Responsiveness, adaptation and reflection characterizes the process	Early signs of rigidity and unwillingness or inability to be flexible in the process	Most of the processes and methods are cast in stone, little adaptation despite early warning signs
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The process as laid out appears to be responsive consisting of a range of different communication mediums (workshops, mobile road cafes, internet site and expos). The diversity of mediums some being mobile or remotely accessed is intrinsically flexible. The consultants are aware that some registered participants are concerned about the lack of communication and the complaint regarding wider participation. They are responding by planning bigger seminar events for broader participation in the up and coming phase two. They are also planning to speed up the start of the second phase of the process where innovative solutions and suggestions in response to the problems and priorities identified in the status quo findings is to take place. Whether the speeding up of the process is a good thing in light of some of the comments regarding notice periods of meetings and the timeous dissemination of information (found in 5.1.9) is an aspect to be observed and commented on in criterion 5.1.9. It does however reflect flexibility and adaptability in the process itself which is encouraging and deserves a green rating.

5.1.8. Is conflict being resolved?

Conflicts are acknowledged and actively managed, facilitators have good conflict management skills	Conflicts are swept under the carpet or unrecognized	Conflicts are left to fester
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A dispute emerged at the very beginning of the process between The Knysna Municipality and civil environmental groups in the area which has resulted in the development of polarisation between the two groups. Even though this conflict is not about how the process is being undertaken or implemented per se, it is affecting the process as it revolves around the appointment of the consultant who the environmental groups feel has a conflict of interest and should not have been awarded the tender.

The civil environmental groups (including the Western Heads-Goukamma Conservancy, Western Heads Protection Group, Knysna Environmental Forum, Buffels Baai Homeowners Association, Belvidere Homeowners Association) have lodged an objection in terms of section 49 of the supply chain management policy of the Knysna Municipality in relation to the awarding of the tender for the ISDF Framework, No. 3 of 2013 to the consortium, Knysna Creative Heads. The civil environmental groups feel their objection has not been sufficiently addressed by the municipality and would like to lodge an appeal of the final decision. They have requested information in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2 of 2000 relevant to the appointment of Knysna Creative Heads appointment in order to draft an appeal but the request for information has been denied by the Knysna Municipality on the grounds that:

- It would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information regarding the tenderers
- Same would involve trade secrets, financial, commercial or technical information would likely cause harm to the financial or commercial interest of other tenderers
- Same would involve the disclosure of information which could constitute an action of breach of confidence that the council owes to other tenderers.

This has resulted in the civil environmental groups appealing the decision refusing access to information related to the appointment of Knysna Creative Heads Consortium and the group are standing their ground and are prepared to utilize all means at their disposal to take the issue forward which includes litigation.

The Knysna Municipality feel that the objection against the award of the tender as having been dealt with and the group responded to in a letter dated 17th of May 2013. The municipality feel they have acted in accordance with the supply chain management policy and provided sufficient justification for denying the civil environmental group access to the requested information.

The stance taken by the Knysna Municipality challenges the criterion of transparency in stakeholder engagement, which would argue that being transparent about what is going on and how decisions are made is likely to allay suspicion. Independence can be demonstrated through the appointment of a steering committee on conditions its members are from a diversity of entities (Rowe and Frewer 2000). A steering committee is in place for the ISDF process.

The conflict and polarisation between the Knysna Municipality and civil environmental groups remains unresolved and is being left to fester. Other extreme groups have been managed but also appear to still publically voice distrust in the municipality.

“There is a constant stone wall between the public and the Knysna Municipality erected by the municipality and until you break that down too many groups will not believe this process and there will be legal action so it's not in the benefit of anybody. “

“The municipality purposefully changed the date of the objections to the tender so that she [municipal manger] would have fewer objections. They do many things that are done on purpose. We have not had transparency from the municipality and from the DA for ages.”

Middle aged male resident

Despite the conflict being between the municipality and the civil environmental groups it is affecting the implementation of the process by the consultant as it permeates several of the criteria under assessment in the public engagement process and is providing grounds for the process to be held in suspicion. This unresolved conflict has been left to fester justifying a red rating for this criterion. The higher the levels of dissatisfaction the more stakeholder engagement platforms will be used as a mechanism to publically vent frustration.

