Preface

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Local democracy was ushered in South Africa in 1994 following a negotiated settlement between the key role-players and stakeholders involved in local government. A local governance system developmentally orientated, constitutional imperatives which manifested itself through critical policy developments and legislative enactments, followed by strategic government interventions to improve performance over a period of twenty one years shaped the new dispensation. Local democracy has become being deeply entrenched in the South African public governance system following the local government restructuring and transformation process, and more importantly the holding of regular elections viewed as free and fair over a period of twenty one years. However, despite a “world class” local government policy and legislative framework being introduced and substantial progress being made in addressing development backlogs, there are still major challenges that have to be addressed, namely, poor service-delivery, unemployment and job – creation, poverty alleviation, capacity – development, corruption, politisation and in the final analysis ensuring a financially viable and responsive local government system. A key consideration is ensuring that the local government dispensation has the capacity of executing its democratic and development mandate as espoused in the Constitution. More importantly, developmental local government as a vision has to be translated to practice for the majority of the populace in terms of improving access to basic municipal services and enhancing service delivery thereby hopefully impacting positively on their lives. Critical questions that need to be addressed in this context are, inter alia, what are the key developmental challenges at the local level and how can they be addressed; are the local governance systems, cultures and structures in place adequate in terms of responding to these issues; are there lessons that can be learnt in the third decade of democracy and finally, how can developmental and good local
governance be enhanced to discharge its constitutional mandate? It is hoped that the chapters in this book will respond to some of the key issues and challenges highlighted above.

The papers in this book include some of the papers presented at the 2012 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), held in Bangkok, Thailand from the 16 – 21 July. The Conference theme focused on challenges for local governance and development in the 21st century. In addition, several other South African academics and senior practitioners were approached to contribute to this book to ensure that it was relevant in terms of responding to the challenges highlighted above and more importantly was reflective of the evolving nature of the South African local government system. It is hoped that this publication will benefit academics, researchers, students, practitioners and non-governmental organisations in South Africa and beyond.