

CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THE STUDY

The establishment of a new unicity municipality represented a significant departure from the previous dispensation for local government in the Tshwane area. The implementation of the new structure was preceded by the gargantuan task of compiling a comprehensive body of legislation that would set out the framework for and provide guidance with regard to the multiple processes involved. Yet, at the point when implementation actually started, it was, more than anything, a human drama that unfolded. It is this drama of people with widely divergent backgrounds, personalities and ambitions aspiring to, wielding and oppressed by power that forms the focus of this study.

1.1 The purpose of the study or problem statement

The study is about the restructuring of the City Planning function during the Tshwane local government transformation from 5 December 2000 to 30 June 2002. It provides an analysis of the forces that were at work in the process, as well as the outcomes thereof with specific reference to power¹ and rationality². The study is presented in the form of a narrative³.

1.2 Type of study

The research focuses on a specific experience of organizational change, namely that of the City Planning function of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM). The research attempts to observe this specific case and to describe the forces and patterns that gave it its characteristic shape – a shape that may well contain elements found in similar experiences in other municipalities and in other organizations. As such, the study has strong parallels with case study research. Moore (1987:47) states that “*Case studies*

¹ See Chapter 5, paragraph 5.1.3, for more on the concept of power in the context of this study.

² Rationality denotes arguments based on scientific knowledge and reason. It represents the objective truth as it is discovered through human understanding.

³ See Chapter 2 for more on the narrative as literary form.

are usually used when the research is attempting to understand complex organization problems or the diffuse causes and effects of change". Leedy & Ormrod (2001:149) offer a simple but valuable definition of a case study when they state that: "In a case study, a particular individual, program, or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time". Yin (1989) describes a case study as an "empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". The legislative and theoretical context of the Tshwane experience is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

I opted for a very detailed and personalised case study, trying to render my own experience as fully as possible. This is in contrast with the type of "generic" case study advocated by Catanese (1974), which, as he states it, "can overcome the necessity to provide countless details of background for each analysis – enhancing readability." It is even further removed from the case studies presented by Schütte et al (1995), which have been generalised to the point of appearing fictitious. It is my contention that it is exactly the densely woven detail of the narration of the Tshwane case study that will convey something of the experience and that will draw in the reader to share in the social reality within which the experience took place. This reality is recreated through my own observations and emotions captured in writing.

The study is an example of Flyvbjerg's (2001) contemporary interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, which can best be translated as "prudence" or "practical wisdom". He argues that *phronesis* goes beyond the other two sciences identified by Aristotle, namely *episteme* (empirical, natural science) and *techne* (craftsmanship) and demands value-judgments of the type required of a "virtuoso social and political actor" (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 2). Basing his argument on the five levels of human learning identified in the Dreyfus model, Flyvbjerg (2001: 9-49) shows that *phronesis* is closely related to the highest, or "expert" level of learning, and not to the lower levels that rely less on contextual factors and more on context-independent facts or rules. As a context-dependent science, *phronesis* is concerned with praxis. In this

regard Flyvbjerg (2001: 4) attempts to help “*restore social science to its classical position as a practical, intellectual activity aimed at clarifying problems, risks, and possibilities we face as humans and societies, and at contributing to social and political praxis*”. Flyvbjerg (2001) therefore argues that social science as *phronesis* is a distinct science and that “*attempts to reduce social science and theory either to episteme or techne, or to comprehend them in those terms, are misguided*” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 2). Therefore, social science fails when it attempts to be (or become) natural science. In popular management theory, however, Flyvbjerg’s viewpoint is yet to be adopted. Kaplan and Norton followed their bestselling book *The Balanced Scorecard* (1996) with another well-received volume *Strategy Maps: Converting intangible assets into tangible outcomes* in 2004. The balanced scorecard and strategy maps developed by Kaplan and Norton (1996 and 2004) are both tools for lending an empirical edge to the practice of management. The rationality underlying this work is aptly summarised on the fly leaf as “*you can’t manage what you can’t measure*”. This stands in stark contrast to the understanding that is to be gained from *phronetic* science, which, according to Flyvbjerg (2001), is intuitive, mature, holistic and well-tried. Flyvbjerg (2001) presents a view directly apposed to that of Kaplan and Norton (2004) when he (2001:19) states that “*Experience cannot necessarily be verbalized, intellectualized, and made into rules. Therefore, the cognitivists have a difficult time understanding it*”. From my own experience as a novice researcher in the field of social science, Flyvbjerg’s (2001) arguments for *phronetic* social study are more convincing than attempts by scholars such as Kaplan and Norton (1996 and 2004) for social (or management) science to be forced into a natural science mould.

