



**Public leadership practices in participation:
A social constructionist analysis of
South African local government**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this Doctoral dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree PhD: Leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, public participation is a constitutional mandate of local government, defined through the language of participatory governance and institutionalised through various formal structures and processes. There is general agreement across government, academia and civil society, however, that these formal efforts to engage communities in local decision-making and development often fail to achieve the intended outcomes, particularly the transformative ideals associated with the concept of participation. This raises questions regarding the roles, practices and challenges of local officials who are mandated to lead such processes. The objective of this thesis is therefore to investigate local officials' practices in leading participatory processes in the context of South African local government.

The study is framed as a social constructionist analysis of officials' practices through the lens of public leadership. It is informed by the literature on public leadership in collaboration, as well as the literature on leadership as socially constructed and constituted in practice. In addition, the study draws on the critical participatory development literature to inform the theorisation of participation. Together, these theoretical strands foreground issues of power and structure in the analysis of officials' practices. The study therefore set out to examine public leader practices in the context of participation, as reflected in the primary research question: *How do public leader practices in a South African local government context influence participation?* With a focus on local officials' formal responsibility to lead participation, this question explores how their practices enable and/or constrain participation, as well as how those practices are socially constructed in the South African local government and informal settlement context.

In answering this question, the study comprises a qualitative empirical analysis of officials' views and experiences with participation in a South African metropolitan municipality ('the City'). This involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews and focus groups with 59 officials across 13 City departments and structures, as well as from different levels of the organisational hierarchy. Interviews focused on how City officials understand the purpose and value of participation, how they engage communities in project and service delivery processes, and what they view as the main challenges and constraints. Although the public leadership literature recognises "collaboration" as a key feature of the public sector context, scholars tend to focus on formal inter-organisational networks and partnerships, and less on how local officials engage marginalised or vulnerable citizens and communities. The study

therefore contributes to studies of public leadership by examining the engagements between local officials and informal settlement communities.

The study examined officials' work in this context through the lens of four public leader practices, which were deduced from the extant public leadership literature, namely: mobilising and convening communities and stakeholders; structuring participatory processes; weaving and navigating relationships; and framing agendas. The study found that officials perform these practices and thereby influence participation through the exercise of positional authority and structural power. This entails the power of officials to determine the space and parameters of participation, which they exercise on the basis of their formal positions. In this way, their practices are also embedded in and defined by existing City institutions, governance arrangements and policy agendas, which produce participatory spaces characterised by 'authorised action' and the diffusion of power. This reflects the influential role of broader structural conditions on the agency of officials in implementing participation policy. The study therefore raises questions regarding the potential for public leaders to support and realise the transformative ideals of participation, and the implications for public leadership theory.

Key words: leadership, public leadership, local government, participation, practice, power, structure

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	Arican National Congress
BEPP	Built Environment Performance Plan
BNG	Breaking New Ground
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSP	Cities Support Programme
DAC	Direction Alignment Commitment
DFID	Department for International Development
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
Fg	Focus group
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GGLN	Good Governance Learning Network
HDA	Housing Development Agency
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HSDG	Human Settlements Development Grant
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
Int	Interview
INTACT	City Integrity Transparency, Accountability and Technology Project
ISN	Informal Settlement Network
LAP	Leadership-as-practice
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003
MSA	Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000
MStA	Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2 of 2000
PAJA	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 3 of 2000
PMT	Project Management Team
PP	Public Participation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RLDP	Rapid Land Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACN	South African Cities Network
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
SDBIP	Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SPCDF	Slovo Park Community Development Forum
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 16 of 2013
UISP	Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme
USDG	Urban Settlements Development Grant
WPLG	White Paper on Local Government, 1998

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study examines public leadership and the public leadership practices of South African local government officials in participation and engagement. In post-apartheid South Africa, local government officials are tasked with initiating, designing and leading participatory processes as part of their project and service delivery work. This suggests they have a crucial leadership role in meeting both developmental and democratic objectives. Yet, formal government-led participation seems unable to effectively engage poor and marginalised citizens and communities in decision-making and policy implementation processes. This raises questions regarding officials' leadership roles, practices and challenges in public participation.

During the colonial and apartheid periods, the majority of South Africans were excluded from political decision-making processes, and subject to a race-based authoritarian mode of public administration (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:371). Whilst urban in-migration provided cheap labour for the formal economy, this was controlled through what Haferburg and Huchzermeyer (2015:5) describe as "socio-spatial engineering". This involved racialised spatial segregation enforced through numerous laws restricting mobility, and through political planning and administrative practices that limited the availability of housing and proper infrastructure services for the black African majority. A major outcome of this system was the expansion of informal settlements (or 'slums') on the urban peripheries of cities and towns, which also became crucial sites of political struggle. Such unequal development continues to characterise urban spatial patterns and is a key governance challenge in the post-apartheid context. In fact, informal settlements remain a prominent feature of South African cities and towns, both as enclaves of poverty and as sites of struggle for recognition and dignity through inclusion in development processes and outcomes (Pithouse, 2014:135). The transformation of living conditions for the urban poor thus marks a critical focus of government development policies and practices, particularly in the local sphere.

Following the introduction of democracy in 1994, the reconfiguration of the South African state centred on transforming the exclusionary political, socio-economic and spatial system of apartheid into a democratic and inclusive one. This agenda found particular expression in the

Constitutional objectives for local government (Republic of South Africa, hereafter referred to as RSA, 1996: Section 152), and more precisely in the formulation of democratic and “developmental local government”, as delineated in the White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998b; Heller, 2001:133). Local government has since been tasked with several critical developmental roles: delivering basic services and sustainable human settlements; ensuring spatial integration across class and race; promoting local economic development; and ‘deepening democracy’ through the participation of citizens and communities (Pieterse, Parnell, Swilling & van Donk, 2008:3). The democratic mandate has furthermore been articulated in numerous policies and legislation prescribing a system of local participatory governance. This has, in turn, been institutionalised through various formal participatory structures and processes, including within planning as well as project and service delivery processes (Nyati, 2008:102; RSA, 1996: Section 152; RSA, 2000a: Section 16(1)).

The concept of participation and its perceived significance for development and governance is not unique to South Africa. It has been widely explored and incorporated into theories such as participatory and deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 2005), participatory development (Hickey & Mohan, 2004), and participatory governance (Gaventa, 2002, 2006b; Fung & Wright, 2001). Both participatory development and participatory governance have permeated international development and policy work since the 1980s, and have also informed South Africa’s post-apartheid public sector reforms (Storey, 2014:404; Nyati, 2008:102). The main premise of participatory governance is that, “citizens should have direct roles in public choices or at least engage more deeply with substantive political issues and be assured that officials will be responsive to their concerns and judgements” (Cohen & Fung, 2004). It focuses on ways for citizens to participate in governance processes “*with the state*” (Gaventa, 2006b:15, emphasis in original), particularly with officials, over and above electoral processes and engagements with political representatives.

Although participation remains an elusive and contested concept informed by varying meanings and discourses (Williams, 2006:199), it generally refers to the ability of citizens to express their views, interests and concerns, to influence government decisions and policy outcomes, and ultimately to act as agents of their own development (Eversole, 2011:51; Thompson, 2014:39; Sharma, 2008:3; Gaventa, 2002:1). It is given expression in the academic scholarship (locally and internationally) in concepts such as “people-centred development” (Picard & Mogale, 2015), “active” or “effective” citizenship (van Donk, 2013;

Miraftab and Wills, 2005; Heller, 2013), and “meaningful” and “transformative” engagement (Chenwi & Tissington, 2010; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). In this regard, a number of standard structures and processes for participation have been prescribed and institutionalised across municipalities, which are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

Despite the ambitious objectives for democratic development, the state of South African municipalities, well into the post-apartheid era, has been described in terms of “crisis”: a crisis of democracy (Millstein, 2010:22); a crisis of service delivery (van Donk & Williams, 2015:5); and a crisis of accountability and governance (Koelble & Siddle, 2014). Although urban municipalities in particular have expanded the availability of basic infrastructure and services (South African Cities Networks, hereafter referred to as SACN, 2016:49; Swilling, 2014:3185), backlogs and demands for services remain high (Turok & Parnell, 2009:157). In place of spatial transformation, cities are characterised by rapid urbanisation and growing informality, whilst the urban poor continue to experience challenges around the affordability, accessibility, functionality, and sustainability of infrastructure and services (Kitching & van Donk, 2015:76; Reddy, 2008:48-50).

Alongside these service delivery challenges, the formal institutions of participation have also failed to realise the promises and imperatives for democratic inclusion and development. In fact, government-led participation continues to be overlaid by decreasing levels of public trust (Human Sciences Research Council, hereafter referred to as HSRC, 2014; Afrobarometer, 2016:3) and high levels of citizen frustration and anger, often expressed through public protest (Chigwata, O’Donovan & Powell, 2017). Even better performing municipalities, especially the urban metros, are not spared from such protests; according to the Institute for Security Studies, protests in 2017 reached record-high levels, with almost half occurring in metros (Mulaudzi & Lancaster, 2017:np). While these have been dubbed ‘service delivery protests’ and are presumed to reflect citizen grievances around service issues, the term has been criticised as misleading, even in government circles. Indeed, “a cross-cutting consensus amongst politicians, technocrats, civil society organisations and researchers” alike link these “to deep dissatisfaction with the opportunities for substantive participation in processes of decision making created by state and other formal institutions” (Isandla Institute, 2013:18; see also Tapscott, 2007:84; National Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as NPC, 2011:31). In other words, public protests are not solely about services, but a range of governance issues (Von Holdt, Langa, Molapo, Mogapi, Ngubeni, Dlamini & Kirsten,

2011:68). It is also usually not the first form of engagement that communities employ, and thus underscores the limits and failures of formalised participatory structures and processes (Dugard & Tissington, 2013:266; Chigwata et al., 2017; NPC 2011:427).

A considerable literature has emerged that examines the limits and constraints of participation in local government (see, for example, Heller, 2001; Miraftab & Wills, 2005; Williams, 2006; Oldfield & Stokke, 2007; Oldfield, 2008; Sinwell, 2011; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013; Lemanski, 2017). A common observation is that participation has been reduced to routine and formulaic processes focused on technical service delivery issues, disconnected from actual decision-making processes, and intended to either inform or garner community ‘buy-in’ for predetermined decisions (Smith, 2011:515; Buccus, Hemson, Hicks & Piper, 2007:10; Oldfield, 2008:488). Whilst the policy articulation for participation suggests the state can effectively determine when, where and how communities can speak and be heard, the academic scholarship points to various structural constraints that undermine the ability of communities to engage in the ways dictated by the state. These include how participatory mechanisms are designed at the local level (Barichievy, Piper, & Parker, 2005; Oldfield, 2008), as well as how such mechanisms operate within broader institutional and governance systems and policy agendas (Heller, 2001:146).

In response, scholars have called for more attention to community-led initiatives and actions that occur outside the formal spaces of government (see, for example, Robins, Cornwall & von Lieres, 2008:1082; Oldfield and Stokke, 2007:144; Thompson & Nleya, 2010:224). However, the fact remains that local government is constitutionally mandated to engage citizens through formalised participatory structures, and in service delivery and development processes. This, therefore, remains a significant interface between local government and citizens, as well as the primary channel through which local government expects to engage citizens and communities.

In addition, realising the participation mandate, particularly in relation to service delivery, is also largely the responsibility of local or municipal officials. Studies of local participation tend to focus on the experiences and agency of citizens and communities, described as the ‘demand-side’ of participation (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:370). With a few exceptions (for example, Smith, 2011; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013; Winkler, 2011), much less attention has been given to the ‘supply side’, or the experiences and challenges of officials who are tasked to lead participatory processes. Yet this is an important component of participation given the

immense pressure on officials to both transform livelihoods and enable communities to have a say in the process (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:371). Although certain aspects of participation are prescribed in policy and legislation, there is considerable scope and need for officials to adapt such requirements to local contexts, and to both interpret and realise the policy intent as they do so (ibid.:368). Being at the so-called ‘frontline’ or ‘coalface’¹ also means officials must navigate between potentially conflicting institutional and community structures, dynamics and expectations, and particularly between the seemingly technical aspects of efficient delivery and the complex political aspects of engagement.

The mandate of participation can therefore be understood to impart a crucial leadership role to officials. It is on this basis that this study examines the perceptions, experiences and challenges of South African local government officials in relation to participation, and particularly through the lens of public leadership.² Notably, leadership has been identified as a gap in both research and policy related to South African local government (Schmidt, 2010:7). Local reforms and provincial and national government support to municipalities have tended to focus on addressing technical and regulatory deficiencies in planning, budgeting and financial management, with the “softer” aspects of leadership often left unaddressed (ibid.).

There is an emerging literature (predominantly within public administration scholarship) that explores issues of leadership and the role of leadership in addressing the challenges in South African local government, often positing leadership as necessary and crucial to resolving local governance issues (see for example, Edwards, 2010; Madumo, 2012; Mthembu, 2012; Sindane & Nambalirwa, 2012; Ndlovu, 2015; Davids, 2015; Govender, 2017). However, within this literature, participation is usually not the primary focus, nor is the interface between local officials and the urban poor.

The question of leadership in participation does, however, resonate with international studies of public leadership and a sub-set of literature that focuses on public leadership in contexts of

¹ These are terms frequently used in local and international literature regarding local governments and officials.

² This thesis is situated in studies of public leadership, as a field of leadership studies that has emerged largely out of public administration. In South African literature, the term leadership is generally used even when applied in public sector and local government contexts. Where necessary, ‘public leadership’ will be distinguished from ‘leadership’, and otherwise the terms are used interchangeably.

“collaboration”³ (see for example, Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006; Crosby & Bryson, 2010a; Morse, 2010; Sullivan, Williams & Jeffares, 2012). Informed by the literatures on collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2007) and collaborative public management (McGuire, 2006; O’Leary & Vij, 2012), these studies tend to examine public leadership in inter-organisational collaboration in the form of networks and partnerships. Although the context and structure of collaboration is potentially different to that of public participation in South African local government, scholars in the field recognise that collaboration presents a challenging context for public leaders and leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Vogel & Masal, 2015). This literature therefore offers a useful starting point for investigating the roles, challenges and experiences of local officials through the lens of public leadership.

Conceptually, this study finds footing in the public leadership literature that employs a social constructionist approach that understands leadership as constituted through the intersection of practices, relations and structures.⁴ Through this lens, an investigation of officials’ experiences in participation can elucidate how their practices are shaped (contextually and structurally), as well as how their practices influence participatory processes. This will give insight into how public leadership is socially constructed within the context of participation and existing constraints and opportunities.

The public leadership literature points to important practices that leaders may (or do) perform in the effort to initiate and sustain collaborations. This study employs these practices as a framework to examine what officials do in participation in the South African local urban government and informal settlement context. Thus, how officials mobilise communities, structure engagements, weave relationships and frame agendas, together illuminate how they take on their leadership roles in participation, and the challenges in doing so. In this regard,

³ This study is concerned with public participation, defined as the formal engagement between local government and citizens and communities. In the public leadership literature, the term ‘collaboration’ is generally used, and refers to formal inter-organisational structures and processes of engagement that may include citizens and communities, but not necessarily or exclusively.

⁴ The social constructionist approach is less prominent in studies of public leadership than of leadership in general, whilst both still predominantly emphasise leader-centric theories that define leadership in terms of leader agency and individual attributes, skills and behavioural styles (Collinson, 2011:183; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012:370; Sullivan et al., 2012:42). Public leadership scholars do, however, argue that social constructionist approaches are more appropriate for examining public leadership in contexts of collaboration where multiple organisational structures and ambiguous power relations come to the fore (Morse, 2010:233; Raffel et al., 2009:10-11). These different approaches are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

this thesis contributes to the theorisation of public leadership and public leader practices through a focus on a South African metro in a developing country and informal settlement context.

It is within this context of South African local government, as well as through a social constructionist approach to public leadership, that this study asks: *How do public leader practices influence participation?* In answering this question, the study takes a qualitative, anonymous case study approach involving in-depth and semi-structured interviews and focus groups, in order to elicit local officials' views and experiences within participation in a South African metro. This includes an exploration of the ways in which local officials respond to the participation mandate and take up their roles as leaders of participatory processes.

The empirical analysis is further situated in a theoretical articulation of the problem in terms of power and the interrelation of agency and structure, as derived through the intersection of public leadership and participation theory. Bringing these literatures together appears to be uncommon in studies of both public leadership and participation. This presents an opportunity to expand existing public leadership theory at an analytical level as well.

As noted above, according to studies of public leadership, collaborative structures and processes present particular roles and challenges for public leaders and leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Public problems, as well as the authority, knowledge and resources required to solve them, are increasingly dispersed across sectors, organisations and geographic scales (Sullivan et al., 2012:43). Public institutions must therefore work through networks and partnerships, in what Crosby (2010:S69) describes as a “shared-power world”, but which is also characterised by unequal relations of power (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:173). A key task of public leadership is therefore to enable and sustain collaborative processes in order to address public problems, and to address power differences in the process (Ansell & Gash, 2007:555).

This acknowledgement of power – power relations, power sharing and power differences – is interesting given critiques within critical leadership studies⁵ that the leadership scholarship

⁵ Critical leadership studies is an emerging field within leadership that has been largely informed by critical management studies. Although it remains broad and heterogeneous, scholars working from this perspective often critique issues of power

often neglects questions of power, even though the theory of leadership as an influence process contains clear linkages to the concept of power (see Collinson, 2011). It is also interesting given debates in the literature on participation (and particularly participatory development) regarding participation as a struggle to transform unequal relations of power. Whereas the public leadership literature recognises power differences between stakeholders (Van Wart, 2013:535; Evans, Hassard & Hyde, 2013:162; Page, 2010:248) and the need for public leaders to facilitate “power-sharing” arrangements (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:174-5; Crosby, 2010:S69-S70; Morse, 2007:3), the participation literature situates local power relations and inequalities within broader structures that may be beyond the individual’s sphere of influence (see for example, Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11; Cleaver, 2001:39; Hildyard, Hegde, Wolvekamp & Reddy, 2001:69). Stated otherwise, whilst the majority of studies in leadership and public leadership seem to associate power with the agency of the individual leader and his/her influence over followers⁶, theories of participation underscore how structures, structural conditions and structural relations of power, constrain individual agency and interactions.⁷

This introduces the well-known debate between the interrelation of structure and agency, or the extent to which people are able to act freely or whether their actions are instead conditioned and structurally determined. This issue has been explored in various scholarly fields, from philosophy to sociology, political science and social theory. Although this debate is increasingly recognised in studies of leadership and public leadership, especially in social constructionist approaches to leadership, there is still “too much ‘agency’ and too little ‘structure’” in theorisations and analyses thereof (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1180).

Although this study focuses primarily on officials’ practices in participation, this is underpinned by questions of power and the interrelation of structure and agency. This surfaces in the examination of public leadership in participation insofar as this involves the ability of agents – local officials and citizens alike – to act within, and potentially transform,

in the practice but also study and discourse of leadership (Collinson, 2011:181). This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1.

⁶ There are exceptions to this dominant trend, which are discussed in Chapter 2.

⁷ Although such structures may include micro-level structures (e.g. structures designed for participation), it more commonly encompasses meso-level structures (e.g. institutional systems and hierarchies) and macro-level structures (e.g. governance arrangements, policies, etc.).

existing structural conditions and power relations.⁸ This thesis therefore contributes to studies of public leadership in collaborative (or participatory) contexts by foregrounding questions of power and structure, and drawing on the critical participatory development literature to do so. More specifically, Susan Strange's (1998:25) assertion that some actors may have the "structural power" to determine the surrounding structural conditions within which relationships are formed and interactions take place, provides a useful analytical framing to examine power in public leader practices in participation. This will be further theorised through Andrea Cornwall's (2002, 2004, 2008) distinction between "invited" and "invented" spaces of participation. Together, these amplify the ways in which leadership practices are situated in structural conditions and power relations that inform participatory structures and action therein.

Through this conceptual framework, the study is interested to understand how public leaders (and public leader practices more specifically) are socially constructed in the context of structural factors that enable and/or constrain spaces of participation, as well as how leader practices influence participation in those spaces. In this regard, the study contributes to public leadership theory by bringing to the fore how officials' practices in participation remain situated in and defined by existing structures and structural relations (including government policies and systems), and are enacted through officials' positional authority and structural power. This gives further insight into the constraints and opportunities of participation in South African local government, and the roles and challenges of local officials therein.

1.2 Problem statement, research questions and research objectives

1.2.1 Problem statement

The problem this study seeks to examine is the seeming failure of South African local urban government, and local officials in particular, to effectively engage citizens and communities in service delivery and project processes. This is despite the clear policy intent to enhance

⁸ In this regard, the study resonates with social theories such as Giddens' structuration theory (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b), and Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Bénit-Gbaffou and Katsaura, 2014), both of which have been employed in leadership and public leadership studies. Despite the theoretical resonances, this thesis does not specifically draw on this work. Rather, the thesis primarily uses the participatory development literature, which presents a critical assessment and theoretical framework for understanding how micro-level participation (including structures and actions) is informed by macro-level governance structures. This is elaborated in Chapter 3, Section 3.4. For a discussion on the meta-theoretical debate regarding structure and agency, see Marsh (2010).

public participation in development and service provision, and despite the institutionalisation of various mechanisms and processes for participation.

This problem is approached primarily through the theory and study of public leadership. However, as a conceptual frame, the public leadership literature does not sufficiently account for the way structural factors may influence and constrain public leader practices and participatory processes, particularly in the context of citizen and community participation in informal settlements.

1.2.2 Research questions

The primary research question of this study is: How do public leader practices in a South African local government context influence participation?

Answering this question will contribute to understanding public leader practices, as well as give insight into how officials in the South African local government context lead participatory processes with informal settlement communities. This question was subsequently informed by the analytical and theoretical framing undertaken in Chapters 2 and 3. These bring to the fore issues and questions regarding the social construction of leadership through practices, the importance of power, as well as the interrelation of agency and structure. The primary research question is therefore underpinned by the following secondary research questions:

1. How are public leader practices socially constructed in the context of participation?
2. How do broader structural conditions and structural power inform public leader practices in the context of participation?

1.2.3 Research objectives

These questions are approached through a number of overall and specific objectives.

1.2.3.1 Overall objectives

- To explore officials' experiences and challenges with participation through the lens of public leader practices.
- To explore public leadership theory in the context of formal participation processes between local government officials and marginalised communities and citizens in a South African metro.

1.2.3.2 Specific objectives

- To identify how local officials understand the objectives and value of public participation in their work.
- To describe the institutional arrangements, structures and methodologies officials use to engage citizens and communities in their work.
- To explain how officials engage and interact with citizens and communities in order to examine key leadership practices.

1.3 Overview of research paradigm, design and methods

This study approaches public leadership through a social constructionist paradigm, and a qualitative case study research design. Both the social constructionist paradigm and the qualitative research design has gained some traction in mainstream leadership studies in the past few decades (Antonakis, Schriesheim, Donovan, Gopalakrishna-Pillai, Pellegrini & Rossomme, 2004:54; Bryman, 2004:749), although less so in studies of public leadership (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183). Whilst social constructionism views the social world as inter-subjective and co-constructed through social processes of meaning-making (Crotty, 1998:19), qualitative research aims to explore the complexities of such processes and experiences therein (Berg, 2001:7). Qualitative research within a social constructionist paradigm therefore does not attempt to measure phenomenal properties or test particular hypotheses, but rather to describe and explain phenomena, which are understood as indelibly social and contextual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:12).

Leadership scholars working within a social constructionist frame do not presume a singular, ‘natural’ essence of leadership, but rather understand and study leadership as a social phenomenon that is constructed, and constructed differently, through various social processes situated in time and place (Ospina & Schall, 2001:3). From this perspective, articulations of ‘what’ leadership is may be expected to change over time (Crevani, 2011:26), although the aim of research may rather be to gain insights into certain aspects of leadership rather than to define precisely ‘what’ it is (Ladkin, 2010:1). The purpose of this study is therefore not to develop a typology of leadership based on individual leader traits, or to categorise leaders as good or bad, as is often the case in leadership research (Collinson, 2005:1423; Collinson, 2014:39-40; Drivdal, 2016:280). It is, rather, to examine how leadership is situated and socially constructed in and South African local government context (Drivdal, 2014:6). This

allows the analysis to consider the particularities of the public sector context (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183).

The focus on leadership practices coheres with the approach offered by Knights and Willmott (1992:765), which shifts away from the common method of examining “how ideas about leadership are attributed”. Citing Hosking (1988), they further posit that the study of leadership as a practice or process rather than a person, may still “retain the understanding that leaders generally enjoy higher status relative to others 'in terms of their contributions to influence” (Knights & Willmott, 1992:765). In this regard, this thesis takes as a starting point that City officials are so positioned that they are expected to have greater influence in initiating, designing and leading participation processes. But at the same time, the concept of leadership is not confined to the qualities of individual officials.

In addition to its theoretical framing, the study comprises the “re-purposing” of data (O’Conner & Goodwin, 2010:9) that was collected as part of a larger qualitative research project conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and funded by South Africa’s National Treasury. The re-purposing of data is a recognised practice in qualitative research (Bishop & Kuula-Lummi, 2017:1-2). In this study, it involved the re-analysis of existing data according to a new research question. The original research explored how City officials in a South African metropolitan municipality perceive, implement and experience public participation in their work. As a core member of the research team, I was involved in conceptualising, implementing and analysing the original research. Through the course of this research, the potential for synergies and tensions between participation theory and practices with the leadership and public leadership literatures inspired a more in-depth examination, which has taken the form of this thesis.

Prior to commencing this research, approval was sought from the HSRC as well as the participating metropolitan municipality. Both the HSRC and the participating metro have granted permission to utilise and build on this data for the purpose of this dissertation. Although the original research project acquired permission from the HSRC research ethics committee, an additional research ethics application process was also completed with the University of Pretoria. The conditions of the ethical clearance given by the City require that the City not be named or any of its branding used. For this reason, it will be referred to as ‘the City’, and discussion of its specific institutional and socio-historical context will be limited.

The research can thus be construed as an anonymous case study. The limitations as a case study are discussed in Chapter 4.

The original research comprised in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 64 officials throughout the City administration. Of these, 59 officials agreed to the use of their interviews for the purpose of this thesis. Three follow-up interviews were also conducted as part of this study. Participants were selected through purposive, snowball and convenience sampling, with the objective of including officials from across the administrative hierarchy, across different departments and units, as well as across different governance and service delivery processes. Participants therefore included project and area managers, middle managers and senior managers/executive directors, from line and corporate departments. The latter focused especially on departments and units with an explicit mandate to engage or interact with citizens (i.e. the communications and media unit, the integrated development planning unit, and the public participation unit).

The original interviews and focus groups focused on eliciting officials' views and experiences on the purpose of participation in the City, their methods, practices, and processes for engaging citizens and communities, and their primary challenges. The research was thus retrospective and based on officials' narratives. These provided the entry point for examining public leader practices, as well as relevant institutional and governance arrangements and power relations more broadly.

The data were analysed through an abductive process (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014:5; Klag & Langley, 2013:149) that involved an iterative and reflective movement between the empirical material and the theoretical literature. A thematic content analysis of the audio recordings and transcripts from the interviews and focus groups was performed. This involved a process of *a priori*, open and axial coding. Three descriptive *a priori* codes sorted the data into: (1) officials' views on the purpose of participation; (2) their descriptions of their practices; and (3) their discussions of the main challenges to participation. This process and the codes applied are presented in greater detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.4. In addition to the primary data collection and analysis methods, a number of strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of these processes. These included continual re-coding, "peer examination", follow-up interviews, and "member-checking" (Krefting, 1991; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

Finally, although the limitations of the research are discussed in Chapter 4, a number of key delimitations must be noted. First, the study focuses on public leadership through the perspectives and experiences of City officials. Excluded from this research are the experiences of formal political leaders, as well as that of citizens and communities. Given the considerable literature available on citizen and community experiences with participation in South African local government, this is brought into the analysis through this literature. That the experiences of government officials (or the “supply side” of participation) have received less attention (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:370) is one of the motivating factors for this focus on their views. Furthermore, since much of the leadership literature focuses on political leaders (as noted in the Section 1.4.2 below), this study is also a response to calls for more research on leadership in the administrative domain, which again supports the focus on officials.

