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The provision of goods and governance in local communities during an emergency: Findings from an urban space in southern Africa

The provision of political goods and governance in marginalised local communities, located in Cape Town, South Africa, during the national lockdown periods (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) is described. The focus is on an African city, drawing attention to the growing importance of urban governance on the continent. Rapid urbanisation and emergency periods (such as the pandemic) are adding to the complexity of the urban space. This study found that communities in the city relied mostly on themselves for the provision of goods, and that the provision of security remains a critical political good, informing governance. However, the findings confront literature on a hierarchy of political goods, in which security is at the apex. In the given context, the sequence of the provision of goods changes to a non-hierarchical process. The fulfilment of other political goods will facilitate improved provision of security. Good governance needs to be informed by an integrated approach to, and the synchronous fulfilment of, political goods.

Significance:

- During times of emergencies, already marginalised urban communities experience greater political neglect and are left to protect themselves and to provide for each other.
- These communities experience desertion across the spectrum of political goods.
- Resilience in such communities needs to be improved through good governing principles.
- Although optimal local level governance relies heavily on the provision of security, the importance of the provision of education, employment, political freedom, housing, and health services (to mention a few) requires renewed attention.

Introduction

Africa is experiencing rapid and intense urbanisation, and the future of the continent will be positioned in the urban context. African cities are the fastest growing in the world and the number of cities on the continent has doubled since 1990.^{1,2} The significant influx of people to the urban space has brought about opportunities and challenges, mostly hampering the road to resilience.³⁻⁶ Part of the latter relates to governance: control over territory, distribution of resources, and the provision of goods and services to all citizens of the urban space. As noticed by Williams⁷: “The massive population surge into the cities of the Global South...not only preceded the building of new infrastructure but swamped existing infrastructure and overloaded the capacity for service provision”. Parallel to the process of urbanisation is the increase in violence and criminal activities.⁷ Rapid urbanisation has also increased structural differences in the urban space and locations facing socio-economic deprivation, and, consequently, local level governance is becoming increasingly important in the African context.⁸ Indeed, in South Africa, urbanisation has increased the informal urban space, including informal economic and social settings, and perpetuated the lingering ailments of apartheid, of which spatial separation is the most prominent.⁹ This is particularly accurate in the case of Cape Town.

A 2022 report on the state of the City of Cape Town indicates that global trends in urbanisation necessitate improved public transport, affordable housing, and the provision of basic services. The report asserts that, although basic services have improved across the city, informality remains high, at close to 20% in 2020. Pressure on environmental resources is also highlighted as one of the main results of urbanisation, especially in light of worsening environmental conditions due to climate change.¹⁰ The importance of new research on urban governance was noted by Da Cruz et al.¹¹, due to new challenges and increased complexity, and that particular attention should be given to the Global South. The notion of ‘taking stock’ during crisis periods in order to improve urban governance was also observed by Pieterse¹²: “The value of a crisis in urban politics is that it potentially reveals the limits of what is possible in terms of prevailing systems of power and hegemonic discourses”. This article assesses the challenges caused by a state of emergency in a city in southern Africa: it draws attention to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lower-income, marginalised communities in Cape Town.

The socio-economic capacity of individuals and communities greatly influenced their pandemic lockdown preparedness.¹³ Accordingly, there is a body of literature on the impact of the pandemic on various components of cities in Africa, given the complexity of the space (for example, Anafo et al.¹⁴, Asante and Mills¹⁵; Schotte and Zizzamia¹⁶; Skinner and Watson¹⁷). The pandemic also forced the debate to reconsider urban governance in the Global South, due to the complicated network of actors involved.¹⁸ Cape Town is no different and is a city of vast socio-economic inequalities, and the provision of goods and governance in developing parts of the city was already impaired in the pre-pandemic setting. The area under investigation for this study is the Cape Flats. It was first established under apartheid in the wake of the coloured communities’ forcible relocation from various districts of Cape Town, particularly District Six, during the 1960s and 1970s (according to the *Groups Areas Act*). Families were split up, and most of those who relocated had to give up their work, which led to widespread unemployment and poverty. This led to the progressive disintegration of working-class culture and extended families in the Cape Flats. Over time, these conditions facilitated the growing presence of non-state actors, most noticeably, criminal

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gangs.¹⁹ Accordingly, the research question is, when looking back at the periods of lockdown, what can be ascertained from the provision of political goods and governance in a developing urban space, to make these spaces more resilient to disasters, given the new reality of a permacrisis: “an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events”²⁰.