Flyvbjerg (2001:63) identifies the following characteristics for *phronetic* social science:

- A focus on values;
- A closeness of the authors to the object of their study;
- A focus on the details (*minutiae*) of practices that “*make up the basic concerns of life*” Flyvbjerg (2001:63);
- Extensive use of case studies;

- Use of the narrative as revelatory tool, and
- A dialogical slant that allows for other voices than that of the author to be heard.

Phronetic research is unequivocally practice-oriented. Flyvbjerg (2001:134) states that “*Phronetic research focuses on practical activity and practical knowledge in everyday situations*”⁴.

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that the case study is a useful tool for developing the “*tacit skills*” Flyvbjerg (2001:35) with which experts (including expert researchers) operate. He illustrates that, while the background conditions for natural science is physical facts, for social science it is “*patterns of behaviour*”, characterised by “*expert exercise of tacit skills*” Flyvbjerg (2001:45). As does expert knowledge, *phronesis*, more than anything else, requires *experience* (Flyvbjerg, 2001:57). Experts have been shown to draw on intimate knowledge of large numbers of cases in their fields of expertise (Flyvbjerg 2001:71). Flyvbjerg therefore describes the case study as a “*method of learning*”.

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that case studies produce the type of knowledge that makes it possible to progress from the lower levels of human learning to the higher levels. He states that “*if people are exclusively trained in context-independent knowledge and rules, that is, the kind of knowledge which forms the basis of textbooks and computers, they will remain at the first levels of the learning process*” (Flyvbjerg 2001:71). He adds that the detailed closeness to real-life situations offered by case studies is helpful in developing a nuanced view of reality. Case studies are, however, also important for the researcher’s own skills through “*concrete, context-dependent experience*” (Flyvbjerg 2001:72), which is essential to progress to the higher levels of learning.

The reader should be aware of the limitations of a case study approach. As Moore (1987) contends, case studies lack the statistical validity of properly

⁴ More could be read on this point on page 39, paragraph 5.1.2, “A penchant for practice”.

selected samples and the validity of conclusions can be limited by the degree to which such a study can be viewed as “*typical*”. Refuting such criticism, Flyvbjerg (2001:66-87) contends that case studies are well suited to produce concrete, context dependent knowledge, which in essence is all that social science has to offer. He adds (2001:75) that the argument that formal generalization is always at the root of scientific progress is unfounded. As *phronesis* has at its centre *practical* rationality, it benefits from case studies and particularly the exposition of the situational ethics and context-dependent value-judgments that constitute cases. Case studies are not only a tool for understanding practical rationality, but also for communicating it to others (Flyvbjerg, 2001:135). It is not the intention of this study to present the Tshwane experience as unique in every (or any) respect, neither is it the intention to portray it as “*typical*”. Rather, my aim is to discover those common threads that characterise processes of organizational change. It should furthermore be noted that purely scientific or empirical research does not necessarily yield more valid results, the classical example of which is the well-known Hawthorne experiments (Moore, 1987:48; Ott, 1989). Moore also argues that case study research can be a time-consuming process, as a study of organizational change, for example, can extend over months or even years. The danger, according to Moore (1987:48), is that the research results, when finally published, may already have been “*overtaken by events*”. I am confident, however, that the timeframe of this study is such that its outcome, which is of a generalised nature (in other words not limited to application in one situation only), will still be relevant at the time of publication. The specific period of eighteen months I have chosen to study represent the peak of the transformational phase that is temporally situated between two phases of relative inertia, or stability (see Aldrich, 2002), or as Greiner (1991) puts it, a *revolution* situated between two phases of *evolution*⁵. The understanding gained from the study may find universal application in other cases of organizational change.