1.4 Background and delimitations

This study examines the seeming failure of local government (and local officials therein) to engage citizens and communities. This is explored through an empirical case of a South African metropolitan municipality, or ‘metro’. It is also framed by the analytical and theoretical literatures of participation and public leadership. The next section describes the local government context of post-apartheid South Africa, as part of the empirical background to the study. Thereafter, the focus on local officials as leaders of participatory processes is situated in relation to the international public leadership literature. This sets the stage for a more detailed discussion of public leadership theory in Chapter 2, as well as a review of the current state of participation in South African local government in Chapter 3. Key terms and delimitations are also defined.

1.4.1 Scoping public participation in South African local government

The eight metropolitan municipalities in South Africa sit at the centre of local urban government and development in the country.⁹ They are indicative of the persistent developmental challenges plaguing the country, as well as the developmental trajectory under

⁹ The metro provided permission for this study on condition that it is not named. This limits the scope for discussing its unique historical context and current institutional dynamics. However, its context can be gleaned on the basis of the broader context of urban informality, the formalisation of the metros through local government reforms and mandates, and the participation mandate that applies to all municipalities in South Africa.

way in the post-apartheid period. The metros are characterised, in particular, by high levels of urban in-migration alongside growing informality. This has implications for development investments, resource allocations and service delivery. The work confronting the metros is therefore considerable and complex, including (but certainly not limited to) overcoming disparities that have been designed into the urban spatial form and infrastructure. The institutions tasked to transform and deliver in this context have, at the same time, emerged out of an intense period of reform and restructuring. As will be discussed below, the current municipal form in South Africa is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. This section provides a brief overview of these matters, and introduces the participation and participatory governance mandate of municipalities. It concludes with a discussion of the key terms associated with participation and how these will be employed in this thesis.

1.4.1.1 Urbanisation and informality

The importance of metropolitan government in post-apartheid South Africa can be understood in terms of the need to transform the urban landscape and address extreme levels of poverty and inequality, particularly in the face of growing urbanisation and informality. With Gini coefficients above 0.7, South Africa is home to some of the most unequal cities in the world (UN-Habitat, 2016:75). The 2018 World Inequality Report (Alvaredo, Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2018:145) even named South Africa the country with the highest income inequality. This inequality further reflects high rates of unemployment and poverty, and is thus exacerbated by differential living conditions and access to resources.

As noted in the introduction, a key development imperative is to overcome entrenched spatial patterns of apartheid, which located the poor in historically deprived areas with limited access to basic services and housing, and far from employment opportunities (NPC, 2011:434). Indeed, the racial policies of apartheid ensured the socio-economic and political exclusion of the majority of people in a profoundly physical and spatial way, especially through differentiated systems of race-based housing and service delivery (Massey, 2015:304). Urban spatial transformation, including the expanded provision of quality infrastructure and services, remains a major challenge (Cameron, 2005:336). At the local level, various resource constraints, including ‘unfunded mandates’ and intergovernmental tensions constrain the ability to deliver (Reddy, 2008:65). The result has been further urban decay and growing inequalities, rather than social, structural and spatial change (ibid.:48-50).

An important aspect of urbanisation in South Africa is the tendency towards extremely rapid and often informalised urbanisation (Turok & Parnell, 2009:157). By 2011, the country's eight metros were home to nearly 40 percent of the national population (Todes, 2015:17), with “more than a quarter of South Africa's urban dwellers liv[ing] in informal settlements” (Massey, 2015:304, citing Misselhorn, 2008). These are officially defined as makeshift dwellings erected on land either illegally or without official sanction or documentation, and lacking municipal services (Housing Development Agency, hereafter referred to as HDA, 2012:53). Informal settlements are not new or unique to South Africa, but in this context can be understood as part of the ‘grand apartheid’ logic of maintaining the black African majority on the urban periphery, and the purposeful neglect of infrastructure and service provision to those areas (von Schnitzler, 2008:909). The reach of government in informal settlements has thus been historically limited (Drivdal, 2016:276), and more recently characterised as a “clash of governmentalities” between the technocratic functionalism of government and the organic dynamism of the informal (Massey, 2015:304).

Nationally, the democratic government under the African National Congress (ANC) have pursued a policy of ‘eradication’, pursued through market-driven efforts, but also through inclusive and participatory approaches focused on *in situ* upgrading, as exemplified in the 2004 policy, *Breaking New Ground: A Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements* (or ‘BNG’), as well as in the *Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme* (UISP) intended to give expression to BNG. Notably, BNG simultaneously enhanced the role of the private sector, gave overall responsibility for housing delivery to municipalities, and stated a clear role for ‘beneficiary communities’ through structures such as ward committees and community liaison officers (Patel, 2016:2743). Generally, however, these programmes have been thwarted by various governance and administrative challenges, and have failed thus far to achieve spatial integration (Massey, 2015:305).

This thesis does not delve into the histories and complexities of the informal settlement landscape, or specific government upgrading policies, programmes or projects.¹⁰ The study is, however, situated in this context insofar as it is here where the service delivery and

¹⁰ In this regard, see Huchzermeyer (2009), Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006), Massey (2015), Ntema, Massey, Marais, Cloete and Lenka (2018), Patel (2016).

participation mandates most visibly and practically intersect, and where the pressure to transform livelihoods is most deeply felt. Thus, the emphasis in this study, in line with the primary locus of officials' participatory work, is on marginalised communities living in informal settlements within the metropolitan area.

1.4.1.2 Local government reforms and metropolitan government in South Africa

Municipal government¹¹ is a fairly new institution in South Africa. There was no uniform system of local government under apartheid, and also no metropolitan form of government (Cameron, 2005:329). 'Local authorities' managed cities and towns in distinct and fragmented ways, largely on the basis of race. In white areas, these were generally well-managed and equipped to provide significant infrastructure and services. In black townships, such local authorities were largely powerless, and "services in black areas were kept in a deliberate state of neglect" (Cameron, 2005:329). Local authorities also lacked constitutional status and political independence; their rights, powers and actions were dependent on, and determined by, provincial and national governments (McDonald & Smith, 2004:1463).

With the advent of democracy, several periods of reform, re-structuring and integration ensued (Powell, 2012:16).¹² A new three-sphere system of government was established comprising national, provincial and local government, and devolving considerable power to both provinces and municipalities (Reddy, 2008:54; Thornhill, 2011:46-7). These reforms established local government as an "equal sphere" rather than a "lower level" of government (Mabin, 2002:46).¹³ Municipalities thus serve as the 'frontline' for service delivery and

¹¹ In the South African literature, the terms 'municipal government' and 'local government' are often used interchangeably, although 'municipality' is used to refer to a specific local entity. Although the White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998b) treats municipalities uniformly, there has also been growing recognition that important distinctions need to be made between smaller and larger, and particularly urban/metro and rural municipalities in terms of resources, pressures and complexity of planning (Mabin, 2006:135). In this study, the term 'local government' is used to refer broadly to this sphere of government, and 'city', and particularly 'city officials' and 'local officials', are used to refer to the metropolitan government that provided the empirical focus for this study. It is also noteworthy that 'public sector' generally encompasses all three spheres of government, and although this is not within the scope of this study, this is often the terminology used in the public leadership literature.

¹² The Local Government Transition Act of 1994 laid out three phases for the transformation of the local sphere. The process was expected to conclude by 2005, with local government fully "consolidated, operational and sustainable" (Morgan et al., 2015:25-31). Cameron (2005:337), however, describes the reform efforts as overly-ambitious, subjecting municipalities to considerable and disruptive intervention: "structural reform (twice), territorial changes (twice), new management structures, developmental local government, new forms of service delivery as well as performance management have all been introduced in the space of the last ten years."

¹³ For a critique of the three-sphere system, see Schmidt (2008). Thornhill (2011:47) also states that "the provincial executive is subject to national scrutiny and that its performance is monitored by the national executive", and therefore claims the Constitution serves to keep the state unified, with the subsequent risk of centralism.

participation, with considerable operational autonomy, whilst the provincial and national spheres provide regulatory support (Morgan, Chipkin, Meny-Gibert, Tshimomola, Menon, & Skosana, 2015:26-7). Although local government is guaranteed the constitutional “right to govern” without impediment, it remains subject to national and provincial legislation and decision-making (Chipkin, 2002:72). In fact, policy formulation is concentrated at the national level, and even, some argue, within the political decision-making of the governing ANC party (Winkler, 2011:261; Bond and Dugard, 2008:23).

The reform of local authorities into municipalities and metropolitan municipalities included various stages of restructuring and ‘re-purposing’. A process of demarcation reduced their number from 843 to 284, and finally to 257 (Cameron, 2006:92). This also included the establishment of a consolidated model of unitary metropolitan municipalities, or ‘unicities’ in 2000 (Todes, 2015:26). By 2011, eight metropolitan municipalities had been established: Buffalo City (East London); Cape Town; Ekurhuleni (East Rand); eThekweni (Durban); Johannesburg; Mangaung (Bloemfontein); Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth); and Tshwane (Pretoria).

At the institutional level, this restructuring intended to reduce staff duplication and enhance operational efficiencies. It was also expected to enable municipalities and metros to better address their developmental imperatives, notably by: consolidating spatial areas in terms of economic activity, topography and infrastructure; amalgamating urban and rural areas; and combining richer and poorer areas (Morgan et al., 2015:27). With regard to the metros, these were – and are still – seen as key vehicles for addressing the social, economic and spatial inequalities of the apartheid city (Cameron, 2005:330). Through functional integration across large geographic areas, metros are expected to “integrat[e] [the] sprawling black townships, historically white suburbs and city centres into a single municipality and tax base” (Reddy, 2008:53).

1.4.1.3 Local government structures, systems and functions

A metropolitan municipality is generally understood as a large urban area with a ‘mother city’ and a population exceeding one million people (Reddy, 2008:47). The political administration of a metro may take a variety of forms (Thornhill, 2008:726). The Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998a: Section 1) defines a metro as having “exclusive executive and legislative authority in its area”. As a ‘category A’ municipality, it comprises “a mayoral executive system combined with a ward participatory system (or both ward and sub-council

participatory system)” (RSA, 1998a: Section 8). Hence, a metro combines a centralised structure – with authority located in the mayor or mayoral council – with a decentralised structure in the form of ward committees.¹⁴

The functions of metros extend further than those of their smaller counterparts. They are responsible for the provision of public housing, as well as infrastructure provision for household services (such as electricity and street lighting, water and sanitation, refuse removal, storm water management, and municipal roads), public municipal facilities (including public transport, emergency and disaster management), and community services (such as libraries, parks and social development) (Chipkin, 2002:72). Some of these functions, for instance housing, electricity and water, remain concurrent responsibilities dependent on coordination between the three spheres of government (Thompson, Tapscott & Tsolekile De Wet, 2018:282).

In terms of these operational activities, it is also noteworthy that municipalities, like their provincial and national counterparts, increasingly rely on outsourcing arrangements with private entities for actual service delivery (Brunette, Chipkin, Tshimomola & Meny-Gibert, 2014:51). Indeed, public sector and local government reforms in South Africa fall in line with public sector reform tendencies around the world (and especially in the U.S. and U.K.) from the 1970s and 1980s (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012:2; Brunette et al., 2014:51). These were characterised by the incorporation of managerialist and market-based principles of New Public Management (NPM) into public institutions (ibid.). This introduced a reliance on performance management contracts to instil accountability, alongside the contracting-out of service delivery through private sector competition to improve efficiencies (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012:3-4). The result, Brunette et al. (2014:7, 51), argue, is that the South African state has become a “contract state”, defined as “a state which coordinates its operations less through bureaucratic hierarchies than through market exchanges” (see also, MirafTAB & Wills, 2005:211). The role of the administration is therefore to coordinate private sector entities to facilitate delivery (ibid.). How this form of public service delivery impacts on the

¹⁴ Ward committees constitute an area-based, representative structure for enabling local participatory democracy (RSA, 1998a: Section 72-3). Ward committees are discussed further in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1.

participation of communities in local governance, and on officials' practices in participation, is an underlying theme in this study.

1.4.1.4 The participation mandate and participatory governance system

In democratic South Africa, all three spheres of government – but especially local government – are mandated to engage citizens, communities and civil society in the delivery of public services and infrastructure development. This is evident in the 1996 Constitution (RSA, 1996), the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998b), as well as the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000a) and Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998a). The participation mandate marks a fundamental shift in the normative foundations underpinning local government structures, systems and procedures (Kroukamp & Lues, 2008:126). Thus, local government reforms went beyond the structural and institutional changes involved in setting up and re-organising municipalities, to include efforts to transform the relationship between citizens and the new democratic state. This meant opening up governing structures to the engagement of citizens and communities, especially to those who had previously been socially, economically and politically marginalised.

Formalised participatory processes in South African local government are thus situated within a broader institutional system of participatory governance. Section 152 of the Constitution (1996) and Section 16(1) of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a) establish a system of both representative democracy and participatory governance (Nyati, 2008:102; RSA, 1996; RSA, 1998b). Section 16(1) of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a) specifically requires that municipalities create a “culture” of participatory governance, and “encourage, and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in [...] (v) strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services”. In other words, the aim is to bring government and citizens closer together by extending the participation mandate beyond the electoral process. Justifications for involving citizens across governance processes in this way often point to the “democratic deficits” of representative democracy (Barichievy et al., 2005:377). It also means engaging with citizens and communities is not solely the terrain of politicians and policymakers; it is also an integral component of public administration and policy implementation, and the work of local officials.

The system of participatory governance also extends the participation mandate beyond a single programme or project, and is rather considered an integral element across the entire ‘service delivery chain’. It therefore defines not simply what a municipality does, but *how* it

does it, reflecting a broader ‘way of doing things’. As will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the system of participatory governance in South African local government can be organised into three main areas of operation: city-wide planning and budgeting processes as part of integrated development planning (IDP); formal and ad hoc engagements through representative structures such as ward councillors and ward committees; and participation in development projects and the delivery of public services.¹⁵ Although engagements through ward councillors and committees is arguably part of the system of political representation, as this study will show, these provide a primary mechanism through which citizens interact with their municipality on any matter, and also play a role in departmental projects and service delivery. The study therefore examines officials’ practices in relation to these three areas of governance or operation, with particular focus on development projects and service delivery, which are based at the departmental and project level. It is here where officials have a central role in initiating, designing and leading participatory processes.

1.4.1.5 Defining key terms: Participation, engagement and collaboration

The term ‘participation’ permeates the South African public policy landscape. It has also become a “near universal feature” of international development discourses, policies and programmes (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014:1). Its prevalence, however, easily conceals the considerable ambiguity and contestation regarding the content, value and application of the term (ibid.; Robins et al., 2008:1069). In Chapter 3, the term is defined in terms of citizen agency – as the ability to voice one’s concerns and priorities in a manner that influences government decision-making and brings about discernible political or socio-economic outcomes (Thompson, 2014:39).

Throughout this study, the terms ‘participation’ and ‘public participation’ will be used to refer to formal, government-led structures and processes intended to involve citizens, communities and/or civic actors in local government decision-making. This is the term commonly employed in public policy. It can be distinguished from informal practices of engagement between government and community actors, as well as from community or civic-led initiatives (this distinction is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

¹⁵ Another area of governance related to the state-society interface is that of city-wide and on-going communications. This is not a main focus of this study, but, as will be briefly discussed in Chapter 7, these various points of interaction between the City and communities do influence one another.

Although often used interchangeably in the scholarship, it is possible to delineate between the terms ‘participation’ and ‘engagement’. The former is the accepted terminology for legislated structures and processes, especially those at the municipal or city-wide level. This would encompass, for instance, integrated development planning processes, as well as local representative structures in the form of ward committees. The latter, on the other hand, is sometimes used to refer to those practices that are less defined by policy prescripts and involve a combination of formal and informal practices, although these may still entail the creation of formal structures under the initiative of government officials. Participants in this study also made this distinction, associating ‘engagement’ with formal community involvement in ‘frontline’ project and service delivery work. Chenwi and Tissington, (2010:9) describe “engagement” as a process that is coordinated, consistent and comprehensive, where citizens are treated as partners in the decision-making process. It is expected to go beyond communication and information sharing, and even beyond consultation, and resonates with the notion of “co-production” (Joshi & Moore, 2004:33). Given the focus of this study on government-led structures and processes of participation across a range of governance processes, but most specifically in project delivery, the terms ‘participation’ and ‘engagement’ will be used interchangeably. Where necessary, the different understandings will be indicated.

A third term – ‘collaboration’ – is also relevant and used in this study. This generally refers to a formal governing arrangement between state and non-state stakeholders to work collectively “to make or implement public policy or manage public programmes or assets” (Ansell & Gash, 2007:544). As will be discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1, collaboration entails formally structured, often inter-organisational, partnerships and networks. This is the terminology most prevalent in the public leadership literature, including for processes that involve citizens and communities. This term is used in this thesis when discussing the public leadership literature.

1.4.1.6 Defining key terms: Citizens, communities and stakeholders

In addition to the above distinctions, different articulations of participation and engagement are distinguished by the addition of adjectival terms such as ‘public’, ‘community’, ‘citizen’, ‘civic’ or ‘stakeholder’. Whilst each of these has some relevance to this study, the focus is on ‘community’ and ‘citizen’ participation. In regard to South African local government, the terms ‘public participation’ and ‘community participation’ are often used interchangeably,

with the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a: Section 16), specifically employing the latter. In this study, these three terms – public, community and citizens – will be used interchangeably.

As with the concept of participation, these terms are also deeply normative and open to contestation. The term ‘citizen’, for instance, may be understood to refer to a person who has been bestowed ‘citizenship’ status as a member of a political community (i.e. nation), and which endows each such person with formal rights (Miraftab & Wills, 2005:212). The status of citizenship therefore depends on one’s area of birth or length of residence in a country, and excludes residents who do not have legal citizenship status. In the literature, the potential for such exclusion through the term ‘citizen participation’ or ‘citizen engagement’ is often neglected. The term has also been criticised for presenting a “static and idealised” notion of the citizen as a passive subject and recipient of services (Thompson & Nleya, 2010:225), or as delimiting the type of ‘action’ (e.g. consultative, deliberative) that would constitute a desired ‘active citizenship’ (Robins et al., 2008:1070; Storey, 2014:404). In this thesis, the term ‘citizen’ participation or engagement is used more broadly to refer to individual residents of an area, whether legal citizens or not.

The term ‘community’ will also be used in this case to refer to geographical communities or “communities of place”, as opposed to individual actors or “elective communities of interest” (Drivdal, 2016:279; Brint, 2001).¹⁶ Although the term is widely applied in the participation literature, it also remains ambiguous and problematic. It has, for instance, been criticized for presenting an idealised view of community as a “natural” and identifiable social entity that reflects homogenous identities (whether religious, ethnic, or linguistic) and shared social and economic priorities (Thompson et al., 2018:277; Friedman, 1993:1, 7). Associated with solidarity and consensus (Mohan, 2001:160; Cleaver, 2001:44), a ‘community’ is presumed to “further cooperative solutions, reduce hierarchical and conflictual interactions, and promote better resource management” (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999:634, cited in Thompson et al., 2018:277). Such an idealised view thus operates in a similar way as that of ‘citizenship’, intending to produce ‘good’ or “functional communities” (Chipkin, 2003:65) on the basis of a

¹⁶ Drivdal (2016:279) argues that informal settlements constitute “communities of place” with geographically defined areas, clear borders and names. There may, of course, be various “communities of interest” in the form of local organisations (e.g. youth and religious organisations) within such a community of place.

particular moral view of ‘development’ and the roles and relations of “citizens” and the state therein.

Acknowledging these concerns, the term ‘community’ is used in this study, as stated above, to refer to geographical communities. It is done with the understanding that ‘communities’ are dynamic rather than static, where identities are multiple and changing, and social bonds are interlaid with competition for scarce resources (Thompson et al., 2018:278). This means needs and priorities can be difficult to aggregate, and local relations invariably include hierarchies of power (ibid.:288). That government policies often fail to consider this reality can be expected to impact on policy implementation at the local level, and especially the work of local officials in participation.

The final term that is relevant to this study and the concept of participation is that of ‘stakeholders’. According to Chrislip and Larson (1994:65), a stakeholder is “one who is affected by or affects a particular problem or issue”. This may therefore refer to a particular ‘community’ or group of ‘citizens’, but it may also include organisations, civic actors, customers, companies, departments, etc. ‘Stakeholder engagement’ is a term commonly used in the fields of business or strategic management, organisational studies, business ethics and corporate social responsibility. It encompasses any practices an organisation undertakes “to involve stakeholders in a positive manner in organisational activities” (Greenwood, 2007:315). In this regard, stakeholders include any members of society with an interest in, or who may be affected by, an organisation’s activities. Given the focus of this study on the public sector, the literature on stakeholder engagement is not included.¹⁷ Insofar as formal participants in collaborative processes are often referred to as ‘stakeholders’, particularly in the public leadership literature, the term is used in this thesis when referring to organisational participants within an engagement process (e.g. NGOs, consultants, etc.), or to the participants of a participatory process as a whole (including community and organisational actors).

¹⁷ See Freeman (2010) for a discussion of the term ‘stakeholder’ and its historical roots and different usages.

1.4.2 Scoping leadership and public leadership

Given the broader context of participation in South African local government, the roles and practices of local officials in leading participation come to the fore. This section establishes the relevance of investigating the roles and practices of local officials in participatory processes on the basis of the leadership and public leadership literatures. It concludes by framing the study's social constructionist approach.

1.4.2.1 Defining leadership: An influence process towards change

The literature on leadership is well-established and prolific, but also varied and contested (Bass, 1990:11; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003:362). On the one hand, a wide menu of theories, typologies and approaches are available through which to understand and examine leadership. On the other hand, a dominant perspective of leadership is also evident, which defines it in terms of some form or exercise of influence in an effort to achieve some type or degree of change (Kotter, 1990; Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2004:3; Day & Antonakis, 2012:5). Moreover, this dominant view locates the source of leadership within individual leaders and their ability to influence followers and enhance organisational performance (Bass, 1990:19). Less individualistic notions of leadership have also emerged that describe it, in varying ways, as a social influence process that enables change (see for example, Uhl-Bien, 2006; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010; Raelin, 2016; Dunoon, 2016:97). This broader theorisation of leadership makes it a relevant lens for examining officials' practices in participation, where both officials and communities are expected to influence efforts to achieve some kind of developmental change. Chapter 2 elaborates on these aspects of the concept of leadership.

1.4.2.2 Distinguishing public leadership

Within the vast field of leadership studies, a distinct literature focused on 'public leadership' has emerged. A number of seminal texts, notably by Kellerman and Webster (2001), Terry (2003) and Van Wart (2003), identified the study and theorisation of leadership in the public sector as a major gap. This prompted a subsequent and substantial surge in research, particularly from public administration scholars, and the field has since progressed and evolved considerably (Van Wart, 2013:522). A number of comprehensive review articles have kept pace with these developments, identifying major theoretical and methodological trends and gaps (see, for example, Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006; Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Jacobson, Morse & Sowa, 2011; Orazi, Turrini & Valotti, 2013; Van Wart, 2013; Chapman, Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Jacobson, Morse & Sowa, 2015; Vogel & Masal, 2015; Ospina, 2017).

Despite this progress, scholars still describe the field as “limited” and “underdeveloped” (Raffel, Leisink & Middlebrooks, 2009:3; Orazi et al., 2013:487; Morse & Buss, 2007:3; Van Wart, 2003:17), and in comparison to general leadership studies, in its infancy (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1166).

A major debate within the public leadership literature is whether it can – or should – be understood as distinct from general leadership, which is usually examined in private sector contexts. This debate, and the ways in which theories of public leadership resonate with those of general leadership, is discussed in Chapter 2. It is pertinent, however, that the significance of public leadership is often described in terms of a “complex and ambiguous world” (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1166) where governance systems and the nature of public problems are such that collaborative arrangements become necessary (Morse, 2010:231). Public organisations are thus under pressure to ‘perform’ in a context where “challenges are complex, stakeholders are many, values are conflicting, and resources are limited” (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i83).

A key question raised by scholars is thus whether these “complex [and] multi-layered” contexts (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007:218) require a different form of leadership. According to Vangen and McGuire (2015:2), “the received wisdom is that in interorganisational contexts, the nature of the problems, the operating structures, and the diversity of participants differ from that of intraorganisational contexts”. On this basis, Connelly (2007:1246) concludes that, “an increasingly important organisational form, collaborative endeavours, is in need of increased empirical investigation”.

Studies of public leadership are not limited to collaborative contexts and processes, however. Scholars have examined public leadership in relation to a number of issues, including, *inter alia*: administrative reforms; organisational commitment and public service motivation; performance management; ethical decision-making; organisational change and change management; and collaboration and collaborative governance (Chapman et al., 2015:4, 12). Scholars in the field broadly agree that public leadership contributes to building trust and confidence in public organisations (Brookes, 2014:202), as well as ensuring efficiency and accountability (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1166).

This thesis focuses on public leadership within collaborative settings. This centers the analysis on the roles of public officials rather than political leaders. This, in turn, brings attention to collaborative and participatory processes as part of policy implementation, and

also extends the analysis to include the interactions between officials and other actors, especially citizens and communities. These are discussed respectively in the next three sections.

1.4.2.3 Political, administrative and collaborative leadership

The public leadership field can be sub-divided into three areas: political leadership; administrative leadership; and collaborative leadership¹⁸ (Van Wart, 2013:527). According to Chapman et al., (2015:2), political leadership concerns elected leaders and high-level political appointees. Administrative leadership examines non-elected officials or staff in public institutions; this is also frequently described as “organisational leadership” (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1166; Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:363; Lawler, 2008:21). Finally, collaborative leadership pertains to the “cooperation of sectors”, or the exercise of leadership beyond the public organisation, as characterised by broader networks and partnerships between public, private and non-profit agencies (Van Wart, 2013:527; Ospina, 2017:276). Budd and Sancino (2016:133) suggest a similar framework within the emerging fields of “city leadership” and “place-based leadership”, where leadership is said to comprise the subtypes of political, managerial and civic leadership. Although for them, civic leadership entails the work of civic actors to address public/social problems, doing so outside the traditional public sector realm (ibid.).

This study aligns with definitions of public leadership that specifically emphasise the relevance of collaboration and the role of officials (as public leaders) therein. Chapman et al. (2015:2), for example, define public leadership as leadership “in, as well as across, organisations working together to address shared problems and produce public value”. Crosby and Bryson (2010b:212) similarly describe leadership in collaborative contexts as “integrative leadership”, where various public, private and civic actors collaborate in cross-sectoral and inter-organisational settings.¹⁹ In this way, this study focuses on public officials as

¹⁸ Van Wart (2013) also uses the term ‘community leadership’ interchangeably with ‘collaborative leadership’. However, there is a body of scholarship that examines community and civic leadership in the civil sector or community contexts that do not necessarily involve collaboration with other sectors (see for example, Munro 2008; Bénéit-Gbaffou & Katsaura 2014; Martiskainen 2017). This study follows scholars that distinguish collaborative leadership from community and civic leadership.

¹⁹ Although Van Wart has been at the forefront of establishing public leadership as a distinct field, his proposed model of “integrative public leadership” retains an internal organisational focus (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:370) and is therefore of relevance to this study.

administrative or public leaders, but in the context of formal engagements with other actors and communities, thus including elements of community and collaborative leadership as well.

1.4.2.4 Moving beyond formal political leaders: The roles of public officials

Literature on leadership in the public sector tends to focus on political leadership, and more specifically on senior politicians such as presidents and mayors (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i84; Hartley & Benington, 2011:203). This both reflects and reinforces a focus on individuals and formal leadership positions as the source of influence (Raffel et al., 2009:3-4; Lawler, 2008:31). However, scholars also increasingly recognise the potential leadership roles of non-elected officials (as managers and administrators) in public organisations, especially given the complex nature of public service processes (Dacombe, 2011:220). Public officials are also often in a powerful position vis-à-vis elected politicians due to their expertise and length of tenure (Dacombe, 2011:220).

In addition, Getha-Taylor et al. (2011:i93), argue that it is not only officials with formal senior positions in who engage in leadership. Individuals across the organisational hierarchy may be expected to lead, or may take on particular leadership roles. Such roles include bridging different types of knowledge (i.e. between politicians and experts), preserving the values of the organisation or political regime, as well as responding to a wide range of stakeholders (Terry, 2003:xiv). In her study of leadership in the health sector in South Africa, for example, Doherty (2014:2) argues that decision-making in lower management levels and by frontline service providers (i.e. clinic staff) “directly affects the quality of care”. This suggests even frontline or “street level” officials play a role in the interpretation and implementation of policy, and especially in the interface between government and citizens (Chapman et al., 2015:3-4). It is on this basis that this thesis examines public leadership in participation across various local governance processes, but especially in the delivery of infrastructure and services in development projects, where officials have a central role.