Complex urban spaces

As most of the writings on urban politics are based on spaces in the Western developed world^{4,11}, there is limited understanding of how these theories transfer to Africa. For the purposes of this article, conceptual difficulties related to urban governance are noted.²¹ Accordingly, Obeng-Odoom⁸ argues for a reframing of urban governance in the African context, based on a disconnection between urban governance in theory and urban governance observed. Governance is regarded as part of the development paradigm, confirming the importance of urban space in the African context. Urban governance in Africa “cannot be uprooted from the historical-institutional context into which the paradigm of urban governance has been imported”.⁸ Lindell²² also argues that, due to extensive informalisation of economic activities in African cities (complexity of the space), Western assumptions of urban governance (for example the policy network approach) are not ideal to understand the African context. By analysing marketplaces in Maputo, Mozambique, Lindell²² develops a conceptualisation of urban governance, illustrating the complexity of the African city: “a range of *actors*, multiple *sites*, various layers of *relations*, a broad range of *activities* or *practices*...involving various *modes of power*, as well as different *scales*”. Resilience – the capacity to withstand a crisis and recover rapidly – is informed by good urban governance.²³ In line with the above, Rotberg²⁴ advocates for assessing governance as an output. The performance of governments (their governance ability) needs to be measured by the delivery of political goods to citizens (in contrast to measuring input, a more Western-centric approach). If governance is measured as an output-oriented approach, it becomes tangible and the result is about the quantity and quality of government services.²⁴ The provision of political goods regards outputs, but also “outcomes...the consequences of outputs – consequences for the people, for the society as a whole, or for some subset other than the polity”²⁵. Good governance (in the urban space) refers to “a multidimensional concept that focuses on the improvement of the quality of living conditions of local citizens, especially those of marginalised and disadvantaged communities”²³ and is often linked to deliverables, for example, safety of citizens, provision of health care, and a beneficial commerce environment.²³ Rotberg specifies a hierarchy of political goods, of which the supply of security (specifically human security) is the most important one.²⁶⁻²⁸ Security includes the prevention of cross-border invasions and infiltrations and defusing domestic threats, with the potential to undermine social order.²⁶⁻²⁸ The notion of human security focusses on the safeguarding of the individual; thus, the unit of analysis moves from the national level to the individual level. Other political goods include political freedom (freedom to participate in political processes), medical and health care, schools and education, physical infrastructure, communication networks, money and banking systems, fiscal and institutional context, civil society, and environmental commons. Rotberg²⁵ argues that, on a macro level (national), “the delivery of a range of other desirable political goods becomes possible when a reasonable measure of security has been sustained”. He also states that: “Only when reasonable provisions for security exist within a country, especially in a fragile, newly reconstructed nation-state in the developing world, can governments deliver other desirable political goods”.²⁸ Security is to be guaranteed first, for the process of good governance to be initiated. Despite the complexity in measuring governance, the premise is that good governance or effective governance is directly related to the delivery of political goods.²⁹ Rotberg’s conceptualisation of political goods relates to tangible and assessable outputs by the government (for example, health care and education), to satisfy the daily, basic needs of citizens of a state and generate possibilities for development.

This view of governance corresponds with the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), referring to governance as the *policy choices* and *implementation* thereof, by those selected. Rotberg’s political goods can also be noted in the WGI’s six dimensions of governance: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism,

Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption.^{30,31} This article is informed by the complexity of governance in an urban space in southern Africa. Therefore, the output-orientated approach to the provision of tangible political goods is applied on a local level. The focus of the article is to assess the supply of goods, services and governance within communities faced with social and political exclusion during emergencies. This is done through a single case study research design and a qualitative methodology, as will be explained below.