⁵ See also page 50, paragraph 5.2.2: “*Organizational Change*”.

Flyvbjerg (2001: 73-81) argues in favour of strategic sampling of cases which promise to be either critical (cases that allow a deduction of the type “*if this is (not) valid for this case, it is valid for all (no) cases*” (Flyvbjerg 2001:79)) or extreme (cases that are particularly problematic or particularly good in relation to the subject being investigated), or paradigmatic cases (cases that develop a metaphor or establish a school for the relevant domain) or a combination of the three, rather than selecting cases on a random basis. I would add to this, however, that there is also a case to be made for the researcher selecting a case that is close to him/her, even a case in which he/she has had personal involvement, as such selection brings with it the benefit of particular insight and unarticulated knowledge that would be absent in an “*external*” case or a case far removed from the researcher’s own experience. A survey of practice proves that this is most often the case. Examples are Flyvbjerg’s (1998) study of Aalborg, and the South African studies of Watson (2001) (Cape Town) and Coetzee (2005) (Tshwane). I also chose the Tshwane case partly on the basis of my own involvement in it.

This approach is strengthened by Flyvbjerg’s (2001:82) view that case study research “*can ‘close in’ on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice*”. He (2001:83) furthermore argues that, in keeping with the model of human learning, researchers stand to gain the most advanced level of understanding when they place themselves in the context studied.

1.3 Focus of the study

The study focuses on people – their intentions and actions, and the relations they have with each other as they take shape and exist at a certain time and within a certain setting or context. In the discourse around the transformation of local government in South Africa, the necessity of capacity-building is often stressed. In this regard, Moosa (1998) refers to the fiscal, technical and administrative capacity of municipalities that will have to be increased in order to enable them to manage the process of change. The main focus of this study is, however, not on the technical capacity of planners and the city

planning function, budgets, organizational structure, or number of support staff, etc. Although I have described the organizational, technical and political conditions that impacted on the planners, as referred to by Rabinovitz (1969), I tried to relate the experience of and reaction to these factors by the people involved in the restructuring of Tshwane's City Planning function. This implies that, rather than to provide a mere description of the context and events, I attempted to expose the social reality of culture, values, relations and emotions that shaped and was shaped by the events in question.

I recorded and scrutinized the deeds and words of the main role players during the study period not only through a recollection of my own experience of the related events, but also through encounters and discussions (interviews) with others who shared in the experience. I did so in an attempt to discern the underlying dynamics of power that shaped the story. More particularly, I focused on how power, or rather the aspiration to power, influenced the words and deeds of the main characters during the restructuring process. This is much the same approach as that which was followed by Flyvbjerg (1998) in his study of Aalborg.

The planners who are characters in my story are all "*real*" people, each with their own personality, background, political and religious affiliation, likes, dislikes and values. Unlike other authors (Catanese, 1974, and So et al (ed), 1979) who portray "*the planner*" as a distinct type, I have not sought to promote such stereotyping or generalisation, as I believe that it will greatly detract from the credibility of my narration and will remove from it the basis of synergy or tensions and powerplay, which, to a large extent, resulted from the unique idiosyncrasies of the characters involved.