1.4.2.5 Leadership in public administration and policy implementation

General theorisations of leadership often distinguish leadership from management (Day & Antonakis, 2012:5). Whereas leadership is associated with pursuing change and processes of meaning-making, management is understood as ensuring stability, order and efficiency (Kotter, 1990:6-7). Whereas leadership involves articulating a vision and inspiring others to realise that vision (what Van Wart and Suino refer to as “visionary leadership functions”,

2012:23), management is linked to planning, organising, and problem-solving through mechanisms of control and operation in order to achieve task implementation (Madumo, 2012:90; Dunoon, 2016:95).

Scholars also recognise, however, that leadership and management roles and activities can be complementary (Madumo, 2012:90; Kotter, 1990:7), if not interwoven (Van Wart & Suino, 2012:23; Orazi et al., 2013:490). Some go so far as to claim that public leadership, in particular, requires both leadership and management since these responsibilities and functions are not necessarily structurally separated (Raffel et al., 2009:4). In other words, officials in public sector organisations “rarely have the luxury of focusing only on maintenance or change, or focusing only on followers or tasks or organisational alignment” (Van Wart & Suino, 2012:23). As Ospina (2017:276) explains, officials are increasingly expected to have influence in shaping and directing policy implementation processes, which requires both managerial and leadership roles. Indeed, it is through policy implementation – which includes operational, motivational and meaning-making practices – that public officials interpret, translate and realise government’s agenda (ibid.). In the South African context, Mfene (2008:212) associates the lags in policy implementation with failings in administrative leadership.

Notably, the leadership roles of public officials become especially pertinent in the context of public sector trends towards collaboration across sectors, organisations and geographic scales, as well as the reliance on interdependent networks and partnerships for public service provision (Sullivan et al., 2012:43; Morse, 2007:2; Ospina, 2017:276). In this context, public officials must increasingly work with other government institutions, companies, civic groups and citizens. This places considerable expectations on officials to initiate and lead such endeavours in order to address complex public problems.

1.4.2.6 Public leadership in the context of collaboration

Public leadership studies still focus predominantly on individual leaders (Lawler, 2008:23) and within organisations with traditional hierarchical structures (Brookes, 2009:8-9). A number of review articles identify an emerging trend, however, towards recognising and investigating public leadership in contexts of collaboration across sectoral and other boundaries (Van Wart, 2013; Getha-Taylor et al., 2015; Chapman et al., 2015; Vogel & Masal, 2015; Orazi et al., 2013). In a special issue on public leadership in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Getha-Taylor et al. (2011:i84), situate this trend

within the changing governance context characterised by the shift away from hierarchical to more “integrative”, cross-sectoral and cross-organisational processes. This also means formal hierarchical relations and positions of authority may be less important in defining relationships between organisational actors, and in leading collaborative initiatives (Morse, 2010:233; Raffel et al., 2009:10-11; Armistead et al., 2007:213).

Although such collaborative efforts involve stakeholders beyond the public sector, given the public nature of problems, these endeavours are not disconnected from, but retain a locus in, public policy programmes. As Ansell and Gash (2007:544) make clear, collaborations aim “to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets”. In other words, collaboration often constitutes the primary mechanism for policy development and implementation. It therefore underscores the broader transformation of the public sector towards systems of “collaborative governance”.

The emphasis in the public leadership literature is mostly on inter-organisational partnerships and networks and informed by the collaborative governance and collaborative public management literatures (Ospina, 2017:276). However, the significant roles and participation of citizens and communities are also recognised (ibid.:277; see for instance, O’Leary & Bingham, 2007; Feldman, Khademian, Ingram & Schneider, 2006; Page, 2010; Bono, Shen & Snyder, 2010; Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). According to Van Wart (2013:535), the inclusion of poor and marginalised citizens in collaborative processes is necessary to address power imbalances. Page (2010:251) similarly focuses on the participation of citizens, reflected in his use of the term “civic engagement” rather than “collaborative governance”. Still, Bono et al. (2010:325), point out that, “existing research on integrative leadership tends to focus on cross-sector collaboration wherein business, government and non-profit organisations work together”; there is therefore a gap, they continue, in research at the individual level. Although they further underscore the importance of “direct engagement of individual citizens with their governments” (ibid.), their study focuses on individuals who volunteer in community organisations, rather than the interaction between citizens and government. There is also a gap in theorising public leadership on the basis of the role and inclusion of citizens rather than collaboration more generally.

This shift to examine public leadership in contexts of collaboration is recognised as a core new paradigm in public leadership studies (Van Wart, 2013:531), whilst also still being somewhat under-researched (Sullivan et al., 2012:42). This study therefore contributes to this

growing literature, specifically by focusing on ‘collaboration’ between local government officials and informal settlement communities in a South African metro.

1.4.2.7 Theorising public leadership through a social constructionist lens

A final delimitation of this study is its social constructionist approach and practice lens. Such an approach is not frequently applied in studies of public leadership, especially of leadership in the South African public sector and local government context. Taking this approach locates the study within a specific body of literature that understands leadership as constructed through contextually situated social processes, relations and practices (see for example, Wood, 2005:1103; Uhl-Bien, 2006:667; Raelin, 2011:201; Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008:366; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Hosking, 2011; Pearce, Wassenaar & Manz, 2014:277; Tourish, 2014:87; Kempster & Gregory, 2017:497).

From this perspective, leadership may be understood and theorised as shared, distributed, collective, relational, or even processual (Carroll et al., 2008:336). It is also enacted in context, where context is not simply an external or static background for leadership, but a constitutive element thereof (Vogel & Masal, 2015:18; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Carroll et al., 2008; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Visions of a heroic leader who directs or inspires followers thus give way to notions of leadership as socially constructed through the “dynamics of interaction” and “mutual influence” (Tourish, 2014:87). Alongside visible forms of leadership (associated with formal positions within organisational hierarchies) is the potential for collective acts of leadership to emerge (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i93).

Furthermore, rather than examining what traits constitute effective leaders, or causal relations between leaders and followers, a social constructionist lens gives prominence to how leadership is constructed and enacted, as well as “what makes things happen in a collaboration” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202; Raffel et al., 2009:10). It therefore raises different questions for public leadership in collaboration, such as: “how do leaders manage collaborations to make things happen?” (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010:425); or “what mechanisms lead collaborative activity and outcomes in one direction rather than another?” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S62). Studies of leadership practices enables a study of leader practices (what individuals do or what they are expected to do), as well as social practices that inform individuals and speak to how collaborative work is initiated, enabled and sustained, how leadership emerges or is constructed in that process, as well as “what challenges,

tensions, and paradoxes constitute the way leadership is constructed” (Tourish & Barge, 2010:333).

1.4.2.8 Public leadership in South African local government participation

Finally, it is noteworthy that much of the literature on public leadership in collaboration is located within Anglo-American contexts (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1180; Raffel et al., 2009:5). The realities of a developing country and informal settlement context have therefore not been adequately researched. Raffel et al.’s 2009 edited book, *Public Sector leadership: international challenges and perspectives*, expands the field by including, in addition to American-based studies, research from Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Scandinavia, Russia, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. While this is an important and insightful step towards more diverse context-based analyses, it still largely focuses on developed country contexts. This study therefore also contributes to the literature on public leadership in collaboration by focusing on the South African local government context, and more specifically that of public participation between local officials and the urban poor living in informal settlements.

At the same time, this context will also potentially illuminate peculiarities of participation in such a context, and thereby expand the public leadership literature. Despite the prevalence of participatory concepts across the leadership and public leadership literature – mostly through the term ‘collaboration’ – it is seldom analysed in the context of citizen participation in local government, or as embedded within a system of participatory governance that comprises multiple and varied participatory structures, processes and participants. This study therefore focuses on public participation in the South African local government context, specifically how officials engage citizens, communities and community leaders in a variety of project and service delivery processes, rather than only on formal inter-organisational collaborations, or through in-depth analysis of a single project or process. This provides an opportunity to also explore public leadership in such a context.

1.5 Overview of chapters

The next chapter examines how the public leadership literature conceptualises public leadership and the roles attributed to public leaders in relation to collaboration. It is guided by the question, what is the key role attributed to public leaders in the scholarship? What are public leaders expected to do and achieve in and for collaboration? In answering these

questions, the chapter provides an overview of key debates regarding the purpose and distinction of public leadership, and reviews theoretical trends in both general leadership and public leadership studies. The chapter further shows where the public leadership literature general leadership theory, especially with regard to the primacy given to leader agency and individual traits, skills and behavioural styles. The chapter then discusses collective and social constructionist theories of leadership, which extend the concept of leadership beyond the individual leader and incorporate more relational and practice-oriented perspectives. This provides the theoretical lens into studies of public leadership in contexts of collaboration.

The chapter then examines how public leadership scholars describe the purpose of collaboration, key challenges that constrain collaborative initiatives, and the role of public leadership therein. If collaboration constitutes a different way of governing, and presents particular challenges for leadership, what leader roles and practices are deemed necessary to overcome these and realise effective collaborative governance? In exploring this question, the chapter identifies four key leader practices through which public officials are expected to enable and sustain formal engagements across organisational and sectoral boundaries and between multiple stakeholders. (These four practices constitute the primary framework for the descriptive analysis of officials' practices in Chapters 6 and 7.) Public leaders are further expected to address power differences and realise a "shared-power" arrangement. Given the nature of cross-sectoral and inter-organisational collaboration, public leaders are expected to act without formal positional power or authority. Through a social constructionist lens, they are expected to do so whilst being influenced by various structures and processes that inform collaborative initiatives. This raises questions regarding the role and ability of public leaders to address the challenges of collaboration, and particularly to navigate power disparities.

Chapter three turns to a discussion of participation in the South African context and in broader theoretical literature on participatory development. The chapter reviews formal structures and processes of participation related to key governance processes in South African local government, as well as the issues, challenges and failures in participation reported in the extant literature. This shows that institutionalising participation through formal structures and processes is not sufficient to guarantee the realisation of participatory ideals and objectives, including the transformation of power relations.

In the participatory development literature, critical scholars highlight the way participatory processes ought to transform power relations between government and communities, but often

fail to do so when those in power are in charge of shaping and structuring the parameters of participation. Thus the chapter supplements the theoretical framework from chapter two through the emphasis on governance structures and structural power. This raises questions regarding the extent to which leader practices, roles and challenges are shaped by structural constraints and opportunities. If it is the task of public leader to facilitate the sharing of power, and to do so through particular leader practices, to what extent are such efforts embedded in, and influenced by existing structural relations of power? What does this mean for the scope and ability of individual officials to engage citizens and communities?

The chapter concludes with a brief review of the South African literature on leadership in the local government context. Whilst this literature recognises the importance of participation, this is rarely the primary focus of study. The complexities of participation in service delivery processes, the potential tensions between participatory and service delivery outcomes, and the implications for leadership theory and practice, are therefore not adequately addressed. Scholars also tend to theorise leadership in terms of individual leader attributes. These gaps suggest there is potential to expand on existing literature by focusing on participation as a key responsibility of local government officials, and to do so by drawing on the broader public leadership literature, as well as through the incorporation of more social constructionist approaches.

Chapter four reviews the study's social constructionist framing and qualitative case study research design and methods, including the relevance to studies of leadership. It also discusses ethical and epistemological aspects of re-purposing data and processes of data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to elicit officials' views and experiences regarding the purpose, methods and challenges of participation. This data were analysed through a combination of descriptive *a priori* and open coding, followed by thematic axial coding. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the ethical considerations of the study, the role of the researcher in the process, aspects of trustworthiness in data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapters five and six present the findings of the empirical analysis. Chapter five asks how officials understand the purpose and value of participation, as well as what formal structures and processes the City has in place for participation. These give a lens into the institutional arrangements in which and through which officials engage communities, as well as the 'official narratives' attached to it. Whilst the data show the City generally complies with

policy and legislative requirements around participation, officials' narratives point to the limits of the City's participatory governance approach, and thus to the limits of citizen and community influence in the City's development agenda. Finally, the chapter also raises questions regarding the extent and ways in which the City's institutional arrangements influence officials in their efforts to involve communities in their project and service delivery work. This sets the stage for the next chapter's examination of officials' practices in initiating, designing and leading participation.

Chapter six details how City officials lead public participation in departmental projects and service delivery processes through the lens of the four leader practices identified in Chapter 2. As those formally responsible for leading participation, the focus is primarily on the roles of officials. However, this also provides an entry point for examining what factors influence their decisions and practices at the project level, as well as how the City's institutional and governance arrangements influence their roles, practices and challenges. The chapter therefore asks: how do officials mobilise communities and structure participation, and how do they navigate between the interests and inputs of different stakeholders? What are the challenges that surface in these processes? And what factors – relations, processes and structures – influence their practices? And finally, where are the limits and constraints to community agency and influence in participation? The chapter reveals the agency of officials in applying and adapting their practices to local contexts, but also how they remain informed by their formally structured roles as defined within broader policy and legislative prescripts within the City's institutional governance system. Together, these begin to illuminate how public leader practices are socially constructed in the context of participation in the City, and the limits of leader practices in addressing the objectives and challenges of participation.

In chapter seven, the findings from Chapters 5 and 6 are analysed on the basis of the key concepts and issues introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. More specifically, each of the four leader practices are analysed through the lens of structural and relational power. Underpinning this analysis is the question: how do officials, as public leaders, exercise power in participation? What informs this power? And how does this, in turn, shape participation? This analysis provides the basis for examining the interrelation of agency and structure in the social construction of public leader practices. The analysis points to the importance of officials' positional authority in leading and designing participatory processes, the role of local participatory structures and broader institutional and governance arrangements in determining

the form of participation, as well as the ways in which communities and community leaders act outside of these prescribed processes in order to engage the City.

Finally, chapter eight concludes the study by summarising key observations regarding how public leader practices influence participation. The chapter reflects on how the social construction of leader practices involves the intersection of local relations and agency with broader institutional structures and structural power. These together influence the direction and outcomes of participation. At the core of the influencing work of public leaders in participation is the structural power to determine the conditions and parameters of participation. Moreover, public leader practices provide a lens into how participation processes become sites through which power relations are channelled, but also sites through which and against which community agency and mobilisation are exercised.

1.6 Conclusion

South African municipalities are legally mandated to both deliver public services and enable the participation of citizens and communities in decisions that affect their lives. These are not two wholly separate mandates. The Constitution, as well as key policies and legislation pertaining to municipalities recognise and reiterate their interdependence (RSA, 1996; RSA, 1998a; RSA, 1998b; RSA, 2000a). The assumption is that through “democratic engagement”, decisions and programmes around service delivery will be more appropriate to local needs and conditions, and thus more effective and sustainable. Participation is therefore a political right and practice embedded in democratic principles, as well as indelibly tied to the realisation of socio-economic rights (Patel, 2016:2739). It is also integral to the project of democratic and developmental local government.

It is cause for concern that, over twenty years after the inception of democracy, previously marginalised communities, including the urban poor, remain largely excluded from both processes and outcomes of government and development decision-making. That local government, and local officials, are tasked with the responsibility to realise democratic and developmental outcomes, raises questions regarding the seeming failure of local government, especially the large, capable and well-resourced metropolitan institutions, to do so. The role of local officials in initiating, designing and leading local participatory processes in order to involve citizens and communities in their service delivery work, suggests they have a crucial leadership role to play in and for participation. But what precisely is this leadership role? And what influences City officials in the South African local government context as they take on

this role? How do their practices – as public leaders and as constitutive of public leadership – influence participation? The next chapter begins to unpack these questions by examining the international public leadership literature. Although this literature does not examine these questions in the context of South African local government and informal settlement communities, it does provide a relatively clear articulation of the roles and practices attributed to public leaders in contexts of collaboration, and the challenges and tensions associated therewith.

CHAPTER 2

THEORISING PUBLIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLABORATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines public leadership and how scholars internationally²⁰ have studied and theorised about public leadership in relation to participation. In the public leadership literature, the term ‘collaboration’ rather than ‘participation’ is used to refer to formal engagements across organisational and sectoral boundaries. It includes a variety of collaborative structures, with a predominant focus on inter-organisational collaboration between the public, private and civic sectors. Collaboration may therefore include elements of participation between government and communities (as will be defined in Chapter 3), although not necessarily and not exclusively. For consistency, the term collaboration is used in this chapter.

The literature on public leadership in collaboration must be understood within the broader public leadership field, which itself has been informed by the even broader and more prolific field of general leadership studies. More specifically, public leadership in collaboration can be situated within two key debates and two emerging trends. These debates and trends illuminate important contextual and methodological aspects in the theorisation of public leadership. One of the main debates within the public leadership literature is whether and how public leadership is distinct from leadership in general. At issue is the question of purpose: whether public leadership should be understood as an effort to achieve some kind of change; and how public leadership navigates the normative tensions between the different bureaucratic, democratic and managerial (or sometimes defined as entrepreneurial/ efficiency) aims often attributed to public sector organisations (Van Wart, 2013). The second point of debate is whether the ‘collaborative governance’ context, which increasingly characterises the work of the public sector, presents unique challenges to public leaders and public leadership.

Alongside these debates are two notable trends in the literature. First is the extent to which the public leadership literature aligns with trends in studies of leadership more broadly. Key among these is the application of a wide range of theories or ‘typologies’ of leadership, and

²⁰ The South African public leadership literature is discussed in the next chapter.

especially leader-centric theories that examine who leaders are and what makes a good leader (Van Wart, 2013:532). The second emerging trend is the, albeit limited, acknowledgement and application of collective and relational theories of leadership. These introduce a different paradigm to the study and theorisation of leadership, and include the application of social constructionist and practice-oriented perspectives. Although this paradigm is still in its infancy within public leadership, scholars studying public leadership in collaboration increasingly recognise and apply this approach, with an emphasis on the social construction of leadership through relations, structures and practices.

It is within these broader trends and debates that the chapter examines public leadership in collaboration as it has been theorised and studied through a constructionist and practice lens. Scholars using this lens inquire into “what makes things happen” in collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202), and how collaborations are shaped and directed in one way or another. The focus is thus not on who leaders are, but what they do (Ospina, 2017:281). The next section explores how public leadership scholars understand the purpose of collaboration and the role of public leadership therein. The latter includes the need to work across boundaries and facilitate power-sharing between participants. Individual efforts and actions are also understood as situated in structural arrangements and processes that inform leadership practices. The final section presents four key practices that describe the work of public leadership in and for collaboration, and which influence the shape and direction of collaboration.

2.2 Distinguishing public leadership and the public sector context

The theory and study of public leadership has been informed in large part by the general field of leadership studies. However, scholars debate the extent to which public leadership should be understood as distinct from general leadership. This section briefly discusses the concept of leadership. It then reviews the debate regarding public leadership on the basis of two areas where the question of its distinctiveness comes forth: the purpose of public leadership and the public sector context.

2.2.1 Defining leadership: Influence and change, leaders and followers

Studies on leadership recognise that there is considerable ambiguity regarding the concept of leadership, which has resulted in the proliferation of approaches, typologies and theories (Burns, 1978:2; Bass, 1990:11; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003:362; Vogel & Masal,

2015:1166). Despite this variety, the idea of ‘influence’ arguably sits at the centre of most definitions (Day & Antonakis, 2012:5). Northouse (2004:3), for instance, posits influence as the “sine qua non of leadership”, where leadership intends to “achieve a common goal”. In a review of key definitions of leadership over a 50-year period, Yukl (2010:21) similarly concludes that most definitions present leadership as “a process whereby *intentional influence* is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organisation” (emphasis added). Studies of leadership have thus centred on questions of who exerts influence and how, as well as questions regarding the purpose and outcomes of the influence process (ibid.).

A notable trend in the literature is to read this process of influence as comprising three main components, namely leaders, followers, and a common goal. Bennis (2007:3) describes this as the “tripod” of leadership, and much of the leadership scholarship focuses on interrogating how leaders influence followers to achieve a common or shared goal. The dominant view, discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 below, is that individual leaders are the source of leadership influence, with considerable research identifying salient personality attributes, skills and behavioural styles that constitute ‘good’ or ‘effective’ leadership. Followers are thus purported to be the object of leadership influence, with leaders intending to transform followers’ perceptions, attitudes and/or behaviours (Ospina, 2017:278).²¹ The final observation of this dominant theorisation of leadership is that the exertion of influence over followers is motivated by a particular shared goal. Thus much of the scholarship examines, not only *how* leaders influence followers, but on leadership effectiveness, or “how *well* a leader is able to influence followers”, whether to “accomplish task objectives” or realise broader organisational aims (Yukl, 2010:20; emphasis added).

Related to the notion of a common goal is the idea that leadership concerns the pursuit or accomplishment of ‘change’. This is evident in the way leadership is often distinguished from management. Day and Antonakis (2012:5), for example, specifically define management as activities undertaken to ensure stability, whilst leadership refers to the effort to achieve change. Bass (1990:19) further describes leaders as “agents of change”. This suggests leadership is about the accomplishment of change. It also suggests a correspondence between

²¹ Again, this is the dominant perspective on leadership and other theorisations are presented in Section 2.3.

the concept of leadership and the idea of agency, as the ‘ability to act’ and enact change. As will be discussed through the chapter, embedded in the notion leadership is a theorisation of agency that is understood and articulated differently across the various leadership paradigms and typologies. What might constitute such change is the focus of the next section.

2.2.2 The purpose of public leadership: Change and the public good

One of the key debates within the public leadership scholarship is whether and how public leadership ought to be distinguished from general leadership, as the latter is usually defined within a private sector context (Van Wart, 2013:533). Kellerman and Webster (2001:486-7) maintain that public leadership is no different from leadership except that it refers to the sector “dedicated to governance and public policy”. They therefore define public leadership as “a dynamic process in which the leader(s) and followers interact in such a way as to generate change” (ibid.).

Scholars who challenge the view that public leadership is simply leadership in the public sector do so by questioning the purpose of public leadership. According to Van Wart and Suino (2012:15-6), general studies of leadership tend to focus on organisational performance, and examine three areas of influence through which the work of leadership is expected to enhance organisational performance. These are: (1) technical performance (i.e. improve systems for greater efficiency and effectiveness); (2) development of people/followers (i.e. provide training, motivation, maturation, etc.); and (3) organisational alignment (i.e. adapt to external conditions) (ibid.). What is often not included, “if not altogether absent”, Van Wart and Suino (2012:16) argue, is the notion that leadership may be about “service to the people, end consumers, society, and the public interest” (ibid.).²² Public leadership scholars, therefore, often use notions such as the “public interest” (Brookes, 2014:200), the “common good” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211; Sun & Anderson, 2012:309) and “public value” (Brookes & Grint, 2010:2; Chapman et al., 2015:2) to define the aims or common goal of public leadership. Brookes (2014:200-1) cites the Oxford English Dictionary in defining “public

²² It may be argued that there are in fact studies in leadership that situate the purpose and aims of leadership in relation to broader societal needs and goals. See, for instance, Pless and Maak’s (2011:5) definition of responsible leadership in terms of leader-stakeholder relations towards a shared sense of purpose, motivation and commitment “for achieving sustainable values creation and social change”. However, it is in the public sector that such aims constitute the inherent purpose of public institutions in the first place.

interest” as “the benefit or advantage of the community as a whole; the public good”.²³ According to Getha-Taylor et al. (2011:i86), this broader objective imparts a unique character, function and jurisdiction on public leadership.

This is not to suggest that organisational management and performance goals are not included in theorisations of public leadership. In fact, public administration scholars writing on leadership have pointed to the simultaneous presence of different models of public administration that introduce potentially conflicting goals, raising further questions of the role and aims of public leadership. In his seminal work, *Leadership of Public Bureaucracies: The Administrator as Conservator* (2003), Larry D. Terry challenges the view, informed by general leadership theory, that leadership in public administration should be innovative and entrepreneurial in the pursuit of organisational change. Rather, he argues, the primary role of the administrative leader is to conserve institutional integrity and the institutional mission and values that anchor it (2003:62-3). Terry does not reject all elements of change, however, but points to important tensions within the public sector context, specifically the fact that public leaders must navigate requirements to protect and maintain administrative institutions, to be responsive to democratic processes (including to political leaders and the public), and to potentially oversee change processes (ibid.:46-60).

In a similar vein, Getha-Taylor et al. (2011:i87), argue that the public sector context presents certain normative or value tensions that administrators must grapple with and that do not necessarily appear in the private sector. These include tensions between bureaucracy and democracy (or efficiency and responsiveness), between stewardship and entrepreneurship (or preservation and change), and between the individual and the collective (or rational self-interest and the public interest) (ibid.). In particular, concerns with efficiency conflict with the “incremental and deliberative” nature of decision-making and implementation that marks democratic processes (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:368). These are not new issues, and reflect broader concerns regarding the intersection of public administration and democracy (Waldo, 1952:81).

²³ Brookes (2014:200-1) also argues, however, that there is a dearth of literature on public leadership and what it means to “lead in the public interest”. Many studies of public leadership thus reflect the same trends as in the general leadership field, rather than considering the public aspect of the public leadership concept.

These observations also correspond with debates among scholars regarding the apparent tensions between different governance systems and institutional logics, and in particular the incorporation of New Public Management (NPM) values into the public sector (Terry, 2003:xxi). Alternative approaches are thus put forward under frameworks such as new public service, new public governance and networked governance.²⁴ The implications for public leadership theory concern how the roles and responsibilities of public leaders are understood, and how, in practice, they are able to navigate between being “neutral conservators”, “change agents”, and “facilitators of democratic processes” (Van Wart, 2013:522).

2.2.3 The context of public leadership

In addition to defining public leadership in relation to the public good, it is also often distinguished on the basis of the public sector context. This context must be taken into account insofar as it shapes public leadership (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:362). This context is often characterised by multiple accountability structures and relations to which public officials are subject, as well as the increasing emphasis on, and requirement for collaboration across organisations and sectors, as expressed in the notion of collaborative governance.

In line with the value tensions discussed above, public officials may be situated within multiple accountability structures and relations, potentially “across levels of government, organisations, and even political boundaries” (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:367; see also Chapman et al., 2015:4).²⁵ They are often professionals with specialised knowledge and expertise, belonging to professional bodies committed to specific standards and values. As managers, they are subject to certain performance requirements and performance management

²⁴ It is beyond the scope of this study to review each of these in detail. These capture, in varying ways, changes in public administration practice and theory, especially the shift away from strictly bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of government to more fragmented and horizontal forms. These have also been contrasted to New Public Management (NPM). Notably, new public service stresses the roles and work of public servants in engaging citizens, communities and civil society to articulate and pursue shared interests, in contrast to the NPM focus on public managers operating through entrepreneurial approaches, in accordance with business values and an increasingly “privatized government” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000:549). Networked governance, on the other hand, places emphasis on the way forms of governance are increasingly fragmented, with less reliance on formal rules and incentives to direct behaviour, and the importance of relationships as a mechanism for mutual respect and shared learning (Stoker, 2006:41; see also Sørensen, 2002). New public governance similarly focuses on the processes and outcomes of service delivery efforts, and also views trust and relations as the mechanism underpinning governance, as opposed to hierarchies, markets or contracts (Osborne, 2006:383).

²⁵ Although leaders in the business environment must also respond to multiple stakeholders, Van Slyke and Alexander (2006:367) claim these stakeholders typically include shareholders, company boards, customers and, where relevant, partners.

systems (Raffel et al., 2009:6).²⁶ In this way, they are accountable to their political counterparts and elected leadership, as well as to other public institutions (e.g. courts). Finally, as public servants, they are accountable to citizens and communities, service users, and a multitude of interest and stakeholder groups. In other words, public officials must navigate multiple lines and standards of accountability.

To complicate matters further, their work increasingly involves collaborative forms of service delivery and governance. The term “collaborative governance” is increasingly used to characterise the macro-level landscape in which and through which public institutions work. This has further been described in terms of global trends towards globalisation and neo-liberalisation, as well as the incorporation of New Public Management principles in the public sector (Sullivan et al., 2012:43). In this context, public problems, as well as the authority, knowledge and resources required to solve them, are dispersed across sectors, organisations and geographic scales (ibid.). For public institutions, collaborative governance encompasses the shift away from working strictly via bureaucratic systems (in the classic Weberian sense), towards networks and partnerships (Morse, 2010:231; Vangen & McGuire, 2015:2; Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:362). It therefore encapsulates a changing operational environment characterised by institutional fragmentation, as well as the need to work and lead, not only within, but also across organisations and boundaries. There is, in other words, increasing emphasis on and requirement for collaboration in public service delivery processes.