Engaging in dialogue can promote understanding and trust and can assist in building relationships by moderating debate rather than mediating negotiations. In others words rather than letting the conflict fester and remain unresolved allowing for dialogue would be more productive.

5.1.9. Are enough resources and time allocated to the public participation?

It is possible to slow down where necessary to enable all key interest groups to make input	Some processes move too fast for role players to stay abreast, some role players lag behind	The process proceeds too fast for most role players to participate, public participation is 'quick and dirty'
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The design of the process and the flexible and adaptive rating given to the process thus far makes it possible to slow down the process to enable all key interest groups to make an input if need be. The public opinion is reflecting a need to slow down the process which would be advised. This opinion is reflected in the following comments.

“There is a lot of information there wasn’t too much on the internet two days ago, just before this meeting , Friday afternoon all the presentations came out so I think it’s a great that’s is there, but perhaps a little bit more time to digest it would have been nice.”

Retired town planner

“Steering committee, people where given less than a weeks’ notice and nobody was there from SANParks. I think it’s important that. If you really want participation you give people decent notice and you make sure it suits them and if it doesn’t suit them then you change the date. It’s a bulldoze situation”.

Environmental advocate

The consultant wishes to speed up the process. This is in response to registered participants expressing a concern that little communication has been forthcoming. The consultants wish to begin the next phase of the process earlier than planned where greater (seminars) public engagement will occur and where registered participants will be invited and more frequent communication with them will take place. Speeding up the process is not advised but more frequent communication with registered participants is encouraged. Due to the need expressed from stakeholders for more time an amber rating is given for this criteria.

5.1.10. Is there integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes?

Efforts are made to ensure compatibility with provincial and national plans and global trends. Provincial and national role players are consulted and make input	Some incompatibilities are evident, provincial and national role players are acknowledged but are not involved	There is little or no evidence of vertical linkages
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Provincial and national government sector departments are represented on the ISDF Steering Committee which is an advisory and administrative body. The committee are to ensure that the consultants are aware of relevant legislation and are informed of and have access to any relevant plans and policies. This allows for integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes and consultation and input from national and provincial role players. The role national and provincial sector departments are fulfilling is working towards ensuring compatibility with national and provincial plans and global trends.

Officials from surrounding municipalities and national and provincial departments attended the launch event demonstrating their support and involvement in the process. Their attendance at the launch event and their role on the steering committee (bar neighbouring municipalities) justify the awarding of a green rating for this criterion which is focused on vertical and horizontal linkages with neighbouring municipalities and national as well as provincial sectors.

6. Summary

The summary dashboard is provided below indicating the current ratings, the reasons for the rating and suggestions in addressing the ratings.

Table 1. Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement summary dashboard report.

Criterion	Rating			Comment	Suggested mitigation
	Green (Satisfactory)	Amber (Early warning)	Red (Problem)		
Is there balanced participation in meetings and discussions?		Some key role players are not participating		Limited participation from the Sedgefield community and other civil groups in workshop cafes.	Particular attention to engaging with the Sedgefield community and the civil environmental groups is recommended.
Is information being shared and understood?		Some important information is unavailable, accessible and/or difficult to understand		Information is not accessible to all levels and languages.	Provision of the various municipal plans to be integrated in the process should be made available. The status quo report should be summarised in Afrikaans and Xhosa.
Are communication channels open and people are able and willing to participate in discussion and learn from each other?	Communication channels are open and people participate in discussions and share information, make compromises & are willing to adapt			Communication channels are open and diverse.	
Is mutual trust and respect being developed between stakeholders?		Early indications of disregard for some views		Mutual trust is developing but not in all sectors.	Conflict resolution or mediated negotiations between conflicting stakeholders needs to occur.
Do participants accord with a shared goals and vision?	Common goals are articulated and agreed upon. Compromises, reconciliation are evident			This early on in the process no compromises are required and trends emerging from the status quo report are indicating that shared goals and a vision are emerging.	
Are there obvious winners and losers?		Power differences are not readily acknowledged. Some interest groups are more vocal and dominant than others		The dominance of the municipal officials in the workshop cafes is creating a power differential where the municipal agenda is being given more preference to civil agendas in developing the status quo.	Moderate power differences in terms of whose knowledge is being included and whose voices are being heard the loudest. Equal credence to be given to all.
Is the process responsive, flexible and adaptive?	Responsiveness, adaptation and reflection characterizes the process			The diversity of platforms and mediums in the design of the process allows for flexibility and adaptability.	
Is conflict being resolved?			Conflicts are left to fester	A conflict between stakeholder groups has been left unresolved and to fester which is harbouring an "us and them" attitude and distrust.	Conflict resolution or mediated negotiations between conflicting stakeholders needs to occur.
Are enough resources and time allocated to the public participation part of the initiative?		Some processes move too fast for role players to stay abreast, some role players lag behind		Some stakeholders are concerned not enough time is provided to assimilate information and not enough time is given in lead up to meetings.	Ensuring information is provided timeously and that sufficient notice is given of events.
Is there integration and linkages to provincial, national and global processes and role players?	Efforts are made to ensure compatibility with provincial and national plans and global trends. Provincial and national role players are consulted and make input			Provincial officials were present at the launch in event in support of the process and are represented on the steering committee.	