1.4 Drawing the line: Defining the scope of the study

The scope of this study can be defined in terms of different parameters. The first is chronological. The study essentially seeks to describe and analyse events pertaining to the restructuring of Tshwane's planning function from **5 December 2000** to **30 June 2002**. The first date is that of the democratic local

government election that heralded the advent of a new structuring of local authorities in South Africa, the so-called unicity structure. The second date is the end of the Tshwane financial year, eighteen months after the introduction of the new structure. These eighteen months of the study were, in my view, the most eventful with regard to the restructuring of the planning function (although the restructuring was not completed in that period) and represented a manageable chunk of history to be studied in depth.

The scope of the study is defined not only in terms of the study period, but also in terms of the subject matter as such. Rather than include the whole of the Tshwane restructuring process, the study is confined to the planning function only, as this formed a manageable unit within which the experience of the transformation process could be studied. The choice of the planning function as the focus of this study was furthermore motivated by the central role afforded to planning within the new system of developmental local government as a tool for redressing past inequities in the country as set out in the White Paper on Local Government (1998).

I tried to expose the underlying forces that determined the course of the restructuring of the planning function. The work of Bent Flyvbjerg (1998), in particular, inspired me to take this approach. Flyvbjerg's study of Aalborg (1998) sparked a renewed interest in how planning works – in the factors and forces that shape the interaction between the profession and the city environment. I chose Flyvbjerg's (1998) gripping, richly textured narrative of the Aalborg Project as a key reference for this study not merely because it is inspirational reading for anyone attempting a case study of planning practice. I also chose it because of the apparent parallels that exist between the Aalborg case and that of Tshwane – this notwithstanding the fact that the focus of the Aalborg narrative is on planning as an activity in relation to external space while that of the Tshwane story is on the planning function as it is constituted within a bureaucratic municipal structure. The stop-start nature of the Aalborg project and the resultant delays in implementation, the failure of noble intentions to be realised, and most of all, the intricate web of powers at play and the use (rather, manipulation) of information and communication to

exercise such powers, are all mirrored in the Tshwane case. This study presents a valuable opportunity to add to this discourse by investigating the forces at play in the internal structuring of a planning function. The changing role of the planning profession, its struggle to find a meaningful role and identity in the face of a radically changing context, has been the subject of much deliberation in recent years (Healey, 1995; Sager, 1994; Nylund, 1995; McLoughlin, 1992) and adds another dimension to the narration.

Campbell and Fainstein (1996) argue that it is difficult to define planning theory in view of the fact that it overlaps with other disciplines and that it is therefore difficult to determine the boundaries between planning and other disciplines. Hulsbergen and Meyer (1998) furthermore argue that such fading boundaries could prove to be sources for renewal and alternative approaches, provided that the respective disciplines define their particularities anew. My study shows, however, that all aspects of planning (its external effect as well as its internal manifestation) are clouded and distorted by issues of power. Scholars such as Flyvbjerg (1998) show that the days of the planner as technician and design master are long gone (see also Oranje, 2000). It seems, however, that a new vision for planning is yet to emerge. Nonetheless, the debate around the new face of the planning profession falls outside of the scope of this study. My study is limited to the experience of organizational change in the planning function of a specific municipal structure.

I have deliberately attempted to “*narrow down*” the scope of the study so as to allow for the level of detail that would give the study the desired depth, rather than “*shallow bulk*”. As Moore (1987:65) argues: “*The tendency is to think that our understanding of a problem will increase as we collect more and more information about it. In fact, the reverse is usually the case ... when more questions are introduced, the amount of data increases but the understanding declines*”.

1.5 Structure of the study

The following four chapters provide the reader with more information on the narrative form that was used for the study, the research methodology and the legislative and theoretical context within which the narrative is located. Chapter six provides the narrative account of the transformation of the planning function of the CTMM during the study period, which can be viewed as the crux of the study. The last chapter offers an analysis of the recurring/enduring elements or patterns that emerged from the narrative.

1.6 Value of the study

An Internet and library catalogue search revealed that no study has yet been done of the transformation of a planning function in the most recent round of Local Government transformation in South Africa. In this sense, the study represents new knowledge. It also seeks to enrich the more general body of knowledge on organizational change or transformation. The study furthermore presents the opportunity to extrapolate the findings by Flyvbjerg (1998) regarding power and rationality from the external effect or operation of planning, to the internal organization of the planning function within a municipality.