This context presents certain roles and challenges for public leaders and public leadership. As Vogel and Masal (2015:1178) explain, “networked modes of producing public goods and services redefine leadership roles both in politics and in administration”. In particular, “the leadership challenge is how to assemble and coordinate various structures of authority into effective networks of responsibility and sources of service delivery” (Nalbandian, O’Neill, Wilkes & Kaufman, 2013:571). This involves a “range of implementation issues”, including, inter alia, mobilising support, coordinating functions across organisations, and institutionalising accountability (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:372). This may require that leaders take on multiple roles, such as that of “negotiator, contractor, expert, manager,

²⁶ In the public sector context, performance measures may include multiple goals and more ambiguous measures than profit margins or stock prices (Raffel et al., 2009:6).

mediator, sponsor, etc.” (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1178). To understand the expected roles of public leaders and leadership in the context of collaborative governance, it is helpful to examine in more detail how scholars have theorised leadership and public leadership in general. Thereafter, Section 2.4 will elaborate on the concept, challenges and structures of collaboration and the implications for public leadership.

2.3 Delineating trends in leadership and public leadership scholarship

Despite debates regarding the distinctiveness of public leadership, trends within the literature also align with those in general or mainstream leadership. This is evident in the wide range of theories or ‘typologies’ applied in studies of leadership and public leadership. These include leader-centric theories that examine leader traits, competencies and behavioural styles, as well as “post-heroic” theories exemplified by a further range of models, from shared and distributed to collective and relational leadership. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss each of these in detail (and it is also not a comprehensive list), it is important to recognise the general trajectory and state of the leadership field insofar as this has informed the emerging public leadership scholarship.

With regard to public leadership, the focus of this thesis is on studies of public leadership in contexts of collaboration, as well as on public leadership through a constructionist and practice lens. In the extant literature, these two foci do not always intersect. In other words, studies of public leadership in collaboration have been informed by the full range of leadership models that will be reviewed in this section. Authors also use a number of terminologies and typologies to describe leadership in collaboration (for example, collaborative public leadership and integrative public leadership) (Crosby & Bryson, 2010a:205; Sullivan et al., 2012:45-6; Armistead et al., 2007).²⁷ These typologies are not, however, presented as standalone approaches, but are included, where relevant, within each of the sections below (i.e. leader-centric, post-heroic and collective).

²⁷ Some scholars even employ different categorisations, resulting in certain studies being included under multiple categorisations. For instance, the work of Ospina and colleagues (see, for example, Ospina & Schall, 2001; Foldy, Goldman & Ospina, 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010), have been located within public integrative leadership theories, but also within social change leadership theories (see for instance, Van Wart, 2011:187-190).

2.3.1 Leader-centric theories: From the ‘Great man’ to the ‘new leadership’

2.3.1.1 Leader-centric theories

A review of the general leadership literature indicates that, despite the ambiguity and multiplicity of approaches, most leadership studies are framed within functionalist and competency-based paradigms, in accordance with the tenets of social psychology, and focus on individuals (Collinson, 2011:183; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012:370). This is evident when one traces the historical development of the field over the last century. This is commonly organised into the so-called ‘Great man’, ‘heroic’, or trait theories (Stogdill 1950), the behaviourist or leadership style theories emerging in the 1950s, the contingency and situational theories of the 1960s (Fiedler, 1964; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), the integrative theories of the 1970s, and the more recent “new leadership” approaches. The latter include, inter alia, servant (Greenleaf, 1977), transformational (Burns, 1978), charismatic (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993), and ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Ciulla, 1995).²⁸

Among these, Robert Greenleaf’s *Servant Leadership* (1977) and James MacGregor Burns’ *Leadership* (1978) (which introduced the notion of transformational or transforming leadership) are seminal texts. Max Weber’s (1968) work, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, has also been influential (see for example, Conger & Kanungo, 1987:638). Burn’s theory of transformational leadership has, in fact, become one of the most widely studied theories in leadership (Dionne, Gupta, Sotak, Shirreffs, Serban, Hao, Kim & Yammarino, 2014:18). It distinguishes between values-based and transactional relations, and suggests transformational leaders can effectively inspire others to “elevate” their values and actions in order to achieve a ‘shared higher purpose’, far beyond mere task accomplishments (Burns, 1978:42, 447-8, 460; Tourish, 2014:81). At the core of transformational leadership theory is the view that leaders change followers’ beliefs, values and behaviours by giving “inspirational motivation” to raise awareness of organisational values, acting as role models to provide “idealised influence”, and encouraging “intellectual stimulation” to change assumptions about organisational challenges and practices (Moynihan, Pandey & Wright, 2011:147). It is associated with processes of “meaning-making” (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) and the “exceptional influence some leaders have on subordinates” (Yukl, 2010:288).

²⁸ For comprehensive reviews of the development of leadership studies, see Yukl (2010); Northouse (2010); Day and Antonakis (2012).

2.3.1.2 Leader-centric theories in public leadership

In the public leadership literature, similar trends are apparent, with several review articles identifying a strong emphasis on the traits, styles, and competencies of individual leaders (Chapman et al., 2015:4; Vogel & Masal, 2015:1179; Sullivan et al., 2012:42). These review articles also identify transformational leadership as the dominant typology in the field (Chapman et al., 2015:11; Vogel & Masal, 2015:1172; Van Wart, 2013:530). In line with general leadership, studies of transformational public leadership are often conducted through large quantitative surveys within organisations, and within an objectivist or positivist paradigm (Van Wart, 2011:13).

Studies taking this approach posit that transformational leaders in public organisations either directly or indirectly influence employee perceptions and behaviour (Moynihan et al., 2011; Oberfield, 2012; Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2011). Findings point to an impact of transformational leadership on: public service motivation (Wright, Moynihan & Pandey, 2012; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010); reform implementation (Moynihan et al., 2011); organisational citizenship behaviour (Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2011); employee satisfaction (Trottier, Van Wart & Wang, 2008); and team performance (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003).

Review articles of the public leadership literature have further identified “collaborative public leadership” as another popular typology (Chapman et al., 2015:11). Although studies under this typology incorporate more varied theorisations of leadership (as will be discussed below), leader-centric approaches are also prevalent. Thus, scholars have examined what personal leader attributes or competencies are necessary to facilitate effective collaboration. Wallis and Gregory (2009:262) identify emotional intelligence as a key element of leaders’ ability to leverage their formal or informal authority in collective settings. For O’Leary and Vij (2012:515), the complexity of collaboration requires leaders to have interpersonal, group process, strategic, and technical skills. Nowell and Harrison (2010:30) similarly recognise the importance of individual passion, knowledge and facilitation skills, although they also identify organisational context as an important determinant of a leader’s capacity to exercise influence. Some studies explore the role of transformational leadership in supporting and guiding collaborations, particularly through inspiring vision (for example, Campbell, 2018:277; Sun & Anderson, 2012:309; Ardoin, Gould, Kelsey & Fielding-Singh, 2015:360).

Collaborative public leadership has also been studied and defined in terms of facilitative leadership and facilitative leadership styles and skills (Bussu & Galanti, 2018:357).

Despite these trends, in their review of leadership studies within public administration journals between 1987 and 2012, Chapman et al. (2015:11), find “little consistency” in how public leadership is theorised and operationalised, describing more than 20 leadership typologies as varied and “highly individualised” (ibid.:8, 13). Even where the same typologies are applied (e.g. transformational public leadership), the authors argue scholars employ these as “broad theoretical areas” without “specific and repeated conceptualisations” that would produce a precise and consistent articulation thereof (ibid.:11). They further identify key debates around “what to measure and how to measure it”, resulting in scholars examining “too many variables” in the attempt to delineate key leadership traits, styles and behaviours (ibid.:3).

2.3.1.3 Critiques of leader-centric theories of leadership

The broad shifts within leadership studies (from trait-based towards more situation-oriented and ‘new leadership’ theories) reflect efforts within the scholarship to address some of the limitations identified within each earlier approach. These limitations include: inconsistent evidence to confirm a particular theory; the lack of predictive power of assumed theories; as well as a general lack of consensus on the specific attributes of leaders (Day & Antonakis, 2012:8). Shifts in the literature are thus indicative of efforts to build upon and expand leadership theory in more comprehensive ways (Moore, 2014:44).

A number of scholars, informed by critical theory and critical management studies, have, however, pointed out how subsequent theories (e.g. leadership style, situational and new leadership) do not fundamentally depart from the leader-centrism of the original ‘Great man’ theories (Moore, 2014:46). The new leadership approaches in particular have been criticised as a return to early trait theories to the extent that these make particularly strong claims regarding the personality and capacity of the individual leader, albeit with a heightened normative orientation around vision and values (Grint, 2011:9; Crevani, 2011:31). Scholars therefore challenge the extent to which these theories focus on the identification of stable and coherent personality traits (of the leader), and assume individual intentionality alone can be causally related to specific (usually moral or otherwise “good”) outcomes (Crevani, 2011:32; Wood, 2005; Grint, 2011). Collinson, (2011:183) in particular argues much of the scholarship essentialises both leaders and contexts.

Such critical analyses have further problematised conventional theorisations of leadership, bringing attention to: the essentialisation of the self and the continued romanticisation of individual leader agency (Meindl, 1995; Gemmill & Oakley, 1992; Knights & O’Leary, 2006; Collinson, Jones & Grint, 2018); the moral superiority attributed to leaders/leadership (Blom & Alvesson, 2015:483; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012:368); the limited recognition of issues of power, or the characterisation of power as neutral or positive (Bresnen, 1995:499; Collinson, 2011:185; Evans et al., 2013:12); the under-theorisation and under-examination of context, or the reification of context as a neutral and fixed object (Eacott, 2013:92; Liu, 2017:344); and implicit (and often unstated) assumptions regarding the ontological status of leadership and the epistemological implications thereof (Kelly, 2014; Wood, 2010; Eacott, 2013; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Bresnen, 1995:499; Fitzgerald & Savage, 2013:138). The significance of this literature has also been acknowledged by public leadership scholars, although the incorporation of more critical theorisations remain limited (see for example, Van Wart, 2013:535; Evans et al., 2013:162).

Whilst the critical leadership scholarship is highly diverse, concerns with issues of power are a prominent focus.²⁹ This is also pertinent given the emphasis on the exercise of power and power-sharing in public leadership in collaboration, as will be discussed in Section 2.4 below. One of the key critiques of leader-centric approaches is that these posit a notion of power embedded in the intentionality of the leader, who is presumed to have the capacity – whether through personality, formal authority or some other source – to influence others. Yukl (2010:199) for instance refers to the “absolute capacity” of an individual agent (whether a person or organisation) to influence the behaviour or attitudes of others. Bass (1990) defines it in multiple ways with a similar focus, as: “the potential to influence” (227); “the capacity to produce effects on others” (226); and “the power of A’s control of what B needs and values” (226). But the emphasis on leaders’ agency neglects the potential constraints on leader agency. It also serves to diminish the agency of followers, as if they are merely passive

²⁹ There is also considerable “conceptual confusion” around the use of the terms power and authority in leadership studies, however, with scholars employing a multitude of models and categorisations (Yukl, 2010:199). Key among these are Bass’s (1990:228-229) dichotomy between “positional power” and “personal power”, and French and Raven’s (1959:263-268) typology of power based on five potential sources of power, namely: reward; coercion; legitimacy; expertise; and reference (i.e. admiration/approval) (Zhao, Shang, Lin, Tan, Li & Liu, 2016:517). See Yukl (2010:198-217) for an extended discussion of these theorisations of power.

recipients of leader influence, and thereby legitimises this power differential (Tourish, 2014:80).

Within this line of argumentation, scholars challenge how seemingly power-neutral theorisations of leadership and leader-follower relations are, implicitly, expressions of power disparities, which are then reproduced through leadership discourse and practice (Collinson, 2011:181; Liu, 2017:344). A second key critique, and linked to the first, is therefore that leader-centric theories tend to suggest leadership influence – and therefore power – is largely positive, where the interests of leaders and followers coalesce in a non-problematic way (Collinson, 2011:185).³⁰ This is especially evident in new leadership approaches that emphasise the leader’s ability to inspire others through ethical values, vision and charisma, eliciting what Bass (1990:228) describes as “personal power”. “Personal power” is that which derives from the high esteem followers hold for a person’s expertise, friendship or loyalty, as opposed to “positional power”, which is derived from one’s formal position or appointment and is exercised as the power to instruct, reward and punish (ibid.). “Positional power” therefore locates leadership in a formal position that is structurally defined and supported through hierarchical relations (Collinson, 2011:185; see Gordon, 2002). Yukl (2010:202) links the personal-positional power distinction to that between transformational and transactional leadership.

Regardless of the source of power, Collinson (2011:185) argues such one-directional influence by leaders over followers reflects a power relation, and specifically one of control and dominance. Liu (2017:346) agrees, claiming even theories of ethical leadership “assume that leaders via hierarchical control, rationally enact ethical behaviours, objectively enforce reward and discipline, and wilfully shape the ethical behaviour of all organisational members via a linear causal relationship”. In a similar way, Tourish (2014:81) describes transformational leadership theories as characterising leader agency as the ability to “act *on* others rather than *alongside* them” (italics in original).

³⁰ Greenleaf (1977:42-3), for instance, distinguishes persuasive power and coercive power, associating servant leadership with the former. However, he also acknowledges that, “all leadership is, to some extent, manipulative”. Greenleaf appears to rely on the initiative and moral capability of the individual servant leader to be “dependable and trusted” (ibid.).

These concerns regarding power, and the many others listed above, have inspired the articulation of much more critical and eclectic theorisations of leadership. Often described as post-heroic theories to denote the shift away from the leader-centrism of the dominant paradigm, these provide alternative perspectives for the study of leadership. The next two sections discuss key examples of these alternative theories and how they have been taken up in the public leadership literature. The question of power will be returned to in the discussion of public leadership in collaborative contexts in Section 2.4 below.

2.3.2 Post-heroic theories: Towards shared and distributed leadership

In both general leadership and public leadership literature, scholars have extended the theory beyond the focus on the individual leader, defining leadership in various ways as a social process of “interactive influence” (Pearce et al., 2014:277). This section presents key examples of these theories, noting how the ‘scope’ of leadership widens from leaders towards the leader-follower dyad, and further towards teams, organisations, as well as more collective arrangements, processes and structures within the “system of relationships” (Ospina, 2017:281).

2.3.2.1 Leader-member exchange and followership

Two theories that paved the way in expanding the focus of leadership studies beyond leaders are leader-member exchange theory and followership theory. Leader-member exchange, or LMX theory, considers the leader-follower dyad, and the quality of the relationship between leader and follower, as the source and object of leadership (Ospina, 2017:279). Mutual trust, respect and obligation are expected to build “high quality relations”, whilst more instrumental behaviours will lower the quality and effectiveness of the relation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995:227). Followership theory views the leader-follower relation in a more constructionist and process-oriented way. Meindl’s (1995) notion of followership identifies followers and follower perceptions as critical constituents within the leader-follower relation. From this perspective, leadership emerges through its attribution by followers, and is therefore perceived to be less determined by a hierarchical power relation between formal leaders and followers (Meindl, 1995:332).

2.3.2.2 Shared and distributed leadership

Two other notable theories that focus on the relational and collective aspects of leadership are shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2009). Shared

leadership focuses on leadership roles, which are understood to emerge through processes of “interactive influence” rather than from formal positions of authority (Pearce et al., 2014:277; Ospina, 2017:280). This is believed to be particularly relevant to contexts of horizontal working together, such as in teams or in decentralised/flattened structures (ibid.). Much of the research on shared leadership treats it as a team-level phenomenon, where the team constitutes the unit of analysis, and leadership roles are predicated on members’ individual knowledge, skills and expertise (Serban & Roberts, 2016:181; Drescher & Garbers, 2016:201).

Distributed leadership extends leadership beyond that of the team, suggesting leadership is ‘stretched out’ across organisational structures and relationships (Gronn, 2009:389). Leader and follower roles and practices are seen as fluid, emerging in relation to the situation (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004:20; Diamond & Spillane, 2016:148). Both formal and informal leadership roles are recognised (Spillane & Orlina, 2005:162), as there may be “visible positional ‘heroes’” located at the top, but who “are supported by a network of personal leadership practices distributed throughout the organisation” (Fletcher, 2004:648). Both shared and distributed leadership theories shift towards more “systems-centred” orientations, and incorporate context as an important constitutive element of leadership influence (Ospina, 2017:280).

2.3.2.3 Post-heroic theories in public leadership

Studies of public leadership and public leadership in collaboration have also been influenced by post-heroic leadership theories, although in more limited or implicit ways. Studies on leader-member exchange have examined its impact on public servants’ organisational citizenship behavior (Vigoda-Gadot & Beerli, 2011) and on job performance (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2015). Nowell and Harrison (2010:31) consider shared leadership in a public health setting, and conclude that organisational context has an important influence on individual leadership capacities. Emphasis is also put on “mutual influence” in contexts of egalitarian teamwork, in contrast to uni-directional influence from formal leaders over followers (Ardoin et al., 2015:362). With regard to distributed leadership, Currie, Grubnic and Hodges (2011:244) investigate distributed leadership in two multi-stakeholder networks in the U.K. on the basis that distributed leadership is expected to better suit network contexts that require more relational and lateral forms of working. However, they find that even where

roles and practices are distributed, this does not necessarily occur in an equal way: “power and influence may remain concentrated with certain participants in a network”.

According to Ospina (2017:280), there are also implicit resonances of shared and distributed leadership within theories of ‘collaborative public leadership’ and ‘integrative public leadership’, where reference to leadership roles (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b) and relational practices (Page, 2010) are evident. However, Ospina (ibid.) concludes there is limited explicit integration of the concepts and articulation of shared or distributed leadership in this literature.

2.3.3 Collective leadership theories: Leadership as socially constructed

Within post-heroic theorisations of leadership are theories of leadership as collective and socially constructed. Although these theories have had some traction within general leadership studies, they are much less prominent in the public leadership literature (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183; Van Wart, 2013:535). The lens of collective leadership shifts the locus of leadership even further away from the individual leader and who she is, and even leadership as distributed between organisational actors, towards leadership relations, interactions, practices and outcomes (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:175; Ospina, 2017:281).³¹ It also shifts attention away from articulating “a specific style or way of doing leadership” to considering how leadership emerges or is enacted within relations (Moore, 2014:58). With clear overlaps with shared and distributed leadership theories, this lens perceives leadership as “less one person doing something to another” than the “dynamics of interaction in which mutual influence is always present” (Tourish, 2014:87). It also posits that: “forms of leadership are made not found, emergent not fixed, and relational not individual” (Tourish & Barge, 2010:333).

³¹ Ospina (2017:281) delineates different theoretical categories within this paradigm, namely: network, complexity, discursive and social constructionist theories. For the purpose of this thesis, these are considered more broadly under the heading of collective theories of leadership and the view of leadership as socially constructed. For further reading, see: Cullen-Lester and Yammarino (2016) on network leadership; Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) and Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007) on complexity leadership; Fairhurst (2007) on discursive leadership; and Fairhurst and Grant (2010) and Drath et al. (2008) on social constructionist leadership.

2.3.3.1 Leadership as relations, practices and outcomes

Scholars working within this paradigm interpret leadership and the social construction of leadership in a variety of ways. Under the notion of relational leadership, Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012a:xxxiii) describe it as a continuum between entitative theories (where entities such as individual actors are said to relate to one another), and relational theories (where relationality and the process of relating are said to define and produce individual entities). Hosking (2011:458), for instance, understands relations ontologically, where leaders, leadership, and “indeed all identities and forms of life”, are constituted in relational processes. Through a relational lens, leadership can be understood as the process of relating and the social construction of influence, or as the outcome of that process, or both (Uhl-Bien, 2006:667). As the former, leadership entails on-going processes of producing change (whether in values, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, etc.) and constructing social order (ibid.:668). As the latter, leadership emerges as the outcome of people working together to define their relationships and direct their work (ibid.).

Importantly, Uhl-Bien (2006:656, 665) does not argue for a strict dichotomy or one “best way” – either entitative or relational – to theorise leadership, but points to how different orientations can influence perspectives. Despite their ontological differences (entity approaches adopting a realist ontology and relational approaches adopting a relational ontology), each approach offers certain opportunities and limitations for understanding. Studies with an entity orientation, for instance, might examine ‘process’ in a static way, through reported behaviors of respondents in surveys (ibid.:666). Studies taking a relational approach, on the other hand, view process in dynamic terms, situated in context and relational interactions that emerge and unfold (ibid.). Uhl-Bien argues there is both potential and need for better integration of these different perspectives and methodologies to advance knowledge and leadership theory. Underpinning this thesis is therefore an attempt to mobilise the concept of leadership practices through an initial focus on leader practices (an entity perspective), and an exploration of dynamic structural and relational elements into the understanding of those practices. This point will be elaborated further throughout this thesis.

Within collective and relational leadership studies, scholars may focus on leadership practices as the unit of analysis (Wood, 2005:1103; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Some scholars have put forward the concept of ‘leadership-as-practice’ (LAP), which brings attention to activities and interpersonal relationships (Raelin, 2011:195), processes (Wood,

2005:114), as well as to the intersection of “context – activity – outcomes” (Kempster & Gregory, 2017:510). There are many variants to how ‘practice’ may be understood ontologically, which also reflect the continuum between entitative and relational perspectives (Carroll et al., 2008:366).

In the leadership literature, ‘practices’ are also sometimes used interchangeably or alongside ‘processes’ and ‘interactions’ (see for instance Crevani et al., 2010:78). ‘Practices’ can be understood as individual activities or performances, or things that individual leaders do (Rouse, 2007:505). However, such performance “take place, and are only intelligible against the more or less stable background of other performances” (ibid.). In other words, practices can be understood and studied as both things individuals do, and broader social processes or patterns of social practices that are reproduced through their uptake in individual activities. This relatively stable background comprising patterns of social practices also generate expectations for individual activity; for instance, generating expectations for individual leaders to perform certain roles or tasks. Here, the practices of actors or practitioners are not simply “the physical or mental capacity of any one individual because it is embedded within the situation” (Raelin, 2011:197). There is much debate amongst practice theorists regarding the ways in which social practices influence, govern or constitute individual practices (Rouse, 2007:507).

From a slightly more relational perspective, such broader social processes are reproduced, not through individual actions, but through interactions (Crevani et al., 2010:79). Here, the individual who acts is in fact “under [constant] construction and re-construction” (ibid.). However, in line with Uhl-Bien’s call for better integration between approaches, Crevani et al. (2010:82) offer a useful middle way: ‘practices’ point to “how work is conducted and performed”, which can be inclusive of individual actions as well as social dimensions, the micro as well as the macro, as long as such practices are not reduced to the intentionality of individual actors. Carroll et al. (2008:366) offer a similar framework that combines the micro and macro, distinguishing ‘praxis’ as the interconnection of actor, action and institution, ‘practice’ as routine forms or patterns of behaviours, and ‘practitioners’ as the active actors. These are, they conclude, “situated doings” of individuals as well as “socially defined practices”. They (2008:366) further summarise the difference between a practice lens from leader-centric competency approaches, as shown in the following table:

Table 2.1: The competency/practice distinction in leadership theory

Competency	Practice
Rooted in objectivism	Explicitly constructionist
Individual level of analysis	Inherently relational and collective
Quantifiable and measurable	Discourse, narrative and rhetoric
Unanchored in relationship and context	Situated and socially defined
Privileges reason	Privileges lived or day-to-day experience
Assumes intellect predominantly	Incorporates embodiment and emotion

Source: Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008:366.

As the table indicates, the practice lens underscores the importance of context, not simply as the external environment or ‘empty space’ wherein leadership occurs, but as a constitutive structure that “expands or contracts the space of possible action” (Holmberg, 2000:181). Munro (2008:65) refers to leaders as “situated agents” to give expression to this important role of context and the interplay between structure and agency that emerges within the constructionist and practice perspective. This approach thus brings to the fore how agency is enabled and constrained, but also dynamically constituted (Tourish, 2014:87).

This articulation of the interrelation between agency and structure may not align with a strict relational approach to leadership (as noted above), which resists the language of structures and entities in favour of “relational networks” (Uhl-Bien, 2006:662). However, it remains attentive to leadership as socially constructed, thereby extending the analysis beyond the characteristics of the individual leader and the understanding of leader agency in terms of personal attributes, competencies or behaviours. It also retains the potential for an understanding that does not expect (or impose) fixed temporal or spatial limits to the observation and understanding of leadership processes, practices and relations (Crevani et al. 2010:79). Although, as Crevani et al. (ibid.) also point out, such limits may be necessary for empirical research.

Not all kinds of social interaction constitute leadership or leadership practices, however. In their article, “All-inclusive and all good: the hegemonic ambiguity of leadership”, Blom and Alvesson (2015) critique studies of leadership that attach it to any kind of activity (often as a consequence of the focus on the qualities of the individual leader). They argue that leadership should be distinguished on the basis of the activities that produce, specifically, direction, support and inspiration (2015:487). Other scholars have made similar claims regarding the

distinctiveness of leadership, with an emphasis on leadership as purposive action (Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008:376) or as the production of direction (Crevani et al., 2010:81). Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor and McGuire (2008:636) understand leadership as the production of direction, alignment and commitment. Their “DAC ontology” is contrasted with the ‘leader-follower-goal’ tripod of dominant leadership theories and the leader-centrism embedded therein. They define these three outcomes as follows:

- (1) direction: widespread agreement in a collective on overall goals, aims, and mission;
- (2) alignment: the organization and coordination of knowledge and work in a collective; and
- (3) commitment: the willingness of members of a collective to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit (ibid.).

These outcomes reverberate with how public leadership scholars understand the role of public leadership in collaborative contexts, notably to produce shared goals, align practices across organisations, and sustain commitment (see Section 2.4.3 below). The focus on outcomes also allows analyses of leadership to go beyond making causal claims regarding the individual leader’s intentionality and influence, and to examine the multiplicity of potential agents and structural factors that contribute to and influence outcomes (Tourish & Barge, 2010:335). In other words, this lens underscores the collective aspects of influence as it emerges, and as it organises and directs goals and actions.

This collective and dynamic view of leadership influence suggests a notion of power that is similarly delinked from the individual leader. Rather, power is perceived as a “fluid process” rather than “a commodity that can be acquired, seized, or shared” (Liu, 2017:351). Power permeates “the social field” (Uhl-Bien, 2006:661), whilst also operating through institutionalised habits, practices, techniques and procedures (Liu, 2017:351). Such a conception of power contrasts with notions of both positional and personal power evident in leader-centric theories insofar as it suggests power is not about the “uni-directional flow of influence in which A has a causal impact on B”, and which is observable within “clearly bounded organisational structures” (Tourish, 2014:88). Rather, it is a dynamic process through which meaning, practices and relations are produced and reproduced.

In a review of social constructionist studies of leadership, Fairhurst and Grant (2010:183) explore different ways in which power has been theorised and studied. This includes attention to discursive processes where “the strategic, relational, cultural and material aspects of power intertwine in discourse to construct leadership in situ” (ibid.). Often informed by critical

management studies, scholars also critique what leaders do and how, as an exercise of power and dominance (ibid.:186). This includes analyses of how discursive and non-discursive practices (e.g. “institutional structures, social practices and techniques”) intersect to shape norms and regulate behaviours, as well as analyses of power in terms of elite privilege (e.g. the privilege of “owners, shareholders and managers”) vis-a-vis the emancipation of the oppressed (ibid.:187). Although still generally limited in the leadership and public leadership literatures, these approaches resonate with critical studies in participation and participatory development, as will be elaborated in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.

2.3.3.2 The social constructionist and practice lens in public leadership

Collective and relational theories have been less prominent in the literature on public leadership, although there is an emergent body of scholarship examining public leadership in contexts of collaboration that focus on relations, structures and practices (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183; Van Wart, 2013:535). Scholars focusing on collaboration in particular seem to agree that leadership within collaboration cannot be adequately understood through the usual leader-centric and leader-follower dyad theories that define much of the general leadership literature. They therefore call for more collective and constructionist approaches (see for instance, Morse, 2010:233). According to Tourish and Barge (2010:336), functionalist approaches to leadership are ill equipped to fully explain how leadership navigates the complexity and ambiguity of working in collaborative contexts (discussed in further detail in Section 2.4 below).

