

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Apart from the groundbreaking work done by Foucault during the mid 1900s, very few theories actually addressed the complexity and sensitivity of *power and power relations*. Despite the efforts made by amongst others, Flyvbjerg, Hoch, Forester, McClendon and Quay, McCloughlin; Allmendinger; Hillier and Watson (see Chapter 2), to study power relations in the planning praxis and the local authority planning environment, there still is confusion and a lack of knowledge regarding the concept of power and power relations - as is evident by the “power-planning dilemmas” in local authorities. Although the recent practice movement and postmodern research methodologies have exposed experiences, narratives and practice stories about power relations, very few efforts actually attempted and/or succeeded to explore and unpack the dynamics of the complex and illusive power structures and power relations.

Following on “the communicative turn” in planning and the work of some of the “communicative theorists” such Healey, Innes, Mandelbaum and Hillier (see Chapter 2), a new interest developed in *the study of power relations within the context of the social nexus*. Although these works expanded the knowledge base on the above, there still is a gap in the knowledge base when it comes to the relationship between power relations (on the one hand), and social structures and alliances, communication, communicative action, social behaviour, conflict, resistance, and transformation processes (on the other).

As discussed in Chapter 2, power is mostly (and wrongfully) seen and experienced as an isolated and centered entity, and something that is acquired, maintained (by prowess and fortune), or exercised by authority - the so-called dominatory/judicial power or the “bad” power of Machiavelli’s Prince. It is rather obvious that future studies and theory (if it wants to contribute to the knowledge base), will have to focus more on the relationship, interaction and commonalities between power relations and social relations, specifically within the context of the (political) local authority-planning environments, which are so closely related with the social nexus.

The Tshwane case study, which covers an extraordinary transformation experience over a period of ten years, presents a thorough discussion and valuable insight on the power relations within a transforming local authority-planning environment. Based on this study, and the knowledge, theory and propositions presented by the scholars mentioned above (with specific reference to the work of Foucault), a number of “power(full)” suppositions were derived from the study. Within the context of

the Tshwane power web and social/organizational structure, these suppositions specifically relate to the particular dynamics of power structures and power relations (how powers and power relations change, develop, emerge, how it moves around in the web); the relationship between power relations, and power struggles, conflict and resistance; the different types and combinations of powers and the effect of it; the impact of the (Tshwane) transformation process on the power structures and power relations in the local authority; and the impact of these power structures and power relations on the transformation process. With regard to aspects such as the generalisability and replicability of these suppositions as discussed in Chapter 3, it should however be noted that these suppositions were derived from, a comparative study of a very unique and particular transformation experience (case study) within the context of other theoretical propositions, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. In view of the above, these suppositions (as discussed in the following paragraphs) should be seen only/mainly as part of the theory-scaffolding process - and should hence, be read and understood within this context.

Reflecting on the practice, politics and powers in the City of Tshwane

Questioning and challenging the powers of “The Prince”. In spite of the work done by amongst others Foucault, to redefine the concept of power, the Tshwane experience clearly showed that there still is a perception, that that power is something that is centralized, “at the top”, and in the hands of “The Prince”. Although much was done during the past decade in the City of Tshwane to establish and develop democratic ways of consulting and communicating, numerous examples were still evident of the strong autocratic and dominatory powers. These powers, as well as the use/abuse of such powers (over the other weaker powers) were specifically evident in the Tshwane transformation and organizational restructuring processes during the early 2000. This continued power-control and domination from “the central and the top” often created frustration and friction amongst the other “less powerful entities” that desired and preferred to consult and talk.

Although these dominatory powers are normally associated with the powers of the top echelon (or “The Prince”), the Tshwane experiences showed that/how these autocratic and dominatory powers have manifested in all levels of the organization. In support of Foucault’s theory, the Tshwane experience therefore showed that power is omni-present and part of the every day life (the lifeworld), and that power is not something that can be ring-fenced or defined.