CHAPTER 2

EMPLOYING THE POWERFUL ART OF STORYTELLING

As this study is essentially a story, the natural form to present it in is a narrative.

In popular self-help literature, the narrative has recently made a huge comeback. Books such as *Who moved my cheese?* by Spencer Johnson and *The one minute millionaire* by Mark Victor Hansen and Robert Allen (2002) have reached millions of readers with a message conveyed by way of simple, unadorned narratives. Painter-Morland (2003) proposes so-called “*narrative witnessing*” as an alternative approach to moral education in schools. She believes that narratives have the potential to allow “*a form of diverse and complex coherence to emerge and develop, both within and among learners with different moral loyalties and orientations*”. Similarly, Boje (1991) in his study of storytelling organizations, suggests that storytelling is used (particularly in turbulent environments) as an attempt to understand unfolding events. In spite of being an outspoken critic of the managerialist approach⁶, Boje (1991) argues that “*training managers to be storytellers may ... result in training them to be more effective in organizations*”. It would seem that we are genetically predisposed to understand and be attracted to narratives, to identify with characters thus presented and to gain from it a kind of learning that is the closest to experiential learning, or, if you will, *real life*. Flyvbjerg (1998) confirms the view that a narrative presentation of events facilitate the understanding thereof, when he states that “*it has been my aim to present my findings in the form of a narrative that would help readers move about in the dense case material*”.

2.1 The default genre of human experience

According to literary theorists such as Webster (1996) and Culler (1997) the narrative is, in fact, such an obvious and natural literary form, that it tends to be invisible. Scholars such as Roland Barthes view the narrative as inherent

⁶ An explanation of managerialism can be found in Chapter 4 of this study.

to all human experience. This is supported by Fredric Jameson (1981), who calls narrative “*the central function or instance of the human mind*”. Culler (1997) argues that humans have a basic drive to hear and tell stories and that we have implicit knowledge about the shape of stories, which results in certain expectations regarding, for example, the manner in which a story ends⁷.

Narrative theory could therefore, according to Culler (1997), be seen as an attempt to make explicit our unconscious narrative competence. The theory of narratives is known as narratology (Webster, 1996). One of the earliest studies of narrative texts can be found in Aristotle’s analysis of plays that showed, among other things, that a play always has a beginning, a middle and an end (Webster, 1996 and Culler, 1997). More recent and comprehensive theories of narrative were developed by the early twentieth century school known as the Russian Formalists. Focusing mainly on poetry, the Russian Formalists sought to approach the study of literature through a scientific, objective methodology. As an example, they would identify “*laws of plots*” that could be applied to all narratives. The Russian Formalist Vladimir Propp (1986) is well known for his analysis of folk tales, through which he attempted to isolate a pattern of regularly occurring features that appeared in all folktales. The focus was not so much on analysing the content of literature, but on its “literariness”, its unique use of organized language. A key concept coined by the Russian Formalists was that of “defamiliarisation”, a device used mainly in poetry to make ordinary/everyday things appear strange. The Formalists were strongly criticised (to the point of persecution in Russia) for not taking into account the social context of literary works and refusing to address ideological concerns arising from them (Groden & Kreiswirth, 1997; Wynne-Davies, 1997).