The social constructionist and practice lens raises different questions for public leadership in collaboration. Rather than examining what traits constitute effective leaders, or the causal relations between leaders and followers, it gives prominence to “what makes things happen in a collaboration” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202; Raffel et al., 2009:10). At the same time, studies on public leadership in collaboration also reflect the broader continuum between entitative and relational approaches. Thus, specific questions may thus include: “how do leaders manage collaborations to make things happen?” (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010:425); or “what mechanisms lead collaborative activity and outcomes in one direction rather than another?” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S62). Studies of leadership practices ultimately focus on how collaborative work is initiated, enabled and sustained, how leadership emerges or is constructed in that process, as well as “what challenges, tensions, and paradoxes constitute the

way leadership is constructed” (Tourish & Barge, 2010:333). The next section of this chapter delineates an approach to studying public leadership in collaboration through this lens.

2.4 Public leadership in collaboration: practices, power relations and structures

The previous two sections gave a broad overview of the concept of leadership and public leadership, how public leadership has been distinguished on the basis of the public sector context, as well as the different theoretical approaches evident in both literatures. This section of the chapter examines studies of public leadership in collaboration more closely. First, the section looks at how scholars in the public leadership literature understand collaboration, the challenges experienced in collaboration, and the role of leaders and leadership therein. The theorisation of public leadership is then unpacked in three sections that explore practices, power relations, and structures.

2.4.1 Understanding collaboration in the public leadership literature

Studies of public leadership in and for collaboration focus on two key issues that set the task of collaboration, namely power-sharing and problem-solving (Connelly, 2007:1231; Armistead et al., 2007:212; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211). Given the complexity of public problems, collaboration is deemed necessary to bring together diverse sources of knowledge and resources, in part because no individual, group or organisation has the full authority, knowledge or resources to solve public problems alone (Morse, 2010:231). That knowledge and resources are distributed in this way is taken as indicative of a “shared-power world”, where collaboration involves building effective “power-sharing arrangements” (Crosby, 2010:S69-S70).

Formal collaborative initiatives are therefore understood as a means through which to achieve these. This is reflected in Ansell and Gash’s (2007:544) definition of collaboration as:

a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.

In line with this broad definition, studies of public leadership have explored collaboration across a multitude of forms (O’Leary & Vij, 2012:517). These include public-private partnerships (Ollerenshaw, Murphy & McDonald, 2017), formal partnerships between government institutions and non-profit organisations (Uster, Beeri, & Vashdi, 2018), and

partnerships between different government agencies (Nowell & Harrison, 2010). Collaborations are also noted to involve either two or more key partners in a well-defined arrangement, or multiple stakeholders brought together into a broad coalition. Notably, much of the scholarship focuses on networks and partnerships at an inter-organisational level (Morse, 2007:1; Armistead et al., 2007:213). In terms of purpose, collaboration may be used as part of service delivery and take the form of a contract-based outsourcing arrangement (Kellis & Ran, 2013:133; Ingraham, 2009), or it may involve stakeholders in a more deliberative decision-making process in an effort to address a particularly complex issue, such as an urban development initiative (Ansell & Gash, 2007:545; Van Wart, 2011:17).

Mandell and Keast (2009:164-5) provide a useful model that distinguishes three types of “networks” based on the degree of interdependence between partners that, in turn, impacts the type of interaction and integration of activities required, as well as the role of leadership therein. These are: cooperative (parties remain independent and share information/ expertise); coordinative (parties interact to align individual service delivery systems); and collaborative (parties recognise their interdependence and develop new relationships and operations). For Mandell and Keast (ibid.:165), interdependent collaborative networks are more complex and raise more challenges for leadership than other forms of networks, precisely because they involve a transformation in how parties operate.³²

Besides the various structures and precise of objectives of collaborations, this form of governance is, as noted above, often a response to shared and complex problems that present particular challenges for any one organisation to address. But working collaboratively also brings challenges that can impact on whether and how such problems are addressed, or how public services are delivered.

³² A distinction can, however, be made between the formal structures of a collaboration, and the occurrence or practice of actual collaboration. O’Leary and Vij (2012:517), for instance, argue it is incorrect to presume “that all networks are collaborative and all collaborations happen in networks”. This also points to the normative aspect of collaboration, which descriptions of formal collaborative structures do not necessarily make explicit. In this regard, it must also be noted that the examples of participation included in this thesis reflect formal participatory structures and processes, without suggesting that they are ‘truly’ participative or collaborative. It is in fact the constraints to achieving meaningful participation, despite there being formal structures in place, which informs this thesis.

2.4.2 Leadership challenges in contexts of collaboration

Contexts of collaboration present a number of challenges with implications for public leadership. Public officials who must undertake collaborative initiatives confront considerable ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty (Sullivan et al., 2012:45; Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S63). At the same time, for public institutions collaboration means working within a bureaucracy that can be difficult to manoeuvre, especially when responding to changing conditions and circumstances (Connelly, 2007:1232).

At the centre of many of the challenges are the fact that collaborations involve diverse actors, each with different interests and expectations that invariably create tension and conflict (Sullivan et al., 2012:58). There may even be ambiguity about the membership of the collaboration, or difficulties in specifying collaborative aims (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202). This makes it difficult to build consensus and navigate competing agendas (Armistead et al., 2012:218). Bussu and Galanti (2018:348) point to potential tensions between the visions of citizens, who may desire greater control over public resources and services, and those of government actors interested in increasing efficiencies and reducing costs. In addition, efforts to balance different concerns and share power may be thwarted by incomplete information, as well as mistrust among participants (Vangen & McGuire, 2015:11; Page, 2010:247). Failure to produce or achieve a shared vision is also likely to jeopardise the process overall (Bussu & Galanti, 2018:350).

For Vangen and McGuire (2015:12-13), these challenges suggest collaborative endeavours, and the effort to formally work across boundaries, is inherently paradoxical. This is evident, they argue, in the way these challenges require “the simultaneous protection and integration of partners’ uniquely different resources, experiences, and expertise”. At an organisational level, this may mean balancing tensions between organisational independence and interdependence (Sullivan et al., 2012:46). In their study of social change organisations, Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010:425) identify two key paradoxes in collaboration: managing both unity and diversity, which requires inward-oriented leadership work; and negotiating between dialogue and confrontation, which requires outward-oriented leadership work.

Despite the potential benefits of collaboration, Huxham and Vangen (2005:34) suggest it is only undertaken when absolutely necessary. In their extensive work and assessments of a range of collaborations varying in size, scope, purpose, lifetime, and success, they find that,

while individual efforts to lead a collaboration do affect the outcomes, “they are frequently thwarted by dilemmas and difficulties so that the outcomes are not as they intend” (ibid.:53). It is therefore likely that, rather than achieve “collaborative advantage” (understood simply as what people seek when they choose to collaborate), collaborations frequently result in “collaborative inertia” where they either “make slow progress” or “die without achieving anything” (ibid.). Of course, the kind of participatory context that is the focus of this study is one where local government actors are mandated to engage citizens and communities, as well as to contract out much of their service delivery work. This means the option to ‘opt out’ due to high risk is not always an option (although many officials and departments may try to do so).

2.4.3 Conceptualising public leadership for collaboration

Given the characteristics, aims and challenges of collaboration, how then are public leadership and the roles of public leaders conceptualised? As previously discussed, the role of public leaders in and for collaboration has been broadly defined in terms of addressing shared problems (Chapman et al., 2015:2), and producing public value (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i84). Doing so through collaboration means the role and work of leaders involves, more specifically: bringing diverse groups together (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211); navigating their different and competing interests (Sullivan et al., 2012:46); “managing power differences and conflicts” (Page, 2010:248); “fostering relational bonds” (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:292); and “creating common purpose” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010a:207). These are not necessarily distinct roles or activities, but together permeate the process of enabling and sustaining collaborative action.

Across these understandings is the view that public leaders’ practices involve working across boundaries and facilitating power-sharing in order to activate and sustain collaborative efforts. Getha-Taylor et al. (2011:i84), speak of “boundary-crossing processes”, and the need to navigate the various boundaries (geographical, political, legal, institutional, social, cultural, etc.) that inform, and potentially constrain, effective collaboration. This may entail building and sustaining “connectedness” through “bridging” (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:292), both within the organisation and “with those it serves” (Clark, Denham-Vaughan & Chidiac, 2014:10-11). This is also reflected in Crosby and Bryson’s (2010b:212) emphasis on leadership as “cross-boundary work” involving the creation of cross-boundary experiences, groups, objects and

activities. This conceptualisation brings attention to the key practices through which this work is accomplished.

2.5 Public leader practices

This section is organised into four leader practices that are expected to entail the kind of ‘bridging work’ that is either deemed necessary for achieving collaboration, or shapes collaborations in one way or another. These are: (1) mobilising and convening stakeholders; (2) structuring collaborations; (3) weaving and navigating relationships; and (4) framing agendas.

A number of key scholars and texts in the field of public leadership in collaboration, and especially ‘public integrative leadership’, have informed the identification of these four practices. Page’s (2010) discussion of three broad leadership “tactics” – framing agendas, convening stakeholders, and structuring deliberations – are used as a starting point. Page’s (2010:248) focus is on practices “for leading collaborative governance initiatives”, and his example includes citizen involvement. It is therefore closely aligned with the kind of participation this study focuses on, although the contexts are different. The work of Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Crosby and Bryson (2010a, 2010b) have similarly informed and confirmed the identification of these practices. The addition of the fourth practice – weaving and navigating relationships – is based on further reading of the literature. In particular, the delineation of this practice draws on the work of Ospina and Foldy (2010) and Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010). Although they focus primarily on leadership in civic, or what they call, social change organisations, their theoretical framing and analysis of practices resonate with the approach of this study.

An important guiding principle in identifying these practices were whether each practice is sufficiently broad to allow for contextual specificities and nuances to emerge. For instance, Ospina and Foldy (2010:299) identify “creating equitable governance mechanisms” as a key practice, but this has been included in the broader category of “structuring”, as the latter is inclusive but not limited to the former. This approach was taken in order to develop a useful framework for data analysis, whilst ensuring the operationalisation of each practice is not overly pre-defined, as cautioned by Crevani et al. (2010:80).

2.5.1 Mobilising and convening stakeholders

The first public leader practice relevant in collaboration is that of mobilising and convening stakeholders. This entails identifying people or organisations to be engaged, encouraging their involvement, and sustaining their commitment (Morse, 2010:234). Vangen and Huxham (2003:S65) refer to “embracing members” and the various ways in which leaders and managers of collaborative initiatives must do so. For Page (2010:249), this is about bringing different stakeholders together in specific venues or forums for the purpose of collaboration. Mobilising stakeholders is also not simply a once-off task as part of the initiating the process. Rather, it may require leaders to identify, engage and support stakeholders throughout the process (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S65).

Decisions about who is in and who is out can shape a collaborative process and its outcomes in important ways (Vangen & McGuire, 2015:14). According to Crosby and Bryson (2010b:218), leaders must use “systems thinking” to analyse the existing context (or “initial conditions”) in order to understand potential drivers and constraints within the system, and to identify salient information flows and potential gaps (ibid.). Chrislip and Larson (1994:59) concur, and associate such an assessment of context with being able to identify relevant stakeholders. This should include:

who are responsible for problems or issues, those who are affected by them, those whose perspectives or knowledge are needed to develop good solutions or strategies, and those who have the power and resources to block or implement solutions and strategies (ibid.).

This suggests the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders, and Page (2010:249) observes that the breadth of outreach will affect the type of information and perspectives brought into the collaboration, how agendas are framed or contested, and even the final outcomes of debates. Identifying and mobilising stakeholders is thus an important practice that can directly influence the power dynamics and success of the process.

For Crosby and Bryson (2010b:218), stakeholders should be identified on the basis of their having specific types of information, technical expertise or specialised knowledge, having authority, or even simply having “commitment and enthusiasm” (see also Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S65). Important roles to fill are also that of champion (a “tireless organiser and promoter”) and sponsor (less involved but who can leverage their “authority, money or connections”) (Crosby & Bryson, 2010:219). Champions and sponsors play important

“translator roles” to link sectoral or other boundaries, and to navigate between stakeholders’ different interests (ibid.). They can also help to mobilise resources (Dorado & Vaz, 2003:148; Hsieh & Liou, 2018:87).

Mobilising stakeholders may also require additional efforts to convince potential collaborators of the value of the initiative. Identified stakeholders, or even those required by government policy to be involved, may be reluctant to contribute in time or resources without a clear sense of its purpose and value. Vangen and Huxham (2003:S65-6) give the example of a project leader having one-on-one conversations with GPs to motivate them to join a healthcare network. In this way, agenda framing practices are also embedded in the work of mobilising. Notably, Vangen and McGuire (2015:14) argue that collaborative initiatives are likely to only present significant value in situations where stakeholders with different positions are brought together:

when actors communicate only with actors who have the same perceptions [...] the outcome of the collaborative activity is, in a way, predetermined or at least predictable due to the consistent and unfailing perceptions of the problem context among collaborative actors. There is essentially no collaborative goal to attain (Vangen & McGuire, 2015:14).

In other words, if collaborators perceive a problem and its solution in the same way, the degree of collaboration required is less complex. There is also less need for managing power differences and dynamics, or for adapting to emergent understandings and processes. The real leadership challenge, then, is precisely in contexts where differences must be navigated.

In addition to the work of identifying and targeting key collaborators, public leaders may also face what Vangen and Huxham (2003:S66) describe as “possibly one of the most challenging of the leadership tasks”: embracing all those who would like to be involved. This, they explain, is often a feature of community involvement in government initiatives, and raises the question of representation: “Who can be considered as representative of a community, and even how ‘the community’ is defined” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S66).

Finally, and linked to the next section, the structures of collaboration can also influence the mobilisation and sustained commitment of participants (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:218; Luke, 1998). The type and exclusivity of the venue, for instance, determine how accessible the collaboration is for different stakeholders (Page, 2010:249). If there are multiple other ways and venues for stakeholders to get involved on that same issue, they are likely to use the

platforms that “privilege their interests, power, or political capabilities” (Page, 2010:249; see also Ansell & Gash, 2007; Fung & Wright, 2001). For instance, public meetings, written petitions, legal cases, or public protest each depends on and reinforces different capabilities. Pre-existing relationships or structural arrangements may also contribute to enabling the formation of a collaborative initiative, and enlisting the participation of key stakeholders (Morse, 2010:233). Hence, both the collaborative structure and prior structural arrangements can influence practices of mobilising and convening stakeholders.

2.5.2 Structuring collaborative processes

The second public leader practice entails how collaborations are structured. This includes the governing arrangements of a collaboration, as well as how actual engagements are organised and undertaken. The collaborative structure to a large extent determines the types of interaction promoted, including how issues and interests are shared, and how decisions are made (Page, 2010:249-250). This also includes how, and to what extent, diverse voices are heard, and participants are empowered to influence agendas, discussions and decisions (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:299).

Collaborative structures can play a crucial role as a “cross-boundary organisation” or “group”, understood as “collections of actors who are drawn together from different ways of knowing or bases of experience for the purpose of coproducing [cross-]boundary actions” (Feldman et al., 2006:95). Such groups function as “linking mechanisms” to connect individuals, organisations, information and ideas (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:218). Within cross-boundary groups, further structural elements can be put in place to address power imbalances and produce shared understandings. Crosby and Bryson (2010b:220) speak of “boundary experiences” that facilitate joint activities, as well as “boundary objects” that are physical objects (such as strategy maps) that can be used to direct discussions, produce shared knowledge and “create a sense of community”. Thus, the design features of a collaborative structure determine, to some extent, what is possible within the collaboration. In this way, structural features act as rules that inform the actions within the structure.

In this regard, Ospina and Foldy (2010:299) argue that it is essential for “equitable governance mechanisms” to be put in place. How seats on a board or committee are allocated, for instance, reflect structural considerations that impact on how decisions are made and representation legitimised (ibid:300). Leaders should structure deliberations in ways that “avoid undue influence by stakeholders with power advantages” (Page, 249, citing Bryson,

Crosby and Stone, 2006). How collaborations are structured is one mechanism through which power disparities may be either enhanced or reduced. The shape this takes will depend on whether engagements are conducted through face-to-face dialogues, small committee meetings, large public meetings, or even virtual online platforms (Page, 2010:249).

As discussed regarding convening and mobilising, some venues and formats may favour certain capabilities over others, and thus determine who has greater power going into the process over others (ibid.). A possible structuring tactic to balance power is to rotate routine tasks (e.g. scheduling, time keeping, note taking, facilitating, etc.) as a way to distribute responsibility and build shared ownership of the process (Moore, 2014:98). Other tactics have the potential to ensure legitimacy in the process, for instance: setting clear procedures and ground rules for interactions; utilising data to guide discussions; and establishing decision-making criteria (Page, 2010:250). Hsieh and Liou (2018:86) call this “framing the work environment”, which includes the arrangement of the structure, and the operating rules and roles within it. Ideally, the practice of structuring involves facilitating joint agreement on these features.

What is interesting from these examples is the tendency towards formalisation. Crosby and Bryson (2010b:220) point out the importance of formalisation for ensuring accountability, which informal agreements around objectives and process would not be able to do. Formal agreements could therefore be established in relation to: the broad purpose and mandate of a collaboration or of a particular cross-boundary group; the commitment of resources; the identification of members and of formal leadership; decision-making structure; and areas of flexibility (ibid.:221). Ultimately, the collaborative structure, and therefore practice of structuring, can have a significant impact on the processes of collaboration, the potential to address power disparities, and the perceived legitimacy of the process and its outcomes among participants and broader stakeholder groups.

2.5.3 Weaving and navigating relationships

The third leader practice that either enables collaboration or moves it in a particular direction, is what will be referred to as, ‘weaving and navigating relationships’. The phrase is drawn from Ospina and Foldy’s (2010:298) emphasis on the important work leaders do in “naming and shaping identities”, as well as Moore’s (2014:98) analysis of how members of a collaborative team may “weave a web of lateral relationships”. The practice emphasises the

on-going process of building relationships (Mandell & Keast, 2009:169). It especially entails shaping identities and managing conflicts (Sullivan et al., 2012:46).

A key element of weaving and navigating relationships is that differences need to be surfaced (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:299). This can be done systematically by creating spaces and dialogues (i.e. structuring) to explicitly discuss identity issues and differences, a activity they term, “engaging in dialogue about difference” (ibid). The leadership task is thus to facilitate interactions that can surface, acknowledge and bridge differences, in order to build relations of trust among stakeholders (Vangen & McGuire, 2015:17; Mandell & Keast, 2009:166). For Silvia and McGuire (2010:270), it is important to acknowledge differences whilst also treating all stakeholders “as equals”. But for Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010:414), the challenge is rather about maintaining diversity whilst building “unity”. It is a task of “building community”, where the role of leaders becomes “facilitating interaction”, “cultivating personal relationships”, and “promoting openness and participation” (ibid.:417- 419). Ospina and Foldy (2010:303) similarly refer to “bridging” as important leadership work to “connect different perspectives without merging them into a single one”.³³

This may be facilitated, according to Vangen and McGuire (2015:17), through pragmatic efforts to promote information exchange, to shift the positions and roles of participants in the process, and to reduce complexity and uncertainty. In contrast, Ospina and Foldy (2010:303) rather emphasise that this is “not just a network management technique or conflict resolution strategy, it is a relational demand”. Tactics for weaving relationships may include one-on-one meetings with, and personalised attention to specific individuals to make them feel personally connected and invited (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:303). Weaving relationships in this way can therefore also inform efforts to mobilise particular stakeholders.

To some extent, weaving identities and relationships resonates with the final practice of agenda framing. In the same way that leaders may interpret and articulate problems, projects and ideas in certain ways, or enable others to frame the agenda, the act of naming an identity

³³ Ospina and Foldy (2010) actually offer the notion of “bridging” as encompassing five leadership practices of: (1) prompting cognitive shifts; (2) naming and shaping identity; (3) engaging in dialogue about difference; (4) creating equitable governance mechanisms; and (5) weaving multiple worlds together through interpersonal relationships. Bridging is here included under the practice of weaving and navigating relations, as a potential way in which this practice can emerge and be enacted. It also, however, pertains to the overarching work required of leaders, identified in the conclusion of Section 2.4.

does similar ‘framing’ work. Naming and shaping identities can serve to bring a specific identity and issue to the fore (e.g. race, gender). This can, in turn, inform discussions on the agenda of a particular project or collaboration. It can also inform the sense of connection among participants, potentially bridging differences and boundaries, producing new types of relationships and developing new ways of thinking and acting (Mandell & Keast, 2009:166). The ways through which identities are shaped and woven together may also be integrated into how a collaborative process is structured to build alliances or to define particular roles within the process (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:298).

2.5.4 Framing agendas

The final public leader practice that shapes collaboration is agenda framing. It speaks to how participants or members of a collaboration identify and make sense of public problems, draw on particular values, and consider and develop potential solutions (Page, 2010:248). For Page (2010:247-8), public leaders use agenda framing to heighten the salience of a particular problem, thereby “helping others recognise public problems [and] their stake in those problems” (see also Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:219). Framing the agenda therefore serves to establish the purpose of a collaboration, as well as the norms and values informing it, with the ultimate aim of achieving a sense of shared vision (Hsieh & Liou, 2018:87) and commitment to finding appropriate solutions (Page, 2010:253; O’Leary & Bingham, 2007).

Agenda framing resonates with theorisations of leadership as a process of “meaning-making” (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) or “sense-giving” (Foldy, Goldman & Ospina, 2008), and the view of leaders as ‘managers of meaning’ (Sullivan et al., 2012:44).³⁴ In collaborative processes, this ideally involves deliberative processes through which ideas are “created, changed, and contested” (Page, 2010:248). In his analysis of action learning teams through a relational lens, Moore (2014:111) describes meaning-making as especially dialogical, where teams negotiate “shared meaning” through direct social interaction and discussion of their different perspectives, expectations and goals. As Moore (ibid.:112) explains, “shared meaning is not a state where everyone agrees to the same point of view – it occurs when the members grasp each other’s positions well enough to accept their different interpretations of the problem, and to exercise collective intelligence about how to proceed toward solving it”.

³⁴ For an early theorisation of leadership as meaning-making, see Smircich and Morgan (1982).

Meaning-making thus occurs, not in people's minds, but in the relations and processes comprising the work of the collaboration (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:294). Although Moore recognises that coming to a shared meaning does not necessitate a single view on a problem (a point also made by Ansell & Gash, 2007:547), his analysis still seems to suggest (as Page's does) that agenda framing engenders a sense of collective purpose among participating actors.

Within this broad process of deliberating views and objectives, the practice of agenda framing involves efforts to interpret problems and situations (Grint, 2005), including also specific proposals, projects, programmes or initiatives. For example, in a study of "sensegiving" practices in a wind farm project, Corvellec and Risberg (2007:313) described the practice as "selecting backgrounds – contextualising". Through this practice, a project can be situated in different contexts, each attaching different meanings to the project. A wind farm project, for instance, can be contextualised in relation to climate change by referencing the Kyoto protocol, or in relation to national energy policy, or to the local economy by referencing municipal plans (ibid.). According to the authors, this way of contextualising is an effort to "manage meaning by selecting and highlighting certain facts or issues over others", which serves to orient understanding of the project "in a particular direction" (ibid.:315). It is also what Morse (2007:2) refers to as "strategic issue framing".

This contextualisation and construction of issues can produce a sense of collective purpose across organisations or actors. In their study of social change organisations in the U.S., for instance, Ospina and Foldy (2010) examine how organisational leaders use agenda framing to redefine particular issues in order to get other organisations on board with their cause. Examples include re-framing oil and gas development from being an environmental degradation issue to a human rights issue, or re-framing views of African Americans with HIV/AIDS in a way that presents it as a shared problem for black organisations working on different issues (ibid.:297). In the South African local government context, an example is the way sanitation services, particularly in informal settlements, have been brought to the fore as a human rights and human dignity issue. The provision of dignified sanitation was also made into a key electoral issue in the 2011 local government elections.

These examples show how frames can be used to highlight shared problems, common values or overlapping interests in order to produce a joint commitment (Page, 2010:249). Ospina and Foldy (2010:292, 298) describe these practices as ways of "prompting cognitive shifts" in order to "bridge differences" and "create a sense of shared interest". This in turn, cultivates

relational bonds and ‘connectedness’ as the foundation of collective action (ibid.:292). In this manner, agenda framing is also a part of the fourth leadership practice: weaving and navigating relationships.

Agenda framing in the context of inter-organisational and cross-sectoral collaboration means frames may be contested. As Page (2010:248) explains, “different leaders and factions compete to frame issues to favour their own interests”. This brings Page (ibid.) to conclude that, “the extent and ways that frames are contested therefore affects the prospects for collaborative governance”. According to Ansell and Gash (2007:554) and Chrislip and Larson (1994:53), the role of leadership is therefore less about taking decisive action based on different inputs, and rather about “safeguarding” the process of deliberation and mutual decision-making. However, in their study of a wide range and types of public sector collaborations, Vangen and Huxham (2003:S70) identify clear practices of “collaborative thuggery” where project leaders resort to various tactics to manipulate the agenda in order to “make things happen”. Such tactics include: imposing an understanding of issues onto participants; influencing the agenda through stealthy behaviours; deciding how to move the agenda forward; and manoeuvring people towards the agenda (ibid.). Where public leadership is understood as what “makes things happen”, Vangen and Huxham (2003) rightly point out that agenda framing practices do not always or necessarily involve consensual and transparent dialogue; agendas are also constructed and driven in other ways.

These four leader practices together comprise the roles and work of public leadership in and for collaboration. These may be read as expectations of what public leaders ought to do, but also descriptions of what goes on in collaboration and what moves a collaboration in a particular direction. These are also not necessarily comprehensive, and there may be other iterations and other practices that, depending on context and situation, emerge and become relevant. The emphasis on leader practices focus the analysis on the importance of individual leaders. This approach is relevant to this study given the fact that, in South African local government (and likely elsewhere as well), officials are mandated to take on the leading role in participation. Insofar as public officials take on the formal role as leader of a collaborative structure and process, and as representatives of the government stakeholder therein, it is reasonable to expect they would have more influence in these practices than other stakeholders. At the same time, however, the notion of practices remains open to a broader understanding of how individual practices are shaped and emerge, and thus to broader social

processes and structures in shaping and enacting leadership. The practice lens therefore provides an entry point for examining, in a more open way, what goes on in collaboration, where the sources of influence are, and how influence is exercised.

2.6 Power relations and structures

This final section of the chapter turns to the question of power relations and structural influence in collaboration. Through a social constructionist lens, these can also be expected to underpin and shape collaborative processes, as well as the role and expected work of public leaders therein.

2.6.1 Power relations and the facilitation of power-sharing

Power, as noted in Section 2.3.1 above, has often been associated with the influence of the individual leader over followers or over the leader-follower relation. From a social constructionist perspective, the intersection of material, institutional, relational and discursive aspects of power are understood to contribute to the construction of leadership, whilst power itself is perceived as fluid and operating in an on-going and dynamic manner. In the literature on public leadership in collaboration, power is discussed as part of the ‘shared power’ world of collaborative governance (Section 2.2.3), where formal positions, formal sources of power, and hierarchical leader-follower relations appear to be less relevant. It is also discussed in terms of the power disparities between different stakeholders in collaboration, and the role of leadership to address these. This section examines these latter two points, and how these are interpreted through the previous theorisations of power in leadership more generally.

2.6.1.1 Shared power and the absence of positional authority

The idea of a “shared power” world (Crosby, 2010:S69) indicates the distribution of power across systems, networks, sectors, organisations, and even teams and individuals. Power – here understood in terms of knowledge, resources or other sources of influence – is therefore distributed rather than centralised in a single organisation, team or person. On this basis, scholars conclude that when public leaders work in collaboration and thus across

organisational boundaries and hierarchies, they must do so without any formal or positional authority (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i84; Morse, 2010:233).³⁵

To say the source of public leadership in collaboration excludes positional authority is not to suggest public leaders in collaboration have no formal authority within their organisations, but rather that they are unlikely to have such authority over members from other organisations within the collaboration (Sun & Anderson, 2010:309). Stated otherwise, in inter-organisational and collaborative contexts, the organisational hierarchy in which a formal position gains authority does not apply externally across networks and partnerships in the same way. According to Connelly (2007:1247), inter-organisational settings may lack any clear authoritative hierarchy or line of influence, as one would expect for an organisation. Instead, hierarchical structures and relations “break down in a collaborative context” (Morse, 2010:233; see also Armistead et al., 2007:213). This means that, in contexts of collaboration, power relations between actors are not necessarily determined by formal positions, but are rather more ambiguous and complex (Raffel et al., 2009:10-11).