Unlike the old perceptions about the untouchable status of certain powers (infra power or the power of “The Prince”), the Tshwane case study also exposed the vulnerability of such powers and presents various examples of how “easily” powers were seized, manipulated or threatened by

other powers and combinations of power. This vulnerability and sensitivity of strong powers is particularly evident in the almost relaxed way in which certain top management officials and senior politicians were “removed” or replaced by others during the recent transformation processes in the City of Tshwane.

The unpredictable and illusive dynamics of power. The case study, in support of Foucault, has clearly shown the dynamics and complexity of powers - how it moves around, how it changes over time and in different situations, the different types of powers, the different levels of powers, and the particular relationship between the above. These dynamics is specifically evident when looking at the radical way in which the different power structures (and their powers), e.g. political parties, departmental managers, leadership structures and communities have changed and fluctuated during the past decade in the City of Tshwane. The Tshwane case study further illustrates that power(s) can emerge or manifest at any time and in any place - even when it is the least expected. This particular power manifestation was often seen in the CTMM, when certain officials (and politicians) were “suddenly” given authority or power, and in the way in which, particular authority or power was just removed from certain officials. This highlights the need to understand and accept the complexity and the unpredictability of power relations and to search for appropriate ways to manage, “control” and balance power relations. This, in itself requires a certain/another kind of power - a power with its own problems and characteristics.

Aspiration for power. Like Machiavelli, the Tshwane case study presents numerous examples of how people acted and behaved in order to acquire more power - at any cost - to become “a Prince”, and what people would do to defend, protect and maintain their power(s). These aspirations and actions were often witnessed during the recent organizational restructuring processes, and the “sometimes extraordinary” ways in which different officials and managers (on all levels) have acted and behaved in order to protect their domains and positions, or to move to a higher position or “the top”. The Tshwane experience further illustrated how these aspirations can dominate and influence, and how it creates conflict and resistance and a clash of different powers. These forms of conflict and resistance were not only witnessed amongst the officialdom and the political arena, but also amongst the struggles between some of the IDP forums and the Pretoria/Tshwane local authority (during the late 1990s), specifically with regard to the respective decision making powers of these entities.

Managing and balancing the different types of power relations. Throughout the transformation processes various examples were presented of *the different types of power* that constitute the power web, such as the community/social power exhibited by some community forums; the social

group power presented by the various planning sections and factions within the planning sections; the professional powers exercised by the professional planners and other related professions; the autocratic powers of the old-style managers who resisted the emerging democratic processes and management styles; the different types of (good and bad) political power; and “the power of instruments” (Foucault) with specific reference to the power of the old Structure Plan and the “aspired power” of the IDP.

Some of these powers above had a negative influence on the system, while others were more positive. The study also presents various examples of the so-called good, productive power, specifically within the context of the social nexus. One of the most important powers, and one that is often most neglected, is the power of communication and communicative action as exhibited by the communicative actions of the various community forums and stakeholder groups. This form of productive power was specifically exhibited by the way in which certain community groups and forums (e.g. the PICP) have exercised their social/community power (over the political power of “the Prince”) in order to obtain funds for certain programmes and projects in the city.

It was however the specific relationships (or clashes) between certain types of conflicting powers, e.g. the professional and political powers that created the most conflict and problems. In other instances, did certain combinations of “compatible” powers (e.g. the combination of social power and communicative power), had a positive effect on the overall power/organisational structure. Within this realm, the Tshwane structure presents a particular power web with unique power relations. This, not only emphasises the need to understand the different types of powers and the different types of relations, but also the effect of these powers and power relations - specifically in a volatile political environment of a transforming local authority. It further emphasises the need to promote and exploit good relationships and to manage bad relationships - to balance the relationships in order to establish and maintain a sound and balanced power web - and ultimately good and productive power relations and organizational stability.

Struggles and conflict associated with power relations. When looking at the complex power web with its different and sometimes-conflicting power relations, it is obvious that these relations have to be associated with conflict, resistance and struggles. This particular study which, through the “practice movement methodology” and practice writing and narrating presents practice stories of real life experiences, has succeeded in exposing many of the struggles, conflict and battles typically found in planning systems and local authorities such as the struggles between the politicians and the planners, and the local authority managers and planners. Many of these struggles (which are intrinsically associated with Foucault’s powers) were associated with, and

amplified by, the Tshwane local government transformation and the transformation of the urban planning and local government system (1992 to 2002), as well as the power/s of/in this system.