Data collection during lockdown

The study received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Educational Research, Humanities of Stellenbosch University (Project number: 17325). Due to the pandemic, data collection techniques such as face-to-face key informant interviews and group discussions could not be used. Online interviews via platforms such as Microsoft Teams can, to a certain extent, fill the gap in data collection. However, only relying on this technique to obtain data, means losing out on what qualitative methodology is about in social science research: richness of context and insight into the world of the respondent. Therefore, the Ipsos AppLife mobile application was used to collect most of the data. The app can be downloaded on most smartphones and interaction on the app can be done offline, to be uploaded when connected to a data point. The app is described as a qualitative data collection tool, as it poses open-ended questions to respondents, and they can participate by using text, audio recordings or photos and videos. The app also allows for interaction between the researcher and the participants. It is an attempt to blend elements from observation, key informant interviews and small group discussions. For this study, 34 respondents were randomly selected from an Ipsos database and invited to participate. Sourcing was conducted in three locations on the Cape Flats: Bonteheuwel, Lentegeur and Manenberg. The app was formally run for three days and remained open for five days, during which respondents had full access to all the themes and probes covered. The broad research themes were linked to political goods and operationalised. As the formal lifespan of the app was only three days, factors were grouped together for some days: getting to know you and safety and security (day one), delivery of services (day two) and communication and sources of information (day three). A list of the questions can be found in [Supplementary appendix 1](#). During the data analysis process, two key informant interviews were conducted with a prominent community activist and a teacher, to discuss preliminary outcomes of the study.

Although the pre-set themes and open-ended questions mainly guided the interaction, respondents reacted favourably to ad-hoc probes. Interaction on the app resulted in an initially daunting amount of data: more than 50 media responses in audio recordings, images and video clips were captured along with 1440 text responses. The text responses quoted in this article are used verbatim and have not been edited. The app facilitated the collection of visual data, assisting in understanding the local context. Although it was impossible to make an emotional and expressive connection to the answers of the respondents, reactions such as fear, anger and frustration were singled out during the analysis of the audio and text files. Collecting data on such a platform remains a gamble. No response is guaranteed by the respondents and there is no minimum prescribed number of responses per question per respondent. The researcher has limited control of the research process and what respondents upload on the app. Some data can therefore be regarded as greatly sensitive but also potentially inappropriate. The process is also time intensive for the researcher, especially if every response is followed for the duration of the project, to initiate detailed themes for coding and analysis. A detailed list of the respondents can be found in [Supplementary appendix 2](#); respondents who participated via the app were anonymised and ranked alphabetically, according to their first name. The data were received in the form of an MS Excel Spreadsheet, and separate media files. The analysis of the data was done in the form of coding: tags or labels were used to assign meaning to the descriptive information compiled during the study. Each of the text responses was manually coded through several rounds, to in the end assemble reoccurring and prominent topics and arguments presented by the respondents.

The failures of local governance, informal authorities, and the complexity of marginalised spaces

From the contextual part of the respondents' feedback, socio-economic conditions appeared to be cyclical from generation to generation, as many of the respondents indicated that they lived with their extended family – parents, grandparents, siblings, aunt, or uncle – and that they were also born in the area in which they currently lived. Contributing to the perpetuation of generational challenges were a lack of employment and financial instability. The political good of education was also extensively mentioned: respondents referred to the need to complete their own education in addition to being able to provide their children with the opportunity to finish school. Education was accordingly highlighted as essential to improving respondents' current conditions, but was a difficult goal to achieve. As in the case of education, there was a great need to improve their present conditions; an additional main goal for respondents was to be in the position to purchase a house outside of the area in which they currently lived. The following quote highlights the main goals and dreams echoed by respondents:

I have big dreams plans to one day own my own home maybe start my own business put my child through university etc, but one of my challenges is in order for me to make my dreams a reality is to first find myself a steady permanent job. I was retrenched in 2019 and 2020 was just a difficult year for us all especially for the job seekers looking for work because most companies was closed and ddnt hire, a lot of people were also retrenched from there jobs, some companies closed there doors permanently [sic] (Respondent 16, 2020)

Lack of housing remains a challenge for residents of the Cape Flats, confirming limited physical infrastructure as a political good. In some cases, residents get access to houses subsidised by the City of Cape Town, but reports indicate that there has been an increase in renting out city council homes to gangs which operate therefrom. The increase comes as a direct result of increased levels of unemployment³², and security in the community is compromised due to a lack of employment opportunities.