2.6.1.2 Addressing power imbalances

A further observation regarding power in collaboration is that there is usually an imbalance of power between participants (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:173). Although power may be “shared”, as discussed above, it is not necessarily or usually shared equally, and may remain concentrated with certain stakeholders (O’Leary & Vij, 2012:513; Currie et al., 2011:245). In fact, from this perspective, positional power and authority may still be present in collaboration. Crosby and Bryson (2010b:219), for instance, describe collaborations both as having “no one in charge”, but also involving individuals with the power to champion or otherwise influence the collaboration (see also Nowell & Harrison, 2010:21). Writing within relational leadership studies, Hosking (1988:147, 152) allows that studies of leadership as a practice may still “retain the understanding that leaders generally enjoy higher status relative to others 'in terms of their contributions to influence'.” Some participants may therefore still

³⁵ This may already be implied in collective theories of leadership, but is an important point given the extent to which it is made within the literature. This might suggest that public leadership scholars do not necessarily push the collective/relational lens as far as it could go, and remain on the ‘entitative’ side of the relational continuum. However, one may argue that theories of collective leadership do not foreclose the possibility of individual leaders being important sources of influence, or that such influence could be located in their formal positions or personal relations. Rather, collective leadership theories remain open to the possibility that leadership is constructed and emerges through the intersection of agency, context, practices, etc., including, at times, formal leaders and their positional power or authority.

exercise power over others. In fact, given the correspondence of leadership with influence, the very role of leadership may contribute to the power imbalance. And yet, as noted above, it is the role of leadership to address such power imbalances and facilitate processes of mutual influence and decision-making.

This work of leadership to balance power can be understood through the conceptualisation of distinct forms of power: “power over”; “power to”; and “power for”.³⁶ These refer, respectively, to orientations towards “own gain, mutual gain, and altruistic gain” (Purdy 2012:410). “Power over” thus constitutes a form of power driven by the desire to fulfil one’s own interests, where gains for oneself are perceived to require control over others and over the relation with others (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:174-5). The concept has been associated with the work of American political scientist Robert Dahl, as well as that of Max Weber (Stone, 2012:11). Dahl (1957:202-3) defines power as a relation between two people, where “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”.³⁷ In collaboration, key power issues emerge around the exercise of “power over”, and the reality that there are often stakeholders who feel or are disempowered to set priorities and/or influence the allocation of resources (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:177).

For Huxham and Vangen (2005:177), it is the task of public leadership to mitigate against the exercise of “power over”, and to facilitate and enact “power to” and “power for”. “Power to”, aimed at mutual gain for the collaboration as a whole, and may be exercised by one member or by mobilising the power of the relations comprising the collaboration itself (ibid.:176-7). This perspective posits power in a much more positive light, as “the ability to do” (ibid.). The third form of power, “power for”, refers to the transfer of power to others in order to support their interests (ibid.:176). The role of public leadership in this instance is thus perceived as enhancing the power of those who are in some sense ‘weak’, powerless or disempowered within the collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2007:555).

³⁶ Some distinguish ‘power over’ and ‘power with’ (see for example, Gaventa, 2006a; Helstad & Møller, 2013:259). For Gaventa (2006a:24), ‘power with’ encompasses the “synergy which can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action”.

³⁷ This concept resonates with the way power has been conceptualised within leader-centric studies. It allows that the exercise of “power over” may involve either positional or personal power. See Section 2.3.1.3.

Studies suggest that greater power disparities can undermine the success of collaboration (Connelly, 2007:1247). In addition, without actively addressing power imbalances, collaborative endeavours are likely to exacerbate inequalities (Bussu & Galanti, 2018:348). Thus, addressing power imbalances is crucial both for supporting the collaboration, and for ensuring the collaborative agenda is collectively agreed and mutually beneficial. It is, in this way, arguably an integral element to ensuring such efforts promote “the public good”.

Given the above discussion, the lack of positional authority ascribed to public leaders seems to suggest much more relational or discursive work is required to balance any power disparities. At the same time, however, there remains the possibility that some individuals may take on formal roles and positions within the collaboration, and that this may be informed by (and thus reflect) existing power relations. Whilst this raises the question of how public leaders can address power disparities, it also brings back to the fore the kinds of concerns raised in the critical leadership literature regarding the ‘romanticisation’ of leader agency, which creates high expectations for what individuals are able to achieve in the first place (see Section 2.3.1.3). More collective and constructionist theories, on the other hand, bring into view how such agency is both shaped and constrained.

The next section discusses how public leadership is socially constructed through the intersection of structures and agency. This lens allows for an exploration of power and power dynamics in processes of social construction (Liu, 2017:346) and of the multiplicity of influences that enable and constrain agency (Holmberg, 2000:181). It also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of leadership practices as leaders may be expected to navigate these complexities.

2.6.2 Leadership beyond leaders: The importance of structures and processes

In examining how public leadership accomplishes the important boundary-crossing work that entails balancing power, navigating interests, and building relations, the social constructionist lens focuses on how leadership emerges through the dynamic intersection of structures, processes and relations. What is particularly noteworthy in this regard is the recognition of the role of structure in shaping collaboration, as well as its associated role in constructing leadership.

With regard to the role of structure in shaping collaboration, Section 2.2.3 discussed collaborative governance as part of the broader macro-level environment characterising the

public sector context. It is further posited as an important factor that creates particular challenges for public leadership, and requires (and through the constructionist lens, produces) a form of leadership potentially distinct from leadership in intra-organisational contexts. At the meso- and micro-levels, collaborative structures also shape relations and processes in collaboration, with implications for leadership therein. This is depicted in Huxham and Vangen's (2005:203) conceptualisation of three "leadership media" comprising structures, processes and participants.³⁸

According to Huxham and Vangen (2005:203), leadership is constructed dynamically through three leadership media. Structures comprise the organisations and individuals involved in collaboration and the "structural inter-connections between them" (see also Vangen & McGuire, 2015:4). For instance, a collaborative structure may have open or closed membership, which would determine "who may have an influence on shaping a partnership agenda, who may have power to act and what resources may be tapped" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:204). The collaborative structure can also delineate "authority and responsibilities within the collaboration", with the potential of either creating or remedying power imbalances (O'Leary & Vrij, 2012:513). Although their focus is predominantly on the structure of the collaboration itself, they also recognise the importance of external influences and broader structures. For instance, the collaborative structure could be imposed from the outside – by policymakers or funders – which can make it "intrusive" by indicating what organisations should be included, who will lead the collaboration, and how it should be organised and managed (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:204). External stakeholders may also dictate the objectives of the collaboration (Currie et al., 2011:245). The structure is therefore much more than a neutral platform for collaboration, but is rather constitutive thereof.

Alongside the collaboration structure, processes entail the formal and informal ways communication takes place (including the instruments used, such as committee meetings, phone or email, etc.) (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:205). These shape the collaboration by enabling or constraining the sharing of information, the discussion and negotiation of the agenda, and the development of shared understandings of issues and solutions (ibid.). In this

³⁸ Given their extensive work on a range of collaborative engagements and initiatives over a ten-year period, Huxham and Vangen's (2005) framing and discussion of leadership media and the role of structure guides this discussion and is therefore dealt with extensively.

way, processes also contribute to the construction of leadership. Finally, leadership is constituted and enacted through the participants, whether as individuals, groups or organisations, as formal leaders appointed to lead the collaboration, or as internal or external ‘influencers’ (i.e. directors, managers, facilitators, etc.) (ibid.:206-7). At the local or micro-level, key practices (as discussed above in Section 2.5) may constitute mundane day-to-day activities, but are also key “points of power” through which power is enacted (ibid.:179). These include activities like selecting issues (i.e. agenda framing) and creating procedures (i.e. structuring). Those with access to these points of power are “in a powerful position to influence the collaborative agenda” (ibid.). Project leaders (such as government officials mandated to initiate a collaboration) presumably have access to these points, and can also influence who else has access.

These three leadership media together lead “the formation and implementation of collaborative agendas” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:208). These do not exist apart from one another, but are interconnected:

structures influence process designs and what participants can do. Processes influence the structures that emerge and who can influence the agenda. Participants influence the design of both structure and process (ibid.).

In the discussion of leader practices in Section 2.5 above, these practices can be understood to comprise efforts by participants and leaders to direct a collaboration, which includes having “to cope with, or build on, the constraints or possibilities dictated by structures, processes or other participants” (ibid). These practices are also, however, the result of the influence exercised through and by structures and processes.

This perspective on public leadership as socially constructed clearly resonates with studies of public leadership (and leadership) that draw on structuration theory in order to bring attention to the influential role of structure on agency (or the intersection between structure and agency).³⁹ For instance, Crosby and Bryson (2010b:219) argue that collaborative structures are likely to produce actions that, in turn, reinforce and validate those very structures. In a study

³⁹ Within political leadership studies, the debate between the interrelation or interaction between structure and agency has also introduced a number of conceptual frameworks for theorizing political leadership, most notable being the neo-institutionalist approach (Hartley & Benington, 2011:208-9).

of public service leaders in the UK, Wallace and Tomlinson (2010:21) use structuration theory to examine leader agency and the extent to which leaders can manipulate or change various contextual factors, which would also serve to further extend their influence. Notably, they associate highly manipulable structures with micro-level contextual aspects, whilst highly delimited structures are likely to sit at the macro level (ibid.:27). The latter still, however, inform leader agency at the micro level (ibid.:36-7).

In sum, studies of public leadership are increasingly (albeit still marginally) engaging with theories of leadership through a social constructionist and practice lens, and recognising the constitutive role of structures and processes therein. This includes macro-, meso- and micro-level structures, which shape collaboration and the power relations therein. At the same time, however, leaders of such processes confront the complex challenge of directing collaborative processes in ways that can bridge differences and boundaries, balance power disparities, and ultimately address critical shared problems. This entails micro-level work within the daily, on-going, visionary and mundane processes of collaboration.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the international literature on public leadership in collaboration. This was situated within the broader public leadership and general leadership literature, particularly in relation to debates regarding the distinctive purpose and context of public leadership. Whereas leadership in the private sector is often associated with enhancing organisational performance, in the public sector leadership is explicitly associated with the broader “public good”. At the same time, however, multiple governance frameworks often inform public institutions, and public leaders must navigate between the goals of bureaucratic stability, democratic deliberation, and entrepreneurial efficiency and innovation. In navigating between these, public leaders are also increasingly required to work through collaborative structures and processes. The collaborative governance trajectory at a macro-level means public problems and service delivery systems are subject to cross-sectoral and inter-organisational partnerships and networks.

A closer examination of the purpose and challenges of collaboration at the micro-level (i.e. in terms of specific collaborative structures and processes) bring to the fore the role of public leadership in crossing boundaries, bridging differences and addressing power disparities. On the one hand, power is understood as “shared” insofar as knowledge, resources and influence is dispersed across sectors, organisations and stakeholders. This means those leading

collaboration, often a public official, is working without the power derived from the authority of a formal position within an organisational hierarchy. On the other hand, power within a collaboration is not automatically and equally shared between participants, and thus power disparities must be actively addressed. Public leaders in charge of collaboration must therefore work to balance power, but must do so largely without formal positional power.

To make sense of this role of public leaders in addressing power disparities in collaboration, it is useful and necessary to situate it in relation to the theorisation of leadership as an influence process to achieve change. In this regard, the chapter reviewed trends within general leadership theory that are also evident in public leadership theory. The starting point for unpacking public leadership in collaboration is the dominant perspective of leadership as an influence process between a leader and followers in an effort to accomplish a common goal. Through this perspective, most studies of leadership have focused on the qualities of the individual as the source of influence, and followers' beliefs, values and behaviours as the object of influence. Alternative approaches, in the form of shared, distributed and collective leadership theories, amongst others, have shifted this perspective away from its leader-centrism, and towards views of leadership as constructed through emergent roles, interactive processes, relations and practices.

Whilst leader-centric theories impart considerable agency and influence to individual leaders, this has been critiqued as an expression of unequal power between active leaders and passive followers. It also places considerable expectations on individuals to be able to have and exercise agency. Such a form of leadership would be problematic in collaboration given the lack of clear leader-follower roles/relations and the aims of balancing and sharing power. Through a constructionist and practice lens, however, power dynamics and the relevance of structures and multiple sources and processes of influence become apparent. The chapter thus concluded with a review of four key leader practices that are purported to enable and sustain collaborative structures and processes, including working across boundaries and addressing power disparities. The four practices discussed – convening and mobilising stakeholders, structuring collaborations, weaving and navigating relationships, and framing agendas – reflect the kind of leadership work expected to ensure effective collaboration, or at least direct collaboration in some way. Although these practices still focus on leader agency, through a constructionist lens the analysis is opened up to the consideration of other influential factors.

Finally, the literature on public leadership in collaboration articulates clear objectives and challenges for public leaders. However, the studies of public leadership in such contexts, whilst recognising the importance of citizens as stakeholders in collaboration, tend to focus on formal inter-organisational networks and partnerships. The roles of citizens are also at times described as a customer/client role, but, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this is fundamentally different the role of citizens as political actors. In addition, the discussion of power disparities in collaboration does, to some extent, recognise the fact that it is usually poor and marginalised communities who are disempowered in formal collaborations. Whilst their inclusion is recognised as important for collaboration, the extent to which the key leader practices sufficiently empower these stakeholders has not been a primary subject of study in the literature. The next chapter begins to unpack these issues through a discussion of the theories and practices of participation, in the context of South African local government, and in the literature on international participatory development.

CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presented a social constructionist theorisation of public leadership in contexts of collaboration. This established the theoretical framing of the study in terms of public leader practices, and identified the need for deeper theorisation of the role of structures and issues of power, as these pertain to the kinds of leadership roles and challenges that emerge in collaborative or participatory processes. This chapter supplements this theoretical framing of the problem from the perspective of participation and the theorisation of structure and power therein.

The chapter begins by contextualising the study in relation to the theory of participation and participatory governance, as well as the formal structures and processes of participation in South African local government. The substantive aims of participation can be understood through the concepts of citizen voice and agency, alongside government accountability and responsiveness. The chapter traces these concepts to both academic literature and the relevant policy and legislative prescripts in South Africa. From the literature, participation can be understood as a process through which citizens influence government decisions and policy outcomes, ideally involving a transformation of power relations and the empowerment of citizens and communities. From the policy landscape, important areas for citizen agency and voice are identified across a range of local government processes. These include city-wide planning and budgeting, formal and ad hoc engagements through local councillors and ward committees, and finally, departmental projects and service delivery. Despite the policy intent and institutionalisation of participation in local government, especially in the metros, the formal structures for participation seem to fall far short of realising these broader ideals, particularly ensuring citizen inputs find expression in policy implementation. The chapter reviews some of the key constraints reported in the extant literature, which suggest participation in South African local government has largely become routine and formulaic, subject to pre-decided plans and technocratic managerialism.

The chapter then shifts away from the South African context to the broader literature of participatory development. The field of international participatory development has been influential in the sphere of participatory governance, and similarly presents participation as an

integral component of development programmes and projects. However, both the study and implementation of participatory development has been subject to extensive critical scrutiny, especially with regard to the structures that shape power relations between actors. Through this literature, the significance of situating micro-level studies within the broader institutional context comes to the fore. The works of Susan Strange (1998) on structural power, and of Andrea Cornwall (2002, 2004, 2008) on the distinction between invited and invented spaces, are particularly pertinent. Together, these provide a useful analytical frame for examining micro practices and power relations within spaces that are initiated, designed and led by institutional actors and within broader institutional and governance structures. Notable macro-level structural conditions that characterise the South African local government context are also discussed.

The final section of the chapter examines the still limited literature on public leadership and participation in the South African local government context. Much of the focus in this literature is on the service delivery responsibility of local government. Although some scholars recognise participation as a critical element therein, this is rarely the main entry point. Notably, most of the studies approach public leadership through the application of a particular typology (e.g. servant, ethical or transformational leadership), rather than through the analysis of leadership practices. This final section sets the stage for the analysis of the experiences and practices of City officials in the systems, structures and processes of participatory governance in a South African metro. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the way the critical discussion of power in participation informs its theorisation in public leadership theory.

3.2 Theorising participation and participatory governance

The commitment to participation and participatory governance in South African local government is encapsulated in a number of policies and laws, including first and foremost the 1996 Constitution and the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) (RSA, 1996; RSA, 1998b). As discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.1, the notion of participatory governance suggests a ‘way of doing things’ that extends the participation mandate beyond the political sphere, and across various government processes. Indeed, Pycroft (2000:150) has argued that the push for participatory governance is motivated by the view that:

regular democratic local government elections are an insufficient democratizing mechanism for developmental local government. What is required is a continual process of dialogue

between municipalities and their communities, as well as community participation in all aspects of council activity.

Through a system of participatory governance, then, municipalities are expected to involve citizens, communities, and civic actors across policy-making and implementation processes. In this regard, the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a: Sections 16, 42) stipulates that citizens and communities must be involved in development planning and budgeting, performance management and monitoring, as well as service delivery decisions. More specifically, there should be mechanisms for engagement in preparing, implementing and reviewing the Integrated Development Plan and the performance management system (RSA, 2000a: Sections 16, 42). Participation is also called for in more specific areas, such as disaster management and spatial and land use planning (see for instance RSA, 2002, RSA 2013).

This is also articulated in the White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998b: Section 3.3), which calls on municipalities to enable active participation by citizens in four distinct capacities: (1) as voters taking part in electoral processes; (2) as citizens engaged in policy development processes; (3) as end-users and consumers of services; and (4) as organised partners contributed to the mobilisation of resources for development. While in the interest of parsimony this study does not unpack each of these in detail, it is noteworthy that for a municipality as a whole, numerous participatory mechanisms and initiatives may be established or under way at any given time, located in different structures within the municipality, with distinct objectives, methodologies and actors involved. Each of these four capacities also suggests a different type of relation and interaction between government and community actors.

The rest of this section presents three concepts underpinning the notion of participatory governance and the ideal outcomes of participation. These concepts are suggestive of the core principles or outcomes embedded therein, although these have also been subject to widespread critique (Storey, 2014:405), which is discussed in Section 3.4 below. In the South African context, these normative ideals also find expression in key policies and legislation. This is followed by a brief overview of the structures and processes intended to institutionalise participation and achieve these outcomes in South African local government.

3.2.1 Citizen agency and influence

Although the notion of participation is as complex and contextual as that of leadership, it generally refers to the involvement of citizens, communities or civic actors in local decisions that affect their lives, as a way of ‘deepening democracy’ (Barichievy et al., 2005:376). At the heart of this definition is the notion of agency, understood in this context as, “the ability to act and be agents of [one’s] own development” (Eversole, 2011:51).⁴⁰ This entails the ability to express one’s views, interests and concerns (often referred to as ‘voice’), as well as to influence government decision-making (Thompson, 2014:39; Sharma, 2008:3; Gaventa, 2002:1). Participation ought therefore to be a process through which people take ownership of their development, ultimately enhancing “the capacity of individuals to improve or change their own lives” (Cleaver, 2001:37; Cooke & Kothari, 2001:5).⁴¹

Agency may be exercised either directly or indirectly (Thompson, 2014:39), and through formal or informal channels (Sharma, 2008:3). Direct action involves individuals and communities in voicing their concerns and exercising influence within participatory spaces and processes. Indirect action occurs through representatives who speak on behalf of the interests and concerns of citizens (Thompson, 2014:39). When associated with the concepts of citizenship and rights (see for example Gaventa, 2002; Masaki, 2010:1199; Robins et al., 2008; von Schnitzler, 2008; Storey, 2014:405), agency can be understood as “the actual capability to meaningfully practice those rights”, rather than the mere possession of rights (as reflected in the distinction between the status and practice of citizenship) (Heller, 2012:646).

Whether direct or indirect, formal or informal, agency is inherently tied up with the notion and exercise of power. One of the early efforts to critically interrogate different forms of participation is Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) well-known “ladder of participation”, which illustrates how formal participatory processes may enable or constrain civic agency, voice and power. Originally focused on government-led initiatives within urban renewal projects in the

⁴⁰ The concept of agency employed in this study is not that of ‘agency theory’ that originated in economics, and that focuses on the relation and contract between principals and agents, where principals delegate work to agents to perform the work. Agency theory is based on notions of individual self-interest, bounded rationality and risk aversion), and often attempt to identify the most appropriate contract to govern such a relation. See Eisenhardt (1989) for an in-depth discussion of agency theory.

⁴¹ This conceptualisation of agency does resonate with Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach and the notion of well-being as freedom (see, for example, Sen, 1985). Whilst Sen’s work discusses the reduction of poverty through individual and collective capabilities, this thesis rather focuses on the exercise of agency within structural constraints.

United States, Arnstein’s ladder has been employed and adapted in the participation literature ever since. In fact, the Draft Public Participation Framework (2007) developed by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG, now Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs or COGTA) in South Africa draws on Arnstein’s typology for its more simplified ‘three-rung’ distinction between ‘informing’, ‘consulting’, and ‘involving’.⁴²

Arnstein names eight levels or rungs that correspond to a vertical and normative ordering of participation, and which reflects the level of citizen input and power in decision-making within a participatory process. The eight rungs are grouped into three categories, namely ‘non-participation’, ‘tokenism’ and ‘citizen power’, as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Arnstein’s ladder of participation

Forms of participation	Rungs of participation
Citizen power	Citizen control
	Delegated power
	Partnership
Tokenism	Placation
	Consultation
	Informing
Non-participation	Therapy
	Manipulation

Source: Adapted from Arnstein (1969)

According to Arnstein, participation must be understood as a power relation and struggle: “it is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (1969:216; see also Tritter & McCallum, 2006:157). Participation is therefore intended to provide a mechanism by which citizens can access and exercise power, although it may also serve to reinforce existing relations of power. This depends on the degree to which participating

⁴² More recent examples provide quite similar typologies, such as the UN-Habitat’s (2009:94) categorisation of participatory urban planning along a continuum of participatory ‘forms’ (adapted from White 1996). Alternative frameworks include, inter alia, work by Cohen and Uphoff (1980), and Archon Fung’s “democracy cube” (2006), which proposes a three-dimensional framework for exploring institutional possibilities for participation. Given the attention to Arnstein’s earlier schema, it is a useful starting point for delineating crucial factors of participatory processes.

citizens are able to influence decisions, which itself depends on various factors, including the design of the participatory structures and processes (Arnstein, 1969:220).

This articulation of citizen agency, voice and power encompasses the ‘mainstream’ theorisation of participatory ideals; but, as discussed further in Section 3.4 below, these have been extensively critiqued and problematised, particularly in terms of the disjuncture between such participatory ideals and the realities of participation in practice (Robins et al., 2008:1070). These ideals also reverberate with the notion of leadership defined in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 as an influence process to achieve change. The participation literature characterises this process in terms of the ability of citizens and communities to influence and effect change, and in particular to impact governance and service delivery decisions and actions in ways that bring about actual, discernible political or socio-economic outcomes (Thompson, 2014:39).

In the South African context, the articulation of participation in terms of citizen agency and voice is most clearly articulated in the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000a), and to some extent in the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998a).⁴³ According to the MSA (RSA, 2000a: Sections 16(1)(a) and (b)), municipalities must “encourag[e] and creat[e] the conditions for community participation in municipal affairs”, as well as build “the capacity of the community, councillors and staff for the purpose of community participation”. The MSA also makes clear that citizens and communities must be involved in development planning and budgeting, performance management and monitoring, as well as service delivery decisions (RSA, 2000a: Sections 16(1)(a) and (b)). These are key areas of decision-making within municipal governance processes. There are also numerous matters that must be open for public comment (e.g. budget, annual report, service delivery mechanisms and service agreements, long-term contracts, by-laws, etc.) (RSA, 2000a; RSA, 2003). Although in practice these have been criticised for only informing or at most consulting citizens (see Section 3.3), the ideal of the ‘active citizen’ assumes that direct engagement in governance processes will empower individuals as democratic citizens, strengthen democracy and state-

⁴³ Other pieces of legislation and policy also include participatory elements, whether in terms of access to information and justice (for instance, RSA, 2000b, RSA, 2000c), or participation in financial management (RSA, 2003) or in spatial planning (RSA, 2013). It is also included in various municipal by-laws, which depends on each municipality. Amongst the metros, some have a by-law or policy in place specific to participation.

society relations, and improve development and delivery (Storey, 2014:404; Gaventa, 2006b; Cornwall, 2002, 2008).

3.2.2 Government accountability and responsiveness

Alongside the ideals of civic agency and voice, government accountability and responsiveness constitute important elements of both the principles and institutional realities of participatory governance. Although these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, this study follows Goetz and Jenkins (2005) in distinguishing between them to bring into view the formal, institutional mechanisms of accountability alongside the more relational aspects of responsiveness. Both have important links to the exercise of agency and voice, and to the roles and practices of local officials as leaders of participatory processes.

3.2.2.1 Government accountability

In its simplest definition, accountability refers to “constraints on the exercise of power” (Freedman & Schaaf, 2013:104), and particularly the ability of ordinary people “to hold the powerful to account” (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005:8). It encompasses a particular kind of power relationship, where those ‘with’ or ‘in’ power must explain and answer for their actions, whilst those who have delegated that power have the capacity to demand justifications and even impose sanctions for unacceptable behaviour or poor performance (ibid.:8). These two aspects are reflected in the notions of answerability and enforcement (ibid.:9).⁴⁴ In the government context, accountability refers to the ways in which citizens, at least in theory, demand and exact accountability from politicians and government officials, “to whom power has been delegated, whether through elections or some other means” (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005:11). Politicians and officials thus have the duty to report to citizens, whilst citizens have the right to demand answers and take action (Gaventa, 2002:12).

Scholars employ a number of accountability models to describe relations and structures of accountability. One model distinguishes vertical and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability refers to “the state being held to account by non-state actors”, whether through elections or through the activities of civic organisations and interest groups, although this is

⁴⁴ Answerability is here understood to refer to “the right to make claims and demand responses”, whilst enforceability encompasses “the mechanisms for ensuring that answers are backed up by actions and for sanctioning non-responsiveness” (Mahmud & Kabeer, 2003:23).

often with reference to formal lobbying activities (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005:11). Horizontal accountability encompasses “formal relationships within the state itself”, including between legislatures and the executive, political leaders and civil servants, and senior officials and their subordinates (ibid.:11-12). Another model of accountability distinguishes upwards and downwards accountability, which is a useful lens to highlight officials’ accountability ‘upwards’ to their superiors and to political leaders, alongside their accountability ‘downwards’ to communities and citizens, as suggested by the notion of participatory governance.

From a related perspective, calls for participatory governance have also been informed by what the World Bank 2004 development report, *Making services work for poor people*, described as the failure of the “long route of accountability”, which runs from citizens through representatives and policy-makers to service providers, to address the needs of the most poor and marginalised. On this basis, it is argued, governments should strengthen the “short route of accountability” between citizens and service providers (i.e. frontline officials or contractors) (2004:49). This shift in emphasis on direct interactions between citizens and officials or service providers again calls attention to the mechanisms and practices of participation that occur (or should occur) outside of those related to political representation. However, citizens are here defined as clients with client power vis-à-vis service providers, rather than as citizens or political actors, which suggests a form of engagement characterised by either payment or opting out.

Finally, the notion of social accountability, which emphasises civic engagement, has become increasingly prevalent in international discourses around good governance (Joshi, 2008:13; Malena, Forster & Singh, 2004:1). Additional articulations of ‘diagonal’, ‘transversal’, and ‘hybrid’ accountability (Ackerman, 2004:450), also bring attention to the multiplicity of relations, structures and methods that may be at work in governance processes, as well as the role of the state in supporting and even formalising social accountability through engagement (Grandvoinet, Aslam & Raha, 2015:33).

3.2.2.2 Government responsiveness

In contrast to accountability, responsiveness encompasses “the capacity and willingness of state officials to take into account the knowledge and opinions of citizens” (Grandvoinet et al., 2015:33). At an institutional level, it corresponds to “the degree to which government listens to what people want and acts on it, and to which public policies and institutions

respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights” (Department for International Development (DFID), 2006:8). Goetz and Jenkins (2005:13) further define it as:

the desired attitude of power-holders towards citizens: we wish them to be responsive to the concerns and problems of ordinary people, to listen with impartiality and fairness to divergent views.

