

# **Integrating the informal economy in urban planning and governance**

## **A case study of the process of policy development in Durban, South Africa**

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### **Abstract**

Local government in post-apartheid South Africa received a new mandate to play an active role in economic development, as well as to promote public participation. This article explores Durban's attempts to grapple with these new challenges with respect to the informal economy. In 1999 Durban sought a policy to accommodate the need to support the growth of economic opportunities for all informal workers, especially women, at the same time as enabling the regulation of what had become been a rapidly deregulated use of public space for trading. Durban embarked on a consultative process of policy development, which was designed to allow the meaningful participation of different interest groups. It is argued that this policy development process was unusual as it actively sought out consultation with poorer people in their roles as workers; it focused on deepening participation within local government and aimed to secure an integrative approach to the informal economy. The article aims to contribute to debates about participation in development planning processes generally and, more specifically, to speak to more pessimistic assessments of participation at a local level in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

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