The impact of power relations on the transformation in the City of Tshwane. These power structures and power relations found in Foucault's power web and the City of Tshwane had a positive and negative *impact on the transformation of the urban planning system* in this City during the past decade. It was positive, in the sense that the transformation process was largely inspired, propelled and facilitated and directed by these different types of powers as well as a combination of these powers, viz: professional powers; the power of knowledge; the power and force of the better argument; the power of effective communicative action; the power of communities and pressure groups; and also the "good" infra power of politicians who used their powers to change the system to the better. Without these powers the transformation would not have been possible. In the City of Tshwane, these powers referred to above, in some instances, e.g. the organisational process, had a negative impact on the transformation as they were used to stop or slow down the transformation process, to defend the old system and to protect and maintain the old practices and powers in the City of Tshwane, e.g. the Structure Plan approach. In many cases these powers were also used to manipulate the transformation process as is evident by some of the restructuring efforts in the former council. These hindering forces or powers, unlike the facilitating forces or powers, were ultimately responsible for the resistance, struggles and conflict associated with the transformation process in the City of Tshwane. Foucault also referred to the concepts of promoting or constraining powers. In the City of Tshwane, it was however, primarily the combination(s) of the different powers (good and bad combinations) that had the largest impact on the transformation process.

The impact of the Tshwane transformation processes on power relations. The transformation processes in the City of Tshwane, or the introduction of new urban planning and urban management processes and practices, although influenced by the various forms of powers, in turn also had a positive and negative *impact on power, power structures and powers relations* as such. It was positive in the sense that it resulted in the establishment and emergence of many new forms of productive power such as the formation of the community/IDP forums with its management committees, new forms of community power and social power in the form of the democratic processes and the community involvement, and also new forms of "good" political power as a result of the (new) democratic dispensation. This also presents a shift from the so-called dominatory power (and the bad power of "The Prince") towards a more democratic and communicative type of power. Although some people saw these new power structures as negative and threatening, the transformation process impacted positively on power structures and power

relations in the sense that it disrupted the old power web and power balances. In some instances old power structures (good and bad) were dissolved or replaced by new power structures (good and bad). This ultimately created conflict, resistance and uncertainty in a volatile transforming local authority - and hence a new form of opposition power and group power - against any forms of change and domination.

The transformation process and the associated new urban planning processes and local government processes and structures similarly had a major impact on power structures in general. The new IDP system for instance resulted in new local authority powers specifically in the top management, the office of the Municipal Manager and the Treasury department, as well as a new system of power relations in the various council departments. Although this IDP system in some ways enhanced the power of the Municipal Manager as it made "him" more strategic, it in other cases diluted the power and influence of the City Treasurer and the Departmental Managers who no longer had the power to control and manipulate the system, projects, processes and the budget - as a result of the particular IDP process. This state of affairs, as could be expected, resulted in conflict, resistance and frustration, specifically amongst the old school (patriarchal) managers and politicians. The new transformed (ing) urban planning system with its developmental, strategic and democratic nature not only affected (positively and negatively) the roles and powers of the managers and councilors but it also had a major impact on the roles and powers of the urban planners as it made them more relevant in the new local government dispensation - and more important (see also Chapter 6). This in some instance resulted in new professional powers that threatened the power structures as discussed previously.

The Tshwane case study not only emphasises the need to understand the different power and power relations and the relationship between transformation processes and power relations, but it also provides a perspective on the transformational issues, struggles, conflict, resistance and power play associated with change. It highlights the sensitivity and complexity of power relations as described by Foucault, and also the need to structure and manage power relations and to achieve a sound balance of powers - a balanced power web. It has specifically become important in the local authority-planning environment with its political nature to limit power play and domination, to devise strategies and tactics to exploit "good productive powers" and to mediate "bad deconstructive powers" and to direct power(s) for the common good. One such strategy that needs to be emphasised relates to effective and appropriate communicative action, negotiation, argumentation and "the force of the better argument" - as promoted by Habermas, Healey, Hillier and Watson.