Responsiveness therefore does not depend on any “formal compulsion”; there is no legal or technical requirement to listen as such (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005:13). It also does not necessarily replicate formal accountability relationships: “public sector actors [may] have a duty to be *responsive* to the members of the public with whom they interact, but to *account* for their actions to their managers” (ibid.:13; emphasis in the original).

Both accountability and responsiveness are often presented as crucial counterparts to citizen agency and voice (Gaventa, 2002:2; O’Neil, Foresti & Hudson, 2007). Although voice is an important vehicle through which citizens can demand and generate government responsiveness and accountability, it is not a guarantee of either (Sharma, 2008:19). In comparing a ‘Citizen Voice’ initiative around water demand management in the City of Cape Town and City of eThekweni, Smith (2011:515) finds that, “despite the empowerment achieved at the citizen-scale, [...] a more articulate voice is not necessarily a more powerful voice *if the state refuses to listen or respond*” (emphasis added). This point is also made by Sharma (2008:5, 12), and is at the heart of Gaventa’s (2002:1) call for working “both sides of the equation”. In other words, for citizen voice and participation to exert actual influence, it must be ‘heard’ by government, and government actors must be capacitated to respond (Selormey, 2013:27).

In practice, what this requires can be understood through the lens of McGee’s (2014:5) distinction between shallow and deep responsiveness. Shallow responsiveness can be achieved through transparent communication loops (van Donk & Williams, 2015:11). However, the aim should be to embed ‘deep responsiveness’, where both the state and citizens develop democratic practices of deliberation, negotiation and power-sharing. In fact, responsiveness may require going beyond “traditional forms of representation” in order to find expression in “more direct and deliberative democratic mechanisms” (Gaventa, 2002:2). The notion of ‘deep responsiveness’ aligns with Wang and Van Wart’s (2007:269) emphasis on “the act of genuine listening” and the “willingness of government to consider public

views”. This suggests that, regardless of the depth or even the decision itself, people need to feel that communication doors are open, and that their ideas and concerns are heard, listened to, valued, and, most critically, acted upon in the public policy implementation terrain.⁴⁵

In the South African policy and legislative context, both responsiveness and accountability find expression in prescripts for various ‘moments’ in the government-citizen interface. These include, inter alia, mechanisms for the invitation and submission of public comments, petitions and complaints; public meetings and hearings by Council and other structures; consultative sessions with local organisations; and report back by Council and councillors to the local community (RSA, 2000a: Section 17(2)). Through these mechanisms, South African citizens ought to be able to demand and receive accountability, and municipalities ought to “be responsive to the needs of the local community” (RSA, 2000a: Section 51(a)). The notion of responsiveness is furthermore reflected in the Batho Pele (‘People First’) principles introduced in 1997, which brings attention to the “level and quality of public services” at the point of delivery (NPC, 2011:428). It is also at the core of the various formal structures and processes of participation in local development planning, representation, and project and service implementation. These three areas of participation are the focus of the next section.

3.3 Formal structures and processes of local government participation

In light of the above articulation of the participatory governance ideals for South African local government, a number of structures have been established, especially in the metros, to bring citizens, communities and civic actors into government processes. These can be organised into three areas of operation: (1) in city-wide integrated development planning (IDP) and budgeting; (2) through formal and ad hoc engagements through representative structures (i.e. ward councillors and ward committees); and (3) as part of departmental and project level infrastructure development and service provision.⁴⁶ These three areas are discussed in greater

⁴⁵ Analysing results from a national survey of U.S. cities conducted in 2000 that assessed the link between participation and public trust, Wang and Van Wart (2007:269) found that responsiveness is also a key element in building trust.

⁴⁶ City-wide and on-going communications, including reporting of service faults and complaints, could be included as a fourth area as well. It is excluded here as such interactions remain at the level of information sharing without the potential for consultation or deliberation. A plethora of communication mechanisms – advertisements, websites, customer satisfaction surveys, as well as various information and communication technologies (ICTs) – provide for information provision and citizen reporting on service issues and complaints. The metros, in particular, increasingly make use of mobile applications to make it easier for citizens to report specific service or infrastructure problems (e.g. potholes), to call for police support, or to access municipal accounts (Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel & Sanchez, 2015:82-3). Although these technologies do not provide for the kinds of consultative or deliberative engagements usually associated with public participation, they do increasingly

detail in the rest of this section. Although the study focuses on the third area – engagement at the departmental and project level – as the core area of work for officials, the other two areas are also pertinent as city-level areas of participation. And as the study will show in Chapter 5, the processes and actors involved in the other areas also play an important role in officials’ leadership practices, even in project-related participation led by officials. It is therefore pertinent to also acknowledge the role of integrated development planning, as well as the roles of ward councillors and ward committees.

The rest of this section gives a brief overview of the formal participation structures and processes in each of the three areas of local government listed above, as well as some of the key constraints as elucidated in the extant literature. Despite the legislative and policy framework for participation, as well as its formal institutionalisation through various structures and processes, this has not resulted in sustainable, meaningful involvement of citizens and communities in local government. A considerable body of literature, including scholarly research and government reviews, shows that current participatory processes are problematic and disappointing, if not ineffective and dysfunctional (NPC, 2011:437; Storey, 2014:404; Thompson & Nleya, 2010; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013). The result has been little scope for citizen agency and voice, and a general lack of government accountability and responsiveness. Key structures, processes and challenges to participation are summarised in the table below.

Table 3.2: Overview of participatory structures, processes and challenges

Governance area	Structures & processes	Key challenges
City-wide integrated development planning & budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing & advertisements prescribed in policy. • Five-year engagements & annual review. • Stakeholder & business forums • Ward/sub-council forums & public meetings. • Mayoral imbizos. • IDP department or unit in metro. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local IDPs must align with national policies & plans. • Performance management system and culture focused on efficiency. • Mostly information-gathering exercises, rather than platforms for decision-making.

constitute one of the main channels for interaction between citizens and government regarding on-going service maintenance. See Vivier et al. (2015), for a review of information platforms in South African local government, and their link to more in-depth forms of engagement.

Governance area	Structures & processes	Key challenges
Ward councillors, committees & sub-councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward councillor. • Ward committees. • Sub-council managers. • Regular monthly & quarterly public meetings. • Advertise Council activities and engagement opportunities. • Receive resident requests & comments (phone, email). • Address local concerns & issues. • Allocate ward budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward councillors often account to party rather than community. • Ward councillors & committees lack influence in Council. • Committees are often enclaves for party politics & patronage. • Issues of representation. • Sub-council agendas set by Council rather than community.
Departmental projects & service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual departments, area managers & project managers. • Policies related to informal settlement housing & infrastructure upgrading (USDG, HSDG, UISP, National Housing Code). • Beneficiary/project steering committees. • Community liaison officers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans & objectives are predetermined. • Participation in projects may be non-existent or constrained by municipal procedural requirements (e.g. SCM). • Projects implemented in technical manner, often driven by consultants. • Selection of beneficiaries and committee representatives is often ad hoc & not representative. • Engagements are only information-gathering exercises to secure buy-in. • Engagements provide inadequate information.

3.3.1 City-wide integrated development planning and budgeting

Integrated development planning constitutes the primary planning process and space for public participation in municipal affairs. It produces a five-year Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is intended to supersede all other plans of the municipality. It is used primarily as the means to decide on key projects and development programmes and to prioritise the allocation of public goods and financial resources. IDPs have legal status provided in the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a: Chapter 5) and are aligned to the five-year political terms of local government. It derives from the understanding of planning as dependent on the coordination between multiple sectors, actors, and activities, within the administration and the municipality as a whole (DPLG, 2001:5).

A key element of integrated development planning is the participation of communities and stakeholders in analysing local issues and setting and reviewing local priorities. In principle, engagements in the IDP should involve local communities in issue analysis, developing strategies and identifying projects, setting priorities, and integrating projects into an overall IDP plan, for final approval by Council (Ley, 2009:62; Nzimakwe, 2012:143). It is thus considered the primary channel for citizens and communities to formally influence municipal priorities, whether for land allocation, housing and infrastructure development plans, business development and investment priorities, or social initiatives. Municipalities are also required to engage communities annually in a review of the plan. Participatory structures relevant to the IDP process depend on each municipality. These may include ward committees (discussed in the next section), as well as specific stakeholder forums, business forums, and Mayoral *imbizos* (public meetings).

Participation in budgeting processes often occurs in conjunction with the IDP. The Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), 56 of 2003 (RSA, 2003) details the participation requirements in the annual budget process (Barichievu et al., 2005:375). This includes the opportunity for members of the public to submit representations/comments on the proposed budget, and for the council to take account of, and respond to, public and community submissions on the budget. Budget meetings may also be held at the ward or sub-council level.

Since their inception, a number of issues have emerged regarding IDPs and the budget process. For Harrison (2006:202), IDPs integrate participation and empowerment objectives with service delivery and performance efficiency objectives (as derived from New Public Management principles) (see also, Parnell & Pieterse, 2002:81). This has resulted in a tension between the flexibility and time needed for participation, and a performance management culture oriented towards efficiency. In essence, it “attempts to marry inclusiveness and participation with a largely technocratic managerialism, and top-down control with bottom-up processes” (Harrison, 2006:202). This resonates with Oldfield’s (2008:488) critique of the over-emphasis on development as “the delivery of physical development”, which reduces participation to a procedural and technical, rather than a political, matter. In addition, local IDPs depend on national government for financial resourcing, thereby requiring that local priorities align with national programmes (Harrison, 2006:190; Pieterse et al., 2008:6). In other words, national government priorities often supersede local planning.

These issues suggest formal participation processes in the IDP are often routine and formulaic, where the ability of citizens to contribute to and actually influence decision-making is increasingly closed off (Smith, 2011:515; Miraftab & Wills, 2005:207). At best, these have been described as forms of information-gathering and public consultation (Buccus et al., 2007:10; see also Malabela & Ally, 2011). According to Berrisford and Kihato (2008:397), the IDP often stands in isolation from, rather than feeding into, decision-making processes. Williams (2006:197) goes so far as to call it “spectator politics, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes, often the objects of administrative manipulation”. Where participation is pursued within a compliance mind-set, the substantive quality and outcomes of participation receive little attention (UN-Habitat, 2009:94).

3.3.2 Participation through ward councillors, committees and sub-councils

Ward councillors, ward committees and sub-councils are also key channels for citizen and community participation. Although applied city-wide, these are area-based representative (and administrative) structures intended to provide for regular engagements as well as ad hoc issues that may arise. In local municipalities and metros, half of council comprises ward councillors, and the other half proportional representative (PR) councillors. PR councillors are party representatives selected by the party based on the percentage share of votes received in local elections. Ward councillors are directly elected to represent wards (Barichievsky et al., 2005:378). They usually represent a political party, but may also stand as an independent or represent a local organisation, such as a Ratepayers Association. Because residents directly elect ward councillors, they are expected to be most accountable to communities. They are furthermore mandated to keep their communities informed of local government matters, as well as to channel local issues and concerns from communities to Council. One mechanism for doing so is through ward committees.

Ward committees are suggested, but not required by the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998a). Section 72(3) of the Act defines the purpose of ward committees as “enhancing participatory democracy” (ibid.). They are intended to provide a two-way channel between government and communities. They are also advisory structures, able to make recommendations to Council, but not make actual decisions (Lemanski, 2017:21). Ward committees are generally headed by the ward councillor as chairperson, plus a maximum of ten members, each of whom represents a particular sector (e.g. business, ratepayers, health,

youth), and are members of a registered civic or community organisation (RSA, 1998a: Section 73(2)). While the Act stipulates the general makeup of ward committees, it is up to municipalities to determine the requirements for ward committee membership, procedures for electing committee members, and the diversity of representation (*ibid.*).

Some metros have also introduced sub-council structures that add an additional layer between ward committees and Council (Buire, 2011:465). These are administrative structures, with each sub-council representing three to five wards. The sub-council is led by a sub-council manager who performs administrative oversight, and also involves the ward councillors from the wards within the sub-council, and a number of PR councillors appointed by Council. Sub-councils are also enabled through the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998a). Accordingly, a sub-council is purported to have “the power to make recommendations on any matter affecting the area; it can also in terms of law, be given delegated powers or be instructed to perform any duty of the Council” (RSA, 1998a: Section 64). In addition, sub-councils provide a kind of “one-stop shop” for any public or civil service issues, engaging with line departments and even able to ask for reports and updates on Council work in the area (Buire, 2011:468).

Since their inception, a range of issues related to ward councillors, ward committees and sub-councils have been documented, many echoing the constraints to participation in integrated development planning. According to a 2011 State of Cities Report (SACN, 2011:135), ward committees can be “slow, ineffectual or dysfunctional”. Ward councillors also have limited capacity to influence council decision-making on behalf of communities (Malabela & Ally, 2011:1). As Buire (2011:471) explains, “their options are either restricted, constrained, or proscribed”. These are, therefore, inadequate mechanisms for accountability, and instead produce a platform vulnerable to party dominance, clientelism and patronage (Piper & Deacon, 2008:61; Lemanski, 2017:30; Barichiev et al., 2005:382). In fact, local community or civic organisations may even oppose ward councillors and committees. Abahlali baseMjondolo in the eThekweni metro is a case in point, which has refused to recognise the legitimacy of councillors, alleging that they bribe residents through promises to put them on the housing waiting list (Schmidt, 2010:13).

Millstein (2010:17) furthermore questions the representativeness of ward committees. Where local government and ward councillors can decide how such committees should be constituted and who should be invited, it becomes unclear whether such structures adequately include and

represent the voices of the urban poor (ibid.). They have thus been described as having “fatal flaws in design which reduce them to toothless adjuncts of ward councillors” (Barichievsky et al., 2005:391). Similar critiques have been raised against sub-councils. According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008:285, cited in Buire, 2011:467), sub-council agendas are largely set by Council and the Mayoral Committee, rather than by local communities. This suggests, communities and civic actors are “relegated to the position of a passive recipient of pre-determined decisions, limited to offering endorsements rather than public engagement around prioritisation and actual decision-making” (ibid.).

Again, ward councillors and committees are not a direct focus in this study given the attention on City officials and their roles and experiences. In terms of participation mechanisms, this means the focus is rather on where and how citizens are involved in development projects and on-going service provisions.

3.3.3 Departmental projects and service delivery

Participatory structures and processes may be established as part of a range of City projects and service delivery, often managed by line departments. For metros this includes, inter alia, participation in the provision of: public housing; household services and infrastructure (such as electricity and street lighting, water and sanitation, refuse removal, storm water management, and municipal roads); public works (such as public transport and emergency and disaster management); and community facilities (such as libraries, parks and sports centres) (Chipkin, 2002:72). Participation in project and service delivery processes can take many forms, from making submissions into proposed by-laws, making requests for services through the IDP and budget process, giving comments or suggestions to proposed developments, completing satisfaction surveys, or engaging in a specific development project either in project (facility/service) design or through some form of co-production. These sit at different levels in Arnstein’s ladder of participation. The main focus in this study is on engagements in projects in informal settlement contexts (but not limited to a specific sector), although officials who participated in the research also represented a wider range of experiences and practices.

Chapter 1 contextualised the study in relation to urbanisation and informality. It is often in informal settlement contexts that City departments formally engage communities, whether as part of the provision of subsidised low-income housing or settlement upgrading, and/or the

provision and upgrading of public and social infrastructure. These processes are also often undertaken through provincial and/or national grants, such as the Human Settlements Development Grant (HSDG) via provincial government allocations, and the Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG) from national government, which provide for the implementation of housing programmes and projects, disaster management, basic utility services and infrastructure, as part of implementation of the national human settlements development programme.⁴⁷

Although methods and approaches vary, certain participatory models have become commonplace within project processes across sectors. These include, in particular, the use of beneficiary committees or project steering committees (PSCs), where affected or beneficiary communities (whether through individual or organisational representation) are brought into project decision-making processes. In this research, City officials referred mostly to project steering committees rather than beneficiary committees. In public housing projects, such committees are prescribed by the National Housing Code, although how these are to be instituted and members selected is left up to municipalities and, more specifically, to housing officials (Department of Human Settlements, 2009: Section 3.9:30; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:374). Another common structure is the Community Liaison Officer (CLO). The CLO is usually a resident of the affected community who is hired for the duration of a project to mediate between the City project team and the community. Project processes may also involve a relevant non-governmental organisation (NGO) or community-based organisation (CBO) in a partnership arrangement with the municipality.

⁴⁷ Municipalities raise revenues through three main sources: national and provincial transfers, property rates and service tariffs. In terms of national transfers, this includes the equitable share allocation, which is an unconditional grant determined on the basis of a number of factors (in particular the low-income population size). According to the Division of Revenue Bill (RSA, 2018: Schedule 1), in 2018, local government received approximately 4% (R62 billion) of the national revenue allocated through the equitable share (provincial received 31%, and national 65%). Municipalities can also receive conditional grants (such as the USDG from the Department of Human Settlements), where the use of funds is determined by the grant. Intergovernmental grants or transfers are, however, generally inadequate given the range of devolved or delegated responsibilities, particularly to address infrastructure backlogs, complete infrastructure projects, or provide services to informal settlements (Thornhill, 2011:51). Such ‘unfunded mandates’ thus present a major challenge (Massey, 2015:307; Ley, 2009:57). Municipalities are therefore ‘encouraged to be entrepreneurial’, with immense pressure to source income from local services and full cost recovery (Massey, 2015:307). The City in this study received approximately R2,5 billion from the equitable share to local government (RSA, 2018:Schedule 3). This constitutes 15% of its total revenues, with 49% of revenue flowing from service charges, and 21% from property rates (City, 2016/17). Annual operating expenditure in 2017 was estimated at R38,4 billion ,and capital expenditure at approximately R6,3 billion (ibid.). In terms of the latter, 29% was allocated to informal settlements, water and waste services, 29% to transport and urban development, 20% to energy, and 22% to ‘other’.

A considerable literature has examined the successes and challenges of participation in specific projects and services. Examples include participation in housing delivery and/or informal settlement upgrading programmes (e.g. Massey, 2015; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013; Tissington, 2012; Bolnick, 2012; Winkler, 2011; Ley, 2009); participation in service and infrastructure development projects (e.g. Smith, 2011); urban renewal initiatives (Matiashe & Sadien, 2017); area-based management (Beall, Parnell & Albertyn, 2015); and disaster management (Ziervogel, Waddell, Smit & Taylor, 2016). The literature largely concludes that participation in project processes is often non-existent, constrained by municipal procedural and supply chain requirements, or curbed through predetermined plans and delimited roles for community participants. Even in more ‘progressive’ *in situ* upgrading, this process can still be differently implemented with regard to participation: it can involve communities in a bottom-up and empowering way, but it more often remains top-down and “modernist” (Fieuw, 2015:60-61). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the literature on participation in each relevant sector or even metro, a few cases exemplify the trends with regards to methods and challenges.

Examining informal settlement upgrading in two informal settlements in Cape Town, Massey (2015:316) finds that the tendency is for government to approach the process through a technical and functional lens. Winkler (2011:262) similarly finds that officials involved in the relocation of five settlements as part of the City of Johannesburg’s 1995 Rapid Land Development Programme (RLDP), perceived the engagements with beneficiaries as “information dissemination and registration fora”, comprising “formal presentations of the layout plans” rather than discussion and negotiation of the proposed layouts, or of the exclusion of some households or the (for some unaffordable) “rent-to-buy schemes”. The process, in other words, was used “to fulfil the state’s predetermined beneficiary identification, relocation and integration concerns alone”, and not the “beneficiaries’ concerns and anxieties” (*ibid.*).⁴⁸

The example from Winkler is arguably out-dated given the extent to which housing policy and upgrading practices have shifted since the 1990s (see Huchzermeyer, 2006:41, Massey,

⁴⁸ Ultimately, the RLDP failed after it was abandoned following a shift in political leadership with the local government elections in December 1995 (Winkler, 2011:263).

2015:305). A counter example is Bolnick's (2012:63) analysis of the informal settlement "blocking-out" method of *in situ* upgrading that has been applied in Cape Town and Johannesburg through a partnership between the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and a number of other organisations and government departments. The process aims to engage community members more directly in all facets of the process through community-based household surveys and shack enumeration, establishing savings collective, and involving community architects in designing spatial and building layouts (ibid.:64-5). It may be argued, however, that this is the exception rather than the rule. And as will be discussed in Chapter 6, such partnership work does not always result in success but can create delays as well as side-line community interests.

In another example, the case of the Slovo Park informal settlement in Johannesburg illuminates how government can take a "top-down, consultant-driven approach" with "little to no engagement" (Bolnick, 2012:50). This was despite on-going efforts over several years by the Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF), a community-led, organised and democratically elected representative structure, to engage and collaborate with local and provincial government.

Even in cases where there are formal participatory structures and processes in place, however, challenges remain. In their analysis of ten public housing allocation projects in three municipalities (including one metro), Tapscott and Thompson (2013:374-378, 381) note a number of issues regarding the selection of beneficiaries, the relationship between beneficiary committees, project steering committees, and CLOs, and the limited prescribed role for communities in project decision-making. For instance, according to the authors, the selection of beneficiaries often occurs prior to the establishment of the beneficiary committee (ibid.:375). This is problematic if not all residents in the community would be able to benefit from the project and may therefore need to be relocated, and if the selection of beneficiaries is not responsive to social networks on the ground, or done in a transparent manner (ibid.). In fact, the broader community is usually only able to participate through a public meeting (ibid.), which was also confirmed in this study. Furthermore, communities may not be informed of the options available to them with respect to different housing types, and are unable to hold the municipality accountable in the implementation/delivery process, whether for delays or quality of materials (ibid.:381).

Xavier, Komendantova, Jarbandhan and Nel (2017) present an interesting analysis of public participation in ten large-scale infrastructure projects across the three spheres of government, including transport developments in Gauteng and Mangaung, and informal settlement upgrading in Cape Town. Although they consider the latter an example of success, they also find that participation is mostly organised with the objective to inform rather than engage stakeholders, and frequently takes place in an ad hoc and reactive manner in response to conflicts that emerge (ibid.:631).

Finally, in a more general study of participation in the City of Tshwane, Molepo, Maleka and Khalo (2015:345, 365) find that the City “does not always adhere to the constitutional and legislative requirements for public participation”, resulting in increased public protest. Moreover, the authors argue that this is “largely because of City officials’ lack of understanding the public participation processes”, including the content of relevant legislation (ibid.). The City also lacks a budget for public participation, and clear strategies for encouraging participation (ibid.:365).

These three areas of governance – city-wide planning, ward-based processes, and departmental projects and service delivery – provide a framing of the standard structures and processes of participation present in South African metros (although there may of course be variations). The extent to which these encompass well-developed and formalised mechanisms for participation may create the impression that engagement in these processes work to achieve participatory outcomes. However, as this section has pointed out, this is not necessarily the case. Whereas formal structures may be institutionalised and operational, the question remains of what happens in the spaces of participation that are created. Again, the limits of participation in the South African local government context have been comprehensively documented, as shown in this section. It is also evident in the continuing (and increasing) occurrence of public protests throughout the country. Together, these may suggest a failure on the part of local officials, as argued by Molepo et al. (2015:345).

However, there is limited research on the actual practices and experiences of officials in fulfilling the participation mandate (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:370). This brief review of existing studies do, however, point to potential challenges with regard to mobilising communities, structuring local committees, bringing communities or stakeholders together, and framing City and project agendas. It also raises questions regarding the way power relations may be mediated or transformed in the process, and the power-sharing responsibility

attributed to leaders of such processes in the public leadership literature. The next section turns to the international literature on participatory development, which problematises the theory and practice of participation, and provides an analytical framework that brings attention to issues of power and structure that permeate relations between formal government leaders and communities.

3.4 Problematising participation theory and practice

The theory and practice of participatory governance has roots in the field of participatory development, which reflects the extent to which participatory language and methods have been taken up in mainstream international development (Altschuler & Corrales, 2013:10; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014:1). This field has also been subject to extensive internal critique regarding issues of agency and how power operates in participatory discourse and practice (see for example, Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Rahnema, 2010; Lemanski, 2017:18). This section reviews key criticisms that foreground the way the analytical and theoretical literature frames the challenges of participation in terms of structural relations of power. This will provide a theoretical frame for examining officials' leadership practices and the power-balancing role and work attributed to leaders in the public leadership literature (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4).

3.4.1 Mainstreaming participation in development discourse and practice

The emergence of participation within development theory and practice has not followed a unilinear path (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:3). Rather, it has been characterised by varied methodologies and practices, intellectual perspectives and debates, and institutional agendas and political circumstances (ibid.). It is beyond the scope of this study to examine all of these in detail. For the purpose of this study, this section presents a brief overview of some of the main themes and debates.

The inclusion of participation in development theory and practice can be traced, firstly, to the 'community development' approaches that marked the 1940s-50s colonial period, as well as the 1960s-70s post-colonial period (Hickey & Mohan, 2005:6). In each of these, participation was led either by colonial or post-colonial governments in an effort to produce (and control) stable, self-reliant communities (ibid.:6, 9). Practically, these included participation for community members in training and education campaigns and in local development projects, often with cost-sharing components built into the design (ibid.).

Although not the focus here and addressed in detail in other sources (see for instance, Schuurman, 1993; Sachs, 2010; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014), it is worth noting briefly how the mainstream discourse of development also informed understandings and approaches to participation. According to Esteva (2010:8), development thinking in the 1950s emphasised economic growth, and this permeated into the top-down ‘modernisation’ strategies and so-called participatory programmes applied to the ‘Third World’ (see also Hickey & Mohan, 2004:9; Sinwell, 2009:51). In the 1960s and 70s, the failures of top-down development in meeting basic needs and addressing inequalities became increasingly evident, prompting the United Nations to recognise crucial ‘social’ aspects of development (Esteva, 2010:9-11).

At the same time, the 1960s and 70s saw the emergence of a range of ‘radical’ development scholars (particularly dependency theorists, Marxists, and anti-colonialists from ‘the South’). These scholars criticised the way intended project beneficiaries (usually poor communities) were not adequately engaged in local interventions, and how these interventions tended to reinforce the dominant structural flaws of the capitalist system (Sinwell, 2009:50). These flaws, also observed in South Africa, included state-driven processes of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003:34) through which land was taken away from rural communities and farmers to create a vast supply of cheap labour for capitalist production (Arrighi, Aschoff & Scully, 2010:412; see also, Legassick, 2016). It also included the geo-strategic global expansion of capital to contexts offering the lowest possible wage, often where it would be possible to shirk meeting the costs of social reproduction (i.e. not paying enough to meet the needs to raise a family) (ibid.:420; see also, Legassick, 1975:249; Hart, 2002).

It was in this context that critical development scholars interpreted the purpose and value of participation in terms of the ‘empowerment’ and ‘emancipation’ of poor and marginalised people, to be realised through their capacity to “confront the structures of oppression” (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:7). Paulo Freire’s notions of ‘critical consciousness’ and ‘conscientisation’, for example, emphasised the importance for marginalised people to understand the oppressive capitalist development structures and relations of power, and that such understanding would enable them to challenge, disrupt and transform those structures and relations (Sinwell, 2009:30, 52). Participation understood in this way is seen to have the potential of “undermining and potentially challenging the dominant political-economic order” (Sinwell, 2009:53). From this perspective, citizen voice and agency take on a much more far-

reaching transformative and political character, linking the expression of specific local concerns with a structural system that neglects and explicitly undermines those concerns.

Alongside these critical narratives, participation became mainstreamed into development discourse and practice in the 1980s. This was largely led by development professionals and agencies, as well as the established NGO sector, with a focus on incorporating participatory methods into project-level interventions (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:7, 11). Through these efforts, development actors claimed to address previous concerns in a number of ways. First, by emphasising “local realities” and the local distribution of resources and development. Second, by transforming the roles of development practitioners from that of experts to that of “facilitators” and “enablers” of local knowledge and capabilities. And finally, by giving ‘beneficiaries’ participatory roles within projects so that they may lobby for better distribution of resources and more socially just patterns of economic investment (ibid.). Development projects therefore increasingly applied methods of participatory rural appraisal (PRA), as popularised by Robert Chambers and articulated in his key texts, *Rural development: putting the last first* (1983), and *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last* (1997). Through this work, Chambers (1997:154-5) argued participatory development processes must enact role or “power reversals” (i.e. put the ‘last first’ and the ‘first last’), as a way of addressing the power differentials between “uppers” and “lowers”.⁴⁹

Despite the incorporation of participation into mainstream development practice, a new flood of critical scholarship emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This scholarship raised a number of concerns with this mainstreaming of participatory discourse and practice, noting in particular how the inclusion of formal structures and processes for participation has not realised the transformative potential attributed to it.