Levels of comfort were generally low. This was mainly due to scarcity of goods, people not adhering to the government's mandated protocols, and increased levels of crime. Local stores had very few essential products to rely on and minimal stock. There was also a significant increase in the price of essential (material) goods. What complicated the matter even further was the lack of their own transport and increased reliance on public transport: taxis were crowded as people rushed to get food and supplies and the alternative of using e-hailing services was very expensive. Limited reliable public transport was a key theme that emerged from this analysis. Lack of comfort was another prominent theme. For example, a respondent replied about ease of living during the lockdown:

Very uncomfortable, due to the fact that we had very little essentials to rely on, everything became very scares [scarce]...They looted the small tuckshops and stole whatever they could take. Being in an over populated area which we live in I feared that the virus could be knocking on my door as we do not have the necessary utilities to protect ourselves but do the basic to stay covered and wash your hands regularly [sic] (Respondent 8, 2020)

This was increased by residents not obeying the lockdown rules, for example, not practising social distancing, having gatherings, and not wearing masks. Respondents also felt that the loss of personal freedom curbed their comfort during this period.

Crime and criminality

During the analysis of the data, lawlessness emerged as a key thematic area of the study. This was triggered by the lockdown situation that facilitated conditions that enhanced operational ease for gangs. Daily

robberies occurred and respondents were scared to walk to the shops. As people could not afford to buy in bulk, they were forced to go to the local store every day. One respondent commented:

now that people can wear a mask a cover their face, gangsters use it to their advantage. Just add a cap and u can walk around as normal, you will not see the killer walking around the corner just a person u think is scared of covid [sic] (Respondent 7, 2020)

Due to the curfew and residents being required to be in their homes earlier than usual, respondents experienced an increase in car break-ins. Essential workers returning from nightshifts were also at increased risk of being targeted by robbers on their way home. The theme of lawlessness was also situated in the poor relationship between communities and law enforcement. There was also limited reporting of crimes and even more limited response by law enforcement. This speaks to a disconnect between governance layers and structures. Feedback was conclusive that law enforcement (police) was so focused on enforcing pandemic protocols, that they forgot about everyday crimes. Feeling unsafe in these communities was intensified by three main factors: fear of looting and riots (due to the lack of essential goods and the prohibitions on alcohol and cigarettes), fear of getting infected, and fear of gang activity. Residents were scared to report gang activities as they were afraid of being targeted by the gangs. People were also afraid of law enforcement officials during night patrols, as rumours did the rounds of officers entering private property without a justifiable reason to enter the premises. Police officers also allegedly used gas guns to shoot at children playing outside (Respondent 19, 2020). During January 2021, the army was deployed in many areas of the Cape Flats³³ and, although the presence of the military usually results in an immediate drop in violent crime, it does not present these communities with any long-term improvement of the security conditions.

Reports surfaced in the media of prominent leaders of gangs operating soup kitchens and handing out food parcels to communities. The media also reported on a truce between prominent gang leaders, coordinated by a pastor not originally from the Cape Flats. Through his guidance, gang leaders worked together in handing out food parcels to the community.^{34,35} Although these acts did provide temporary relief, the ceasefire was short-lived, and acts of philanthropy were met with doubt. Gangs used the lockdown period as an opportunity to boost their image as benevolent dictators and create stronger ties with the local communities. Indeed, a key informant interview confirmed that these acts were used as a smokescreen to move illicit goods:

I followed it in fact, and he was just, uhm, manipulated and used again by the gang...that was the reality...because why it was in the Covid-19, and they needed to transport the drugs...because business was stagnated with the movement of people. The pastor in fact helped them by giving those food parcels out to people so the drugs could be transported, guns and hits could be done more directly in that process... business did not stop for the gang. Live stopped for most of the people, but for the gang nothing has stopped. They got avenues, like the pastor was a vehicle for them, to be operating still [sic] (Key informant interview 2, 2021)

Gang response to community needs and the provision of goods differed from group to group and neighbourhood to neighbourhood. There was no standardised or permanent approach, indicating various layers of governance in the urban space. This respondent commented on the delivery of food by the gangs during the lockdown:

It was only in fact for the gang members and the people that hold the guns and drugs...It was a form of payment because the work must go on... You could find anything in the community...it was the only space you would get. Cigarettes, alcohol, whatever you wanted the gang thrived more in Covid...Again, just like the state left our people



out and to dry and to die. And leave them on their own with the gangs, again it was like that [sic] (Key informant interview 2, 2021)