In his plea for a new (*phronetic*) social science, Flyvbjerg (2001) makes a compelling argument for the use of the narrative as a tool for such research. He (2001:18) states that “*Where science does not reach, art, literature, and narrative often help us comprehend the reality in which we live*”. He argues (2001:84) that narratives are ideally suited to conveying the complex and

⁷ For more on the endings of narratives, see the discussion on “closure” in paragraph 2.5.

contradictory nature of real life. The minutiae of a case that can be conveyed in the form of narrative description are important in the light of “*a fundamental phenomenological experience, that small questions often lead to big answers*” (Flyvbjerg 2001:133). However, Flyvbjerg (2001: 84-87) is sceptical of the ideal of summarising and generalisation as the outcome of social research. He rejects the notion of sacrificing detail in favour of “*conceptual closure*” and concludes that “*the narrative itself is the answer*”.⁸ Apart from the voices of the narrator and of the actors in the case, there is also room for the voice of the reader to ultimately decide the meaning of a case. Flyvbjerg (2001: 87) views “*thoroughly executed case studies*” as producing the exemplars which are essential in ensuring an effective discipline.

Such case studies, according to Flyvbjerg (2001:137) do not use explicit theoretical assumptions as their point of departure, but rather “*an interest in a particular phenomenon that is best understood narratively.*” This was indeed the case with the narrative of the restructuring of Tshwane’s planning function.

Flyvbjerg (2001:164) furthermore remarks that, thanks to the central place accorded to the narrative in *phronetic* social science, this form of research is less Eurocentric than other methods. *Phronetic* studies can be of value in all cultures by tapping into existing narrative traditions. In the light of the strong oral tradition in Africa, the narrative promises to be a mechanism well suited to bridging the cultural divide in the development of a *phronetic* science that is indigenous to the African continent.

2.2 The “narrative turn” in planning theory

The emergence of the focus on communicative action and power, as well as a heightened interest in planning practice (and the iterative relationship between practice and theory) in recent literature⁹ by authors such as Patsy Healey, Jean Hillier, Charles Hoch, Judith Innes, Helen Liggett, Tom Stein and Tom Harper, Seymour Mandelbaum, Tore Sager, Jeff Throgmorton (Yiftachel and

⁸ For a listing of possible research questions to be answered in this manner, see page 189.

⁹ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of communicative planning theory.

Huxley, 2000) is accompanied by a preference for the narrative as a tool with which to describe and analyse practice stories.

Hillier (2002:16) explains that she uses practice stories for three reasons. Firstly, practice stories are used to enable planners to recognise situations similar to their own experiences. Secondly, they provide planners with more understanding of the behaviour and motives of the actors involved, and lastly, they serve as a basis for theorisation in order for *“those experiences to be shared amongst a wide range of practitioners attentive to the complexities of planning practice”* (Hillier 2002:16).

In the light of what is said in 2.1 above, it would seem that the narrative is the obvious form for presenting complex cases of planning practice. The practice stories studied were typically dense, or so-called *“thick”* descriptions (Hillier, 2002:16). They described the *“voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals”* (Hillier: 2002:16), or, in the case of Flyvbjerg’s (1998) study, *“the minutiae of the Aalborg story”* The *“dense case material”* (Flyvbjerg, 1998) thus presented, forms the basis of theorisation that could contribute to explaining and improving practice (see Hillier, 2002 and Forester, 1999). In this regard, Flyvbjerg (1998: 8) states that: *“Narratives not only give meaning to our past experiences, they also help us envision alternative futures”*.

Despite the fact that most of the proponents of communicative planning theory display an awareness of postmodernism (as the plurality of values and viewpoints characteristic of postmodern society is part of the rationale for a communicative approach), it should be noted that none of the practice stories studied (Coetzee, 2005; Hillier, 2002; Watson 2001, Flyvbjerg, 1998; Mcloughlin, 1992, Peattie 1987) were presented in the post-modern narrative style. In other words, these stories are not characterised by a disjointed temporal aspect, a blatantly dishonest narrator, or the use of puns and wordplay found in typically self-conscious postmodern story texts (Sim, 1998). Although Flyvbjerg (1998: xi) suggests that he is not a structuralist, he admits (1998:9) that his narrative is structured *“by the conventional means of time,*

place, actors and context.” The same can be said of the other narrative planning texts studied. The story of the transformation of the Tshwane planning function will also be offered as a narrative in the conventional sense. Background on this literary form is given below.