7. Conclusion

South Africa and the Knysna Municipality in particular offer a complex context in which to work. The area has a diversity of stakeholders and therefore values which are difficult to reconcile. It is plagued with social problems such as great social inequality, economic decline, high levels of poverty a burdensome population and growth rate. The environment on which life and the economy depend is threatened by ribbon development, modification of freshwater runoff, catchment issue related to rivers feeding the estuaries, non-extractive recreational activities, harvesting of marine living resources, waste management, poor land use practices and mariculture (Arcus Gibbs, 2008). The Knysna Municipality is a hot bed for social ecological problems which are not easy to manage or solve.

Planning for this context is fraught with challenges and requires innovative thinking and an involved community with a shared vision and goal. Stakeholder engagement in planning processes can be just as fraught with challenges such as the socio economic divide creating inequalities of power, information provision and communication challenges, all which can threaten the processes designed to be democratic and fair. Conflicts arise where stakeholders will posture, hide information from one another, stereo type one another and take on an “us versus them” persona and a competitive attitude. Despite good intention histories of distrust prevail, compromising planning processes.

No stakeholder engagement process is perfect necessitating flexibility and adaptability in its implementation so that it may be responsive to emerging needs. Continual monitoring of processes can provide warning signs of aspects that might need attention by being conducted by independent entities can provide legitimacy to processes. Evaluation of stakeholder engagement is also fraught with challenges, where those engaged in the projects are often reluctant to agree to be evaluated on the grounds that scrutiny of the practices intended to achieve objectives cannot be easily measured. Reflexive approaches designed to explore experiences and perceptions being qualitative in nature are only now being accepted by decision makers. The Knysna ISDF and the impartial reporting of the process are both contemporary practices which have the potential to lead the way and provide a test bed to learn from and adapt the way we do things currently.

Commendable aspects of the Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement process include the diversity of mediums and platforms available to stakeholders which has made the process easily accessible to a diversity of participants. The process design is also intrinsically flexible allowing for it to be responsive and adaptable. The website has been very favourable received as a medium by which information can be disseminated and constructive dialogue and social learning has been taking place in the workshop cafes. The Status Quo report reveals emerging trends which illustrates that stakeholders are on the road to developing a shared vision and goals.

Emergent issues drawn to light in this impartial report of the stakeholder engagement aspect of the Knysna ISDF are not unique to stakeholder engagement worldwide. They include the difficulties in ensuring fair representation and being all inclusive while managing resources (example, financial and human resources and time). The provision of timeous information at a diversity of levels and languages is also proving to be challenging especially at the pace at which the process is moving.

Another significant issue emerging from the Knysna ISDF process is the unresolved conflict between the Knysna Municipality and the civil environmental groups. The dispute is not being acknowledge and has been left to fester breeding suspicion and mistrust in the process.

Conflict hardly ever results in understanding or dialogue but through the use of skilful mediation mutually beneficial agreements can be reached where the conflict is redirected towards a joint inquiry and collaborative problem solving. It would be beneficial to adopt the attitude that mediated negotiation is better than moderating debate.

The report has highlighted the aspects of the Knysna ISDF stakeholder engagement process that are working well and those that require some attention. In general however the process has been received well and a general buy in is evident. The status quo reports have provided a starting point for continued engagement to focus on.

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