The rise in gang shootings was attributed to fights to keep control of territory, enforced by strict guarding of territory and goods. Gangs clashed frequently for control over the licit (extortion, for example, the above-mentioned renting out of city council houses) and the illicit market (most noticeably drugs and guns). Gangs also used this time for increased and active recruiting of gang members, due to the sharp rise in unemployment and levels of poverty. A worrying trend that emerged was the increase in youth recruitment during the hard lockdown, again due to poverty, the prospect of employment, a sense of belonging and (illicit) activities to pass the time. During an interview, a community activist described a mother's answer on how she can allow her seven-year-old son to join a gang:

Nobody cares what happens him. Nobody cares what happens to us. We have no one to call on. The gang sees to that the light is burning. We have a piece of bread. And at this moment that is all we need to survive [sic] (Key informant interview 2, 2021)

The increased insecurity facilitated further marginalisation of communities; this can also be referred to as territorial stigmatisation. Wacquant³⁶ links the concept to "zones reserved for the urban outcasts... Whether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their population composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences". What Wacquant³⁶ describes rings true in the case of the Cape Flats, and this unfortunate description increased during the pandemic. It emerged that stronger community ties with gangs were not based on the provision of goods and services by the gangs, but out of (1) fear of the gang and (2) worsening socio-economic conditions. During this emergency, the *criminal governance* of spaces increased, recognising and in accordance with Lindell's²² range of actors in the urban space. Certain territories remained under the control of gangs, and others shifted control, but spaces were not claimed back by either the state or the community. Findings on the theme of lawlessness correspond with the hierarchy of political goods. The provision of security was viewed as instrumental to good governance: regrettably, in this context, the conversations were dominated by poor provision of security by state structures and territorial security governance by the gangs. The lack of security and increased lawlessness perpetuated the Cape Flats as an urban outcast of the City of Cape Town.

Delivery of services

Reduced service delivery was a dominant thematic area. The theme rested on two factors: first was a disjoint between members of the community and government representatives, and the second was neglected maintenance of limited government services available. When probed if there was any contact with a ward councillor or a member of a political party during the lockdown, most of the respondents confirmed that they had no contact with a ward councillor and/or that they did not know who their local councillor was:

There was no contact with them during this period of lockdown. I wouldn't know if it was that they were hiding or shying away from the issues but they were not seen or heard and clearly not taking any steps to make people in the community feel any safer or reassured during this time [sic] (Respondent 31, 2020)

Respondents also commented on extremely poor service delivery, on output-based governance, and in some cases on service delivery that came to a complete standstill, for example, fixing of potholes, blocked drains, dumping sites and housing projects. The general feeling was that people were left to fend for themselves. Another theme that surfaced that illustrated the relationship with local government is political neglect: the government is not eager to help its people and no steps were taken by the government to make the people in the community feel safe. On the first mentioned topic, one respondent commented:

Government makes it hard for people like me to go apply for home loans as well as to start up a small business they will say yes, we here but our community suffers day in and out. So, our government must start to REALISE we not only here when it comes to voting. Main objective is government don't support "GHETTO COMMUNITY'S [sic] (Respondent 4, 2020)

There is a disjoint between the community and both local and national structures of governance. This is based on strong feelings of continued marginalisation through territorial stigmatisation and the lack of provision of political goods in the form of basic service delivery. There is also resonance to governance complexities caused by vertically divided authority; different levels of government occupied by opposing political parties will often play a blaming game in cases of poor service delivery.³

On political participation, one respondent confirmed that they had contact with a ward councillor who gave out food parcels (Respondent 12, 2020). There was also a community WhatsApp group through which the ward councillor sent information related to the lockdowns (Respondent 24, 2020). Political response was based more on the individual involved (local councillor) rather than a political culture of participation and accountability by politicians. On the topic of food parcels, the theme of corruption emerged during a key informant interview. An acquaintance of the key informant explained: "during the hard lockdown last year the ward councillor handed out *parcels* to her people, however, these parcels were handed out to the councillor's *people*, and she basically rationed the items from a bigger food parcel into smaller parcels" [sic] (Key informant interview 1, 2021). The respondent also mentioned another project that they were informed about, in which the provincial government assisted the national Department of Social Development. This was a once-off project to distribute food parcels to the community; however, it was unsuccessful as many people never received any food parcels (Key informant interview 1, 2021).