2.3 The story and the telling of it

Many studies and models of narrative writing exist. Roland Barthes suggested a model categorising all elements in the narrative in two groups, namely “*catalysers*”, which play an incidental or background role; and “*nuclei*” which are crucial moments of development or integration.

Studies such as those by Propp and Barthes concentrate on the content of narrative texts. However, much has also been written about the form of narrative texts, the telling itself or narration. Genette (1980) distinguishes between story, narrative, and narration. In concise terms, the story is the chronological sequence of events, the narrative the text presenting the events (in an often dislocated sequence) and the narration is the actual telling of the story. The Russian Formalists distinguished between the “*fabula*” or story material (events) and the “*suzet*” or plot. Later, EM Forster made the distinction between “story” and “plot”. Wayne C. Booth (1961) differentiates between the “*teller*” and the “*tale*”. Culler (1997) chooses a confusing terminology when he refers to “*discourse*” (the narration or story) and “*story*” (the events in chronological sequence) to distinguish between the events (albeit fictional events) and the telling of the events. It is therefore clear that a mere sequence of events does not constitute a story, rather, there has to be a plot indicating some kind of transformation and an ending relating, somehow, back to the beginning (Culler, 1997). In this study, I hope to transform the “*fabula*” or history through the telling of my own experience of the events (which I will further enrich with what could be discovered of how others experienced the events) into a narrative, or “*suzet*”. According to Culler (1997), the plot of any narrative hinges on the tension between that which was said to have happened, and that which actually happened. The same applies to my narrative of the transformation of the Tshwane planning function.

2.4 The powerful and, sometimes, invisible narrator

Fundamental to all narratives is a teller and a listener, or reader. A variety of terms are used to refer to these parties. The “*teller*” or narrator can appear in a variety of different forms, notably as first person or a third person narrator (Webster, 1996). First person narrators can play different roles in the stories they tell. They may be:

- The main *protagonists* (main characters);
- *Participants* who have a minor role in the story, or
- *Observers*, whose main role is to describe rather than to act (Culler, 1997).

Furthermore, the first person narrator may be fully developed (a person with a name, history, personality etc) or not well developed at all (Culler, 1997).

Culler (1997) states that “*to tell a story is to claim a certain authority, which listeners grant*”. So-called *unreliable* or *self-conscious* narrators undermine this authority when they flaunt the fact that their telling is coloured by their own bias or that they have the power to determine how the story will turn out. In this study, however, I endeavour (within the limitations of my own undeniable bias) to be a reliable narrator. I did not attempt to manipulate the story or its outcome, but rather tried to render “*the facts*” in the form of a narrative or story.

2.5 Who sees, who tells? Narrator and focalizer

Henry James developed the term “*post of observation*” (later referred to as “*point of view*”), which in more recent literary theory is called narrative focalization (Webster, 1996). Gérard Genette (1972) was the first to indicate the flaw in the assumption that the narrator and the figure in the text from whose perspective events were seen, was always the same person. This led Genette to make a distinction between the narrator and the focalizer. In the case of a first-person narrator, the narrator and the focalizer are most often

one and the same. Focalization can, furthermore, shift from one character to another during the course of a narration.

Culler (1997) identifies three variables that come into play during narration and focalization. The first variable is the *temporal aspect*. A narrator or focalizer can view events as they happen(ed) or with the gift of hindsight, or there can be a combination of the two. The second variable is related to *distance and speed*. This has to do with the pace of the story and the level of detail that is related. The third variable is so-called *limitations of knowledge*. A narrator or focalizer can lie anywhere between the two extremes of, on the one hand, viewing events and characters from a very limited perspective (similar to the lens of a camera), or, on the other, as a so-called omniscient narrator that has the godlike ability to access the innermost thoughts and motives of the characters.

