

“Development Local Government” and the Language Issue in South Africa¹

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ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to establish whether it is possible for local government to act effectively as a development catalyst if citizen participation is not secured through developing functional multilingualism within municipalities. As point of departure, the researcher chose the reference made by the South African White paper on Local Government to “Developmental Local Government” (1998), that is, the explicit requirement for municipalities to find sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs of their residents and to improve the quality of their lives. The intricate connections between language rights, local government and the issue of securing livelihoods for all citizens of South Africa will be illustrated with reference to the experience gained from the establishment of a Local Government Translation and Interpreting Services (LOGTIS) in the Free State province. With the example of the LOGTIS project the researcher hopes to illustrate that workable, practical solutions to problems posed by the dichotomy between multiculturalism and universalism can be found already at the level of local government.