Some respondents mentioned that they had contact with the local neighbourhood watch as a way of involvement in an organised (community) response to community challenges; communities formed street committees and used this as a platform to get in contact with a local ward councillor (Respondent 24, 2020). Although these territories are regarded as part of the City of Cape Town by geographical ward inclusion and legislative authority, the delivery of these political goods is haphazard at best, and more compromised during an emergency. The local neighbourhood watch groups played an important role in community communication and planning around security (Respondents 15, 20 and 26; 2020).

With regard to health care and access to health care, when respondents visited healthcare facilities, services were experienced as poor or satisfactory, with very long waiting times. Healthcare facilities were full, with limited capacity to assist residents. Access was problematic for some; for example, one respondent commented that older members of the community had to rely on others to get their medication at the local clinic (Respondent 13, 2020). A few years before the lockdown, a provincial hospital in Manenberg was demolished, with the prospect of being rebuilt with better facilities. At the time of conducting the interviews, the space where the hospital once stood was an open field, filled with litter and rubble. It was confirmed during a key informant interview that the field is often the scene of rape and other crimes, and that bodies have been dumped there in the past (Key informant interview 2, 2021).

There were limited to no state-driven developmental projects; however, several community-organised projects were reported. Examples included soup kitchens, feeding projects, neighbourhood watch groups and small-scale job creation strategies. Food distribution initiatives were funded by local non-governmental organisations and produce donated by residents and local shops, or residents paid for the food out of their own pockets:

Yes, myself & a friend started handing out sandwiches to the kids in our street, from there we made 1 pot of soup per week and there after we

were blessed with basic items for food from family, friends and neighbours. We could then make 1 pot of soup & 1 pot of food for our street kids & elderly. We started this without any financial support but with 10 loaves of bread & R50 polony. Doing this in this period was ensuring that residents gave not gone hungry during this time [sic] (Respondent 24, 2020)

When probed on what they would change if they were the councillor in charge, respondents focused on three main themes. First, creation of more opportunities for youth-related employment (indicative of the lack of the political good of education), skills development projects to ensure employment, and permanent food projects or community feeding schemes, for the unhoused and unemployed. Two community-based training workshops were also reported by the respondents: sports activities for children and the teaching of computer skills (Respondent 22, 2020; Respondent 29, 2020). This clearly illustrates the needs of the community, considering governance as an output.

Communication and knowledge

As distrust was a noticeable theme during the discussion of communication and knowledge, it is not surprising that the main method of communication during the lockdowns was social media: WhatsApp and Facebook. The reasoning for WhatsApp is that it is by far the cheapest way to communicate. Topics discussed during lockdown included: COVID-19 and if it is a hoax, local hotspots for the virus or outbreak areas, and COVID-19 rules and regulations. News on protocols and rules regarding the lockdown were also often sourced from Facebook. Information was more often sourced from smartphones and social media than from formal news outlets, such as television or radio, although it was mentioned that news sourced from television was the most accurate. This related to the president addressing citizens on protocols and developments. Respondents were often confronted with fake news, in the form of videos (most often via WhatsApp).

On thoughts and reflections on lockdown restrictions, respondents felt that the initial lockdown measures were important, reasonable, and appropriate. It was also regarded to be in the best interest of everyone, with reference to health and safety. Respondents felt comfortable sharing political opinions with friends and family, but not on broader social media platforms. They were, in fact, very cautious about sharing any opinion on social media in fear of negative reactions (misinterpretation). Although many respondents agreed with the restrictions, their political opinion and general judgement of the national government remained one of incompetence. Respondents expressed disappointment in the general political conditions of the country. One respondent also commented that a negative opinion of the national government on social media may hamper the possibility of securing employment in government in the future (Respondent 31, 2022). Another did not want to share their political opinion due to fear of losing their job (Respondent 7, 2020). Some respondents also expressed that there was no need to share their political opinion as nothing would change, and even that there was no need to have any political opinion, as the government did not care about poor people and governance would not improve:

...Not really, because it falls on deaf ears. I remember one of my friends posted on Facebook to say when are they bringing food parcels here to us, On the news you use to see how these food parcels was distributed to different areas bt never do you see people coming here to deliver-her never got response but they always posting stuff... Because most of the time it falls on deaf ears. You raise your opinions but nothing comes from it, you don't even get responses sometimes... [sic] (Respondent 16, 2020)

As with the provision of other political goods, communication and knowledge also mostly emerged from the community. Although the president was considered as a stable source of information, local governance structures were not relied upon to respond to the needs of the community. Respondents voiced limited need to participate in political

processes as they did not see the value, and expressions of political freedom were low. The theme of overall political neglect was thus echoed in obtaining reliable knowledge and communication, and in increased levels of distrust in political processes and governance structures.