Ending this discourse with “The power of communicative rationality”

During the past few years, the respected work of Flyvbjerg provided evidence on the power of politics, the way in which power defines and dominates rationality. See Chapter 2; and see also Lapintie (2000); Watson (2001); and Allmendinger (2001) on the above. As discussed in Chapter 2, the work of Flyvbjerg was widely criticised by amongst others Lapintie who argued that his work and theories were too simplistic, in that it did not define and unpack the concept of rationality effectively.

The Tshwane case study, in support of Flyvbjerg's theories, further presents evidence of how political power was (ab)used to define and dominate rationality - e.g. the powerful methods which were used to dissolve the “rational” inner city process and projects and the effective and “rational” Planning Zone Forums, to name a few examples. The Tshwane case study, however also presents numerous examples and evidence that challenge and contradict the theoretical propositions from Flyvbjerg's study. These propositions are mostly too simplistic in that it over-emphasises the “*power of (political) power*” and that it under-emphasises “*the power of rationality*” and more specifically communicative rationality or action. It provides evidence that rationality is not always inversely proportional to power as presented by Foucault. The Tshwane case study further shows that it is not desirable to have such an unbalanced relationship between power and rationality as it results in domination, conflict and the neglect of good rational arguments (“the better argument”). This again, highlights the need to devise strategies to ensure a more balanced relationship between power and rationality, or to limit or mitigate dominance or bad power. Within the context of these strategies, Watson (2001) argues the need to identify and counter relations of domination wherever they may occur and to be alert to power and its dynamics through rationality and knowledge, giving support to its production and positive forms and monitoring and revealing its negative forms. This implies that rational actions such as communicative action be applied to manage these power dynamics.

Of particular importance for this study is the way in which effective communication, communicative action and speech act was used and harnessed to strengthen the power of rationality. As discussed in Chapter 2, power relations (Foucault) can be associated and linked with social relations (Habermas), see also Kogler, Hillier and Wartenburg in Chapter 2. The lifeworld comprises of one integrated web of power and social relations. The flow of power, power relations and the “power” of powers are largely influenced by social relations, communication and more specific communicative action (Healey), and the power of coalitions (Watson; Wartenburg and Kogler).

These communicative powers coincides with Flyvbjerg's viewpoint namely that "*rationality in open confrontation yields power*". Good power relations and good social relations provide a good and stable power/social web/system that is good for rationality, as it makes rational actions more powerful. In support of the above, Watson (2001), further argues that normative rationality may still provide an ideal, worth striving for, but it is a poor guide needed to get there. Her study amongst others illustrated the critical role played by discourse as a mechanism through which power was exercised. She argues that discourse is more than talk and that it (following Foucault) is viewed as including verbal and textual practices, which together is organised in a regular and systematic way. This "discourse coalition" around issues, according to Watson (2002), made the exercise of power more effective as it provides a better rationality.

The more active, omnipresent and power(full) these social powers become, "*the more the rationality and the less the power*" (the inversion of Flyvbjerg). This supposition is supported by a number of events during the Tshwane transformation process *viz*: the sustained pressure and power of the PICP working groups to obtain funds for social projects; the efforts made by planners to implement new systems in spite of much resistance; and the way in which grand plans and presentations (and good arguments) were used to approve and implement certain projects, e.g. the Inner City Spatial Development Framework.

Unlike the theory of Flyvbjerg (and the suppositions by Watson and Homann), which argues that "the force of the better argument" is often dominated by political powers, the Tshwane study argues that the force of the better argument or rationality (within the context of communicative action and social power) can be more powerful and influential than what some scholars tend to believe. If social rationality/arguments are applied/presented properly it has the potential to overshadow or at least challenge the political powers, ultimately providing a more balanced relationship between power and rationality. The Tshwane experiences show that the power/social web is highly unstable and that it should be stabilised through balanced power relations, through power(full) rationalisation and communicative action. These communicative actions not only support and strengthen the force and power of "the better argument", but it ensures a more balanced relationship between power and rationality and a more balanced power and social web. This ultimately ensures a more effective organisation, a better organisational culture, less conflict and resistance and more production.