2.6 Closure: the persuasive ending?

A narrative text follows a trajectory and, of its very nature, has to come to an ending, or closure. The manner in which narratives end is in itself the subject of much theorising. Endings vary from closed or “*rounded-off*” (Forster 1968) endings, to more open or unresolved endings. The term used for the way in which a narrative ends is “*closure*”. According to Webster (1996), closure has to do with the way in which a text persuades a reader to accept a certain worldview as valid or natural, as “*truth*”. This is confirmed by Catherine Belsey, in her book *Critical Practice* (1980), when she says that closure is the moment at which “*the events of the story become fully intelligible to the reader*”.

2.7 Telling seeking or becoming the truth

Culler (1997) refers to several functions of narratives, or reasons stories are told. The first function of narratives, initially identified by Aristotle, is to give pleasure through their imitation of life and their rhythm. Furthermore, the movement of narrative is driven by the human desire to know, to discover the

truth, to know the end. This is known as “*epistemophilia*”. Stories also teach us about the world and, through focalization, allow us to view the world from different vantage points. Narratives are at the same time a device for internalizing social norms and a mode for social criticism. Culler (1997) furthermore states that the basic question for narrative theory is whether a narrative is a fundamental form of knowledge of whether it is a rhetorical structure, which offers delusory clarification and consolation.

As it has become fashionable in texts such as this one, to also point out the “*dark side*” of certain academic perspectives or vantage points, such as modernism (Boje, 2001; Allmendinger, 2001), or planning (Allmendinger, 2001), it should also be pointed out that there is indeed a dark side to the use of the narrative. In the light of the American “*war on terrorism*”, which followed the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, Boje (2001) argues that “*Narratives that posit a ‘totality’ of people in the West versus another ‘totality’ of people in the East need to be deconstructed to reveal the play of differences and emergent forces of resistance to such grand narration.*” He adds that storytelling can be a dangerous tool in the hands of political forces, especially in times of war, and when used by “*the non-critical academy*”, that is, academy that perpetuates propaganda rather than to expose it.

2.8 Telling it as I see it

In my narration of the transformation of the City Planning Function of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality rendered in Chapter 6, I am a participant teller or narrator and the focalization is my own. It could be argued that all narrators are biased (see Watson, 2001). Nonetheless, as stated earlier, I am what is referred to as a “*reliable narrator*”, as I attempted to provide the reader with a truthful and sincere rendition of the events as I experienced them. As does Flyvbjerg (1998:4) with his rendition of the Aalborg case, the Tshwane case study provides the reader with the “*real history*”¹⁰ or the “*effective truth*”¹¹. Of course, I realize that *any* attempt at a

¹⁰ Referred to as the “*wirkliche Historie*” by Nietzsche.

“*truthful telling*” is suspect. As Peattie (1987) says: “*After all, every telling represents a different way of seeing. We see from where we stand; and why would we look unless we care about how the story comes out?*”

As far as the temporal aspect is concerned, I write the story from my present post of observation, looking back at events as I recall them and as they emerge from the research into CTMM operational documents and from the interviews I have had with some of the role players or characters. It is implied that I have the benefit of hindsight, without which, I have no doubt, I would have written the story differently. This temporal aspect is also a dimension of “*where I stand*” as a storyteller, to use the words of Peattie (1987) above, and could therefore be viewed by some critics as another “*filter*” that could have a distorting effect on the facts of the events I relate. It could, in other words, be argued that the story would have been more authentic, even more “true” had it been told as it happened. I would counter, however, that *all* stories are essentially told from the vantage point of a narrator who has already “*moved on in time*” (examples are Peattie (1987), McLoughlin (1992), Flyvbjerg (1998) and Hillier (2002)). Particularly in the case of a participant narrator (see paragraph 2.4) I believe the distance thus achieved could assist the narrator to give a *less* biased account of matters as the passing of time brings better perspective and an understanding of the “*bigger picture*” of which the events and experiences form part. Flyvbjerg (1998:139) also views hindsight as an advantage.

¹¹ Referred to as the “*verita effettuale*” by Machiavelli.