Discussion: Sequence and context of political goods

Appropriate and timely response to an emergency can facilitate mitigation and reduce the immediate and lasting impact. To establish mitigation and reduction of the impact of an emergency in an urban space, two components need to be present: (1) high levels of community resilience and (2) strong state directives coordinating the response. The first can only be present in communities that have an adequate representation of political goods before the onset of the emergency. If this is not the case, the provision of goods and governance will further deteriorate during the period of calamity. The data provided above were collected in communities on the geographical outskirts of the City of Cape Town. Even though apartheid ended more than 30 years ago, the cycle of violence, unemployment and a lack of education continue in this part of the city. These issues were intensified during the pandemic. These communities experienced more unemployment, more poverty and hunger, less development and more insecurity and crime. The provision of political goods came from the community (non-formalised groups) and temporarily from criminal gangs. The latter came with haphazard rules and regulations, subject to change at the will of the various criminal groups. Local state level governance, measured as an output, declined. This article illuminates that, during this emergency, the main operational shortcoming of governance was the provision of security, and this overshadowed the entire lockdown period. It is therefore hypothesised that, regardless of the emergency, impediments in the provision of security will dominate the agenda of the provision of political goods. This occurs in the complex context of marginalised, developing communities, suffering from territorial stigmatisation³⁶, located on the border of socio- and political control. The complexity of the space is informed by the historical-institutional setting⁸, layers of relations, a variety of actors, numerous sources and methods of executing power, and a myriad of activities²². Therefore, the article motivates for a revised construction of the political good of security by providing it with a more human and social dimension. Within this complexity, the importance of the provision of security as a political good is not disputed: it is regarded as crucial. What differs, however, is the notion of *sequence* and *context*: in the above analysed micro setting, other political goods are not dependent on security, but rather the contrary. This can be explained by answering the following question: how do we improve the provision of security to strengthen community response and resilience during an emergency? By using an outcome- and output-based framework, security is the most important in the hierarchy of political goods, but it cannot be *achieved* in the surveyed communities without the fulfilment of the other political goods. Security is reliant on the presence of other political goods. In this context, different actors have different priorities, but in terms of governance, the provision of political goods (other than security) is the priority of the communities and should be for the government as well to subsequently curb criminal activity. Effective provision of security will be attained only with higher levels of political freedom, participation in political processes, medical and health care, effective communication networks and infrastructure, and education (not an exhaustive list). The presence of these political goods will position communities to better respond to an emergency, enhancing the safeguarding of the individual. To safeguard and provide individual and community security, other political goods, and their provision, need to be prioritised. If not, the cycle of insecurity will be perpetuated and deepened by future calamities. Local level governance will be improved by following an integrated approach to the provision of goods, not a hierarchical one. The provision of security in the promotion of good governance needs to be acknowledged.

Conclusion

Urban governance in Africa is leaping in importance, and traditional notions of governance should increasingly be challenged to best understand the concept and improve capacity in African cities. This article adopts the perception of governance as being measured in an

outcome-based approach. Although security is an essential political good, in this context, political goods cannot be fulfilled in a hierarchical manner. It is recommended that the notion of *sequence* (improved provision of other political goods to achieve stable levels of safety and security) and *context* (developing marginalised communities) is tested with similar cases on the continent: will the provision of state security be enhanced with higher levels of education, employment, political participation, and freedom? In essence, the bottom-up structure of achieving durable security in marginalised urban spaces warrants additional examination, to build resilience in communities located on the border of socio- and political control.

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Data availability

The data supporting the results of this study are available upon request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of AI use

AI was not used in the preparation of this article.

Competing interests

I have no competing interests to declare.

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