3.4.2 Critiques of participatory development practice and discourse

The critical participatory development scholarship at the turn of the century is marked by the seminal work, *Participation: the new tyranny*, edited by Cooke and Kothari (2001).

⁴⁹ Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) refers to an approach within rural development project process that introduced the direct involvement of local people in actual project activities. These included, for instance, community mapping and modelling, trend and change analysis, seasonal calendars, wealth and well-being ranking, etc. It was promoted as a way of empowering local communities and ensuring sustainability of local action and processes. For more information, see Chambers (1994).

Contributors to the text present a number of critiques regarding how issues of power underpin participatory practice and discourse, as well as the limitations of focusing on local participatory methods to unearth and address such issues. A key argument scholars raise is that participatory practices often fail to empower participants (as the subjects of development interventions) to influence decisions and resource distribution, and instead serve existing development objectives, entrenched power arrangements, and forms of exploitation.

This, it is argued, occurs in practice through the “tyranny of technique” (Cleaver, 2001:37-8), where the complexities of development and poverty reduction are reduced “to a series of methods and techniques” (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:369). This, in effect, depoliticises processes of development, thereby side-lining an understanding and experience of participation as a political process of empowerment (or disempowerment) (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11; Miraftab, 2009:34). In other words, the core assumptions of development as linked to economic growth, industrialisation and accumulation by dispossession remain uncontested (Mohanty, 2018:1, 33). Participatory processes thus concern only questions of implementation. Whilst the aims of technical efficiency and cost-effectiveness are neatly packaged within the language of “participation”, “empowerment” and community “buy-in” (Mosse, 2001:17), these terms become mere “buzzwords” stripped of their “transformatory edge” (Cleaver, 2001:37-8; see also Cooke & Kothari, 2001:14).⁵⁰

In conjunction with the above points, scholars direct their criticisms at the scholarship itself for emphasising local participatory methods and actors (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Accordingly, analyses of participation tend to explain its limitations in terms of an inappropriate selection and/or design of participatory methods, and the inadequate implementation of methods, particularly due to the shortcomings of local actors. Thus, project managers or local elites may be identified as ‘culprits’ who either manipulate the process or fail to engender inclusive behaviours and relations in the process (Goetz & Jenkins 2005:6-7). But such analyses provide only localised or individualised explanations, and do not sufficiently account for the ways wider structures may influence the exercise of agency at the local level (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11; Cleaver, 2001:39; Hildyard et al., 2001:69).

⁵⁰ Similar criticisms have been made of, for instance, the discourses of “good governance” and “social capital” (see Oldfield & Stokke, 2007), as well as of “accountability” (see Freedman & Schaaf, 2013).

For example, examining a Rainfed Farming Project in Western India, Mosse (2001, cited in Williams, 2004:569) concludes that the project was constrained, not due to the lack of effort by local actors, but due to how the project, like many others like it, was shaped by the agendas of donor organisations and government departments. These agendas constitute “deep-seated and structural” elements that shape both the project and the scope of individual and collective agency within it (Hildyard et al., 2001:59). Indeed, as Nelson and Wright (1995:6) explain, people are not “free-floating actors, each with different interests which they pursue by bargaining with each other in interactional space”; there is a certain “structural dominance” that enables the negotiating power of some and limits that of others (ibid.). The notion that ‘effective’ participation relies on the efforts of one or a few local agents is simply, as Williams (2004:569) describes it, a “mythic participatory ideal”.⁵¹ Blackburn and Holland (1998:5) similarly observe a shift in development thinking from an emphasis on structure (understood in terms of resource transfers, capital accumulation and managerial techniques), to a consideration of agency (as “the ability and will of individuals to act”). The debate between agency and the conditions that constrain it (i.e. structure) has thus become a central motif in development and participatory development literature (ibid.).

In addition to recognising the structural relations in place, it is also the content and purpose thereof that must be interrogated (Williams, 2004:573). In the example by Mosse et al. (2001), cited above, government and donor agendas are characterised by the pursuit of “efficient service delivery” and the maintenance of the status quo (Williams, 2004:569; Mirafab, 2009:34). According to Goetz and Jenkins (2005:6-7), structural biases against poor and marginalised social groups are often institutionalised in such a way that it constrains the ability, even of government actors, to recognise and respond to power imbalances and social injustice. In a more explicitly radical vein, Taylor (2001:124-5) claims development projects have as “overarching but often unstated objectives” – “to integrate beneficiaries into ‘national and international political, economic and ideological structures’ by creating rational farmers

⁵¹ This is not to remove the responsibility of individual leaders’ altogether. In humorous opinion piece in *The Daily Maverick*, an online platform for news and political analyses, Richard Poplak (2017) writes, with regard to a speech by the former president, Jacob Zuma: “He spoke about the many issues that had dogged his presidency, but he spoke about them like he’d had no influence over their outcome – as if the shitty economy, the slow pace of land reform, the terrible state of education, the gap between rich and poor, the racial discord, the gutting of state-owned institutions, all of it just happened.” Poplak further notes how the speech “portrayed the ANC (but more to the point, Zuma) as victims of the courts, Parliament, colonialism, factionalism, the ANC’s alliance partners, London, the media, the weather.”

increasing GDP, participants in the labour market, consumers for the products of capitalist production, and citizens of the institutions of the modern state”. Thus, part of the critique against the “tyranny of technique” is that this merely maintains, if not reinforces, existing power relations and structures, which further reproduce existing political, social and economic inequalities.

This internal critique against the scholarship points out how micro-studies of participation may fail to uncover broader structural dimensions (and their implicit political and ideological values) that delimit the scope of local engagements. According to Williams (2004:566):

Evaluations often revolve around whether particular techniques empower or discipline participants, and who and what gets represented within the events themselves. While these remain important questions for a self-critical development practice, the study of such immediate issues should not overshadow a wider analysis of the institutional contexts within which participatory development is located, and the imperatives for (and obstacles to) participation that these contexts produce.

The critique therefore shifts attention away from a focus on individual motivations and behaviours at the micro-level, to how these are situated in, and shaped by macro-level structures. This is not, however, to say micro-level studies are not important and instructive. Rather, as Booth (1993:62) argues, the key is not to reduce the macro to the micro, and to try to, “[disentangle] the invariably complex web of unintended consequences and feedback effects that form the link between action and structure”. Indeed, local, micro and actor studies can illuminate how macro-processes, structures and relations constrain local development possibilities (ibid.). The implication for an analysis of public leader practices, which focuses on the micro-level of participation, is thus to recognise and consider ‘external’ and broader structural influences.

3.4.3 Structural conditions of action and structural power

This conceptualisation of broader structures and structural dominance within the critical participatory development literature resonates with theoretical debates regarding the interrelation of structure and agency. Although clearly emphasising the importance of structure, the above articulation should not suggest a materialist conception that disregards the influence of agency, but rather as positing a kind of dialectical or interactive relation between the two (see in this regard, Marsh, 2010:213). For the purpose of this thesis, structure is understood as the context within which agents act (Marsh, 2010:219). This context manifests

materially in the physical world, and produce different opportunities and options to individuals depending on their circumstances and positions (Young, 2011:55). Such structural conditions also position people in relation to one another, which may occur on the basis of social positions of race, class or gender, for example, all of which shape expectations and possibilities of interaction (ibid.:57-9). This positioning of members of society enables some whilst constraining others. Stated otherwise, it allows that some people have more power in certain circumstances than others, and in effect reinforces the structural conditions that produce positional differences in the first place. In fact, these structural conditions enable some to have the power to determine the structure itself. This is explained by Susan Strange's (1998) concept of structural power.

Structural power means one party in a relationship has greater power relative to another party, if that party "is also determining the surrounding structure of the relationship" (Strange, 1998:25). That is, also determining how things will be done in the first place. Strange examines structural power at the macro-level as it pertains to the roles of markets and states, particularly to the structures of security, production, finance and knowledge (Strange, 1998). It therefore reflects macro-level conditions and relations of power that influence, if not establish, how nations, organisations and various other actors and processes relate to one another. Linking back to participation, this means those who are able to set the parameters of participation have greater structural power vis-à-vis those merely participating within those parameters. Efforts to address power imbalances in participation (whether in practice or in scholarship), should therefore also examine the structural power that some actors may have at the outset.

The concept of structural power frames the dynamics of participation and collaboration in a way that brings these issues of power and structural constraints to the fore. It has some resonance with the concept of positional power from the leadership literature; although positional power refers to the power one gains through a formal position of authority, whilst structural power refers to the power one has to determine "the surrounding structure of the relationship" (Strange, 1998:25). This power may be gained through one's positional power, but it may also be embedded in social, political and economic conditions that position people more generally in relation to one another. Both positional and personal power are also 'relational' in the sense that these refer to power enacted in relation to others/followers, rather than power exercised over structures or conditions of relation.

In summary, there has been considerable work done within the field of participatory development in response to these various critiques. These have included efforts to incorporate more political notions of agency, rights and citizenship within that of participation, and also to give greater attention to the structural dimensions and power issues therein (see for example, Gaventa, 2002; Gaventa, 2006a; Mohan & Hickey, 2004:66). One particularly relevant approach is that of Andrea Cornwall (2002, 2004, 2008) and the distinction she makes between invited and invented spaces. Through the metaphor of space, Cornwall picks up on the above critiques and dissects the issues in terms of those participatory projects and processes that are initiated, designed and led by the state or other institutional actors (e.g. funders, NGOs, etc.), in contrast to grassroots, community-based and social movement struggles. Given the focus of this study on formal, government-led participatory structures and processes, it is useful to consider her analysis in some detail.

3.4.4 Participation in invited and invented space

Cornwall's theorisation of participation presents an important critique of government-led and institutionalised mechanisms of participation (see Cornwall, 2002, 2004, 2008). Her distinction of invited and invented space has also become a popular framework for analysing participatory practices in both academic and policy literatures (Thompson, 2014:40).

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), Cornwall's starting point is that participation occurs in space. But this "space" is not simply the concrete, empty or seemingly neutral geographical locations that actors physically enter; these geographical spaces are also "social arenas" dynamically constructed and continually transformed by "power, voice and agency" (Cornwall, 2004:75, 80; Gaventa, 2002:11). According to Chouinard and Milley (2016:2), the spatial metaphor links space – understood in terms of time and place – with the processes that unfold "within" that space, and which are "saturated with multiple, contested and competing cultural, political and social narratives" (Cornwall, 2004, quoted in Chouinard & Milley, 2016:3). Space is therefore as much a setting as it is a performative social process, "constitutive as well as expressive of power relations" (Cornwall, 2004:83; Cornwall, 2008:275). This, Cornwall (ibid.) argues, brings attention to questions of agency, and the "strategies and tactics" possible or performed within participatory spaces, and on "the lived experience of particular spaces".

Through the metaphor of space, Cornwall distinguishes forms of participation on the basis of two types of space: “invented” and “invited”. She describes these respectively as:

spaces that are chosen, fashioned and claimed by those at the margins – those ‘sites of radical possibility’ – and spaces into which those who are considered marginal are invited (2004:78).

The former characterises “invented spaces”, which arise out of grassroots and community-based efforts and are, organic, transitory, “self-created” and bottom-up sites of “resistance” (Cornwall, 2002:3; Thompson, 2014:40). They are also “radical” insofar as they express efforts to transform existing structural relations and power inequalities (Miraftab, 2004a:4). “Invited spaces”, on the other hand, are those initiated and managed by governments or other formal organisations (e.g. donors, development institutions and practitioners, even civil society organisations) who are structurally in a dominant position vis-à-vis “those at the margins”. These may be described as forms of institutionalised, top-down or “induced participation”, or even “instruments for managed intervention” (Cornwall, 2002:3; 17-19). Rather than enabling radical change to prevailing conditions, these spaces provide “coping mechanisms” for the poor, intended to stabilise existing relations and thus maintain the status quo (Miraftab, 2004a:4).⁵²

Invited spaces do not, therefore, necessarily empower or support citizen agency. This is because those who initiate or create the space control the terms of participation. This includes what type of interaction is deemed legitimate within that space, as well as what concerns and issues are deemed relevant. In this way, the nature of the space determines, “how issues are debated, how different perspectives are viewed, whose participation is legitimate, and who gets to participate at all” (Cornwall, 2002:18). This makes it difficult to “transfer ownership” to participants in a way that would transform those very power relations (Cornwall 2008:275). Mosse (2001:20) makes a similar point when he describes participatory projects that “put emphasis on certain issues – e.g. soil fertility, when it could be something like wages and a different intervention could have been conceived”.

⁵² Gaventa (2006a) expands on Cornwall’s invited-invented distinction by proposing a “power cube” comprising three dimensions: closed, invited and created spaces; visible, hidden and invisible forms of power; and local, national and global levels of power.

Cornwall (2004:80) applies Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality to further describe how participatory spaces define the very boundaries of action in this way, and where invited spaces in particular aim to constitute participants as "governable subjects". It is therefore also through such participatory processes that the state exercises the power to govern appropriate ways of speaking, doing and thinking, in line with norms of "good citizenship" (Kothari, 2001:142; Lemanski, 2017:18; Masaki, 2010:119). One offshoot of this power of space is the way knowledge is understood and produced. Although 'local knowledge' is often believed to be at the heart of empowerment (Chambers, 1983:202; Cooke & Kothari, 2001:5), within invited spaces, external interests are likely to shape the contours of what is deemed relevant knowledge, as well as to shape the production of that knowledge (Kothari, 2001:141).⁵³ This issue has also been picked up in the South African informal settlement context by Storey (2014) in relation to the failure of local government to recognise local experiences of sanitation services as relevant 'data'. Thus, a key risk associated with invited spaces, as stated above, is the extent to which those who lead and control such spaces can deem certain types of knowledge, behaviour and forms of engagement as legitimate or illegitimate (Thompson, 2014:45; Miraftab & Wills, 2005:10).

This critique of invited spaces is relevant to the South African context where participatory governance means participation is conducted within the boundaries of formal, state-led structures. "It is the state", Kihato notes (2011:70-1), "that sets the nature and character of participation and decision-making, and determines when, where and how civil society (or others) engages with it". This is evident in the way the extensive policy and legislation discussed above stipulates participation requirements for local government, including structures, procedures and timeframes, as well as in the actual structures and processes that have been institutionalised in municipalities. The next section explores some of the broader structural aspects of the South African local government context that have been recognised in the literature as constraints to public participation.

⁵³ Kothari (2001:141) goes further, claiming, "the process of producing knowledge [...] reflects wider power relations in society".

3.4.5 Contextualising participation in South African local government

As noted previously, the ideals of local government reforms and the participatory governance mandate have not fully materialised in democratic South Africa, and the popular discourse around local government has increasingly been one of crisis (Millstein, 2010:22). Section 3.3 discussed a number of challenges within three main areas of local governance. These included: challenges with how communities are brought into project processes (e.g. failure to address community concerns within pre-decided plans, reactive and exclusive engagements); design flaws, politicisation and patronage networks undermining representative structures; as well as technocratic approaches to city-wide planning and an emphasis on physical delivery. This section expands the discussion by examining the broader structural conditions that influence participation in South African local government.

3.4.5.1 Structural conditions shaping participation in South African local government

Key structural conditions that have been recognised as having adverse effects on participation include the neoliberal policies of the ANC national government, the incorporation of New Public Management (NPM) principles and the concomitant institutionalisation of performance management systems and market-based mechanisms that orient local government towards physical and efficient service delivery (Bond & Dugard, 2008:15; Chipkin, 2011:35; Naidoo, 2015:438; Veriava, 2015:428).

The introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996 is generally regarded as the introduction of the ANC government's shift to neo-liberal policies, which replaced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as its socio-economic policy. Whilst the RDP emphasised redistribution over growth, GEAR turned the country towards greater "trade liberalisation, financial deregulation, export-oriented growth, privatisation, full cost recovery and a general rolling-back of the state" (McDonald & Smith, 2004:1461). Although scholars debate the extent of privatisation and commodification of basic services (Bond & Dugard, 2008:15), as well as the balance of pro-growth and pro-poor development efforts (Ley, 2009:147), this broader trajectory has impacted on the environment within which local governments operate, including available choices for policymakers and city managers (McDonald & Smith, 2004:1463). There is also a considerable literature describing local (and particularly metro) government policies and rationalities in similar terms, notably as "technocratic, functionalist, market-driven and neo-liberal, driven by the need for alignment with national policy documents, budgets, mandates and targets" (Massey,

2015:307). These tendencies are evident, for example, in the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a) and the Municipal Finance Management Act (RSA, 2003), particularly the emphasis on using external service delivery mechanisms.

It is also the performance management system, based on the results-based principles of NPM, which “guides the municipality’s strategic planning processes and controls its budgets” (Winkler, 2011:266). Although NPM was justified in light of perceived bureaucratic rigidities and inefficiencies (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012:3), it has also affected the form and impact of local participation. The first is the fixation with “solving overly technical or managerial problems”, or an approach to performance management through “technocratic managerialism” (Pieterse et al., 2008:18). Although Pieterse et al. (2008:18), describe this as a reaction to the complexity and uncertainty of development objectives and challenges in the post-apartheid era, the nature of the response has tended towards “apolitical debates about how to fix and finance services” (ibid.). On the administrative side, this has also comprised a strong emphasis on compliance (Van Donk, 2013:16), as well as upward accountability (Pieterse & Van Donk, 2008:64).

For senior managers, performance management has been structured around a set of quantitative service delivery targets, which has ultimately undermined the quality, depth and flexibility of participation (as these processes are often time-consuming and unpredictable) (Pieterse & Van Donk, 2008:64). In the effort to meet the technical requirements of the planning and performance management system, “officials resort to quick-fix, linear, and once-off initiatives” (Winkler, 2011:266). Participation therefore frequently serves to reduce diverse and complex local needs and ways of organising, into “manageable and quantifiable outcomes” (ibid.). What is lost is the opportunity for communities “to explore and resolve competing demands and trade-offs within themselves” (Pieterse et al., 2008:15).

At the same time, NPM relies on market-based mechanisms to ensure accountability to users and consumers, rather than democratic mechanisms of accountability to citizens (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012:3). At the heart of this has been the increased commodification of basic services and use of cost-recovery mechanisms, the logic of which many argue has come to define service delivery across the country (Naidoo, 2007:57; McDonald & Smith, 2004:1462). According to Heller (2013:56), this market orientation has reduced local government to a:

... bureaucratic and corporatist ... instrument for delivery rather than a forum for participation”, where efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of effective governance. There is, therefore, a “disconnect between institutional arrangements of the state, on one hand, and the ability of the poor and marginalised to get their voices heard, on the other (Kateshumbwa, 2012:no page).

Some scholars have further criticized a predominant ‘customer-centred’ orientation within local government (e.g. Storey, 2014:405; Naidoo, 2007:60). For Storey (2014), the focus on customers rather than citizens reflects the influence of market principles, through which citizen ‘agency’ is increasingly understood as payment for services (Storey, 2014:405; Naidoo, 2007:60). It also indicates the way in which the government-society relationship and interface is being shaped. In terms of individual paying customers, mechanisms of interaction tend to provide individual-based channels (e.g. to report service problems or grievances via text). Even though specific service issues may be individual concerns (Cornwall, 2002:17), in some contexts (e.g. informal settlements), these are often also shared concerns, but without adequate channels for collective agency and engagement. As Naidoo (2007:61) explains, “collective political demands” are converted into “individualised bureaucratic arrangements”. What is lost, in other words, is the role and value of participation as a process of engaging on “issues that structurally shape our society”, in favour of “patronising consultation” around service delivery (Oldfield, 2008:494; see also Pithouse, 2006; Smith, 2011). In summary, these various trends and tendencies constitute the broader structural conditions within which local officials operate, and may be described as the current ‘status quo’ in South Africa.

3.4.5.2 Alternative engagement approaches and invented spaces

That the state’s invited spaces are experienced as ineffective in addressing the needs and concerns of the poor is evidenced by the variety of alternative efforts emanating from communities themselves, taking the form of invented spaces (Miraftab & Wills, 2005:207). These include various community-based initiatives to monitor and oversee municipal services and performance (see in this regard, Storey, 2014), as well as more “defiant” forms of collective action, such as public protests and demonstrations (Bond & Mottiar, 2013:290), non-payment for services, and illegal connection and re-connection of services (Miraftab & Wills, 2005:207; Naidoo & Veriava, 2003:73). A range of local social movements and organisations, such as the Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and the Social Justice Coalition, have also either led or supported such efforts. Everatt, Marais and Dube (2010:224) describe some of these as “officially illegal yet morally appropriate

actions”. They are also examples of everyday forms and practices of participation that are emergent, dynamic and contextual.

Scholars have called for more attention to these collective initiatives and practices that fall outside the formal spaces of government (see for example Robins et al., 2008:1082; Oldfield & Stokke, 2007:144; Thompson & Nleya, 2010:224). However, it also remains important to continue to examine participation in local government’s invited spaces, for several reasons. First, government responsiveness remains a crucial component for citizen voice and influence (including responsiveness to citizens’ invented or claimed spaces) (Winkler, 2011; Gaventa, 2002). Second, ensuring the participation of communities through various invited spaces continue to be a central mandate for local government officials. And whilst research on participation has tended to focus on what citizens do as they struggle to realise their socioeconomic rights, the “supply side” of participation, in terms of the role of government, has received much less attention (Tapscott & Thompson, 2013:370). Finally, attending to the supply side of the equation surfaces questions and expectations around public leadership.

Calls for studies of leadership as it pertains to the challenges of local government have emphasised the need for attending to the “softer sides” of governance, such as values and relationships (Schmidt, 2010). But it is not immediately clear how leadership (or public leadership) in this context should or could navigate the issues of power and structure that permeate participation, as articulated through the critical participatory development literature. This raises the question of the scope for public leaders to address the challenges of participation. And further: to what extent are leadership practices, roles and challenges shaped by structural constraints and opportunities in the exercise of power? The final section of the chapter turns to studies of leadership in the South African local government and public sector context as a preliminary exploration of these questions.

3.5 Review of the South African public leadership literature

This final section examines the extent to which studies of leadership and public leadership⁵⁴ in South African local government address the context and challenges of public participation.

⁵⁴ The literature on leadership in the public sector, public administration or local government in South Africa does not necessarily distinguish ‘leadership’ and ‘public leadership’. Most scholars use the term ‘leadership’. In this section, the two terms are used interchangeably to refer to leadership in the public sector and local government context.

Studies of leadership in the South African public sector can be organised in multiple ways: the sphere of government, the sector, or the leadership theory. As will be discussed through this section, studies on ethical, transformational and servant leadership are common. Studies that focus on specific political leaders are also prevalent (see for example, Glad & Blanton, 1997; Rassool, 2008). Many studies focus on a specific sector such as health or education (see for example, Daire & Gilson, 2014; Sader, Odendal & Searle, 2005; Grant, 2005), whilst others examine leadership across a number of public institutions (Naidoo, 2005). In the latter, leadership is associated with governance and service delivery in general (Dorasamy, 2010). In relation to local government (as will be discussed below), there are a few conceptual analyses of leadership in local government, and a number of empirical studies of leadership in specific metros and municipalities. This literature is discussed in more detail in the next two sections.

Excluded from this review are studies of political leadership, although there is a notable literature on specific leaders or on local councillors (Mfene & Taylor, 2015; Ndlovu, 2015). A tangential literature is that of community leadership (Bénil-Gbaffou & Katsaura, 2014; Bénil-Gbaffou, 2010; Drivdal, 2016; du Plessis, 2008; Kirk & Shutte, 2004). Although this is also not explicitly included here, these studies are important given their attention to community leaders, who play an important role in participation. The next two sections explore how leadership is understood in relation to governance and service delivery, and the extent to which participation is recognised in the literature on local government. The concluding section discusses the links and gaps between these local studies of leadership and those of the international public leadership literature, as well as the connections and tensions between the theorisation of leadership and that of participation.

3.5.1 Defining public leadership in relation to governance and service delivery

Studies of leadership in the public sector or local government tend to frame leadership as necessary to overcome various internal governance and management issues, as well as to address broader, external governance and development challenges. Internally, these issues include, *inter alia*: policy incoherence; dysfunctional decision-making; shortage or misplacement of technical and managerial skills; political centralisation; political interference; political culture and patronage; poor accountability; corruption; and inefficiencies (Sewell, 2012:5; Koma, 2010:115; Ndlovu, 2015:40; Van Donk, 2012:13). More broadly, leadership is deemed necessary to address poverty and inequality through infrastructure development, service delivery and socio-economic upliftment (Dorasamy, 2010:2088; Govender, 2016:21).

It is also considered key for municipalities to adapt to the changing institutional and external environment, and to address the need for innovation and skills development (Pretorius & Schurink, 2007:20; Davids, 2015:46-7).

In the framing of leadership in relation to these challenges, scholars clearly associate leadership with organisational performance, organisational change, as well as broader social change. Whilst the main focus remains governance and service delivery, there is some recognition of the importance of participation and of public officials in the local government context.

3.5.2 Tracing participation in studies of local government leadership

The literature on leadership in local government is summarised in Table 3.3 below. As the table indicates, scholars recognise the importance of both political and administrative leadership, although most retain a focus on senior leaders (mayors, municipal managers and senior managers). Only a few of the empirical studies explore perceptions of leadership among a cross-section of administrative staff (e.g. Davids, 2015, Govender, 2017). Whilst all of the listed studies recognise the importance of participation in some form or another, none focus primarily on participation or the relationship between leadership and participation.

Table 3.3: Overview of studies of leadership in South African local government

Authors	Focus	Leader position	Leadership theory	Methodology	View of participation
Davids 2015	City of Cape Town	Administrative (Senior & middle managers)	Transformational leadership	Mixed methods; self-perceptions of leadership style	Political & managerial responsibility; about customer service & democratic voice
Edwards 2010	Local government	Political & administrative	Ethical and servant leadership	Conceptual	Community building as an outcome of service delivery
Govender 2017	Division within City of Johannesburg	Administrative (All staff in the division)	Transformational and empowering leadership	Quantitative	Customer service management
Madumo 2012	Local government in South Africa & Swaziland	Political & administrative (Mayor & municipal manager)	Leadership style (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire)	Conceptual	A means for goal attainment
Mthembu 2012	Buffalo City	Political & administrative	Leadership roles and traits	Qualitative	A way to ensure community buy-in; customer service

Ndlovu 2015	City of Tshwane	Political (Mayor & ward councillors)	Servant leadership	Quantitative citizen survey	Key to build trust & cultivate shared leadership
Schmidt 2010	Local government	Political & administrative	Six context-based themes	Conceptual	An integral part of democracy & development
Sindane & Nambalirwa 2012	Local government	Political & administrative	Public leadership as collective leadership	Conceptual	A mechanism for democratic voice & improving service delivery

The application of transformational, ethical and servant leadership typologies corroborate findings presented in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 that these constitute a major trend in studies of leadership in the public sector. These approaches also indicate a strong emphasis on the roles and qualities of individual leaders. One exception is the conceptual piece by Sindane and Nambalirwa (2012), which defines public leadership as a collective process. However, none of the listed studies approached leadership through a social constructionist and practice lens. Nevertheless, this literature provides a useful entry point to explore how participation – as a mandate and reality of local governance – is understood in relation to leadership.

As a starting point, Schmidt’s (2010:6) conceptual piece establishes leadership in local government as a research and policy gap. Local government reforms and provincial and national government support to municipalities, Schmidt (ibid.:7) argues, have tended to focus on addressing technical deficiencies and strengthening regulation of planning, budgeting, and financial management, with little if any attention to “the softer ‘leadership’ realm – where values, vision, commitment, motivation, energy, innovation, learning, relationships and trust – come into play”. He then points out critical areas for investigation, one of which is the way models of governance and leadership may inform how leaders understand and respond to issues, including participation (ibid.:10). Schmidt (ibid.:10-13) also notes a number of aspects that potentially shape participatory processes and leadership therein: the regulatory regime and its emphasis on compliance; the professional opinions of officials in decision-making; regional party structures and processes; and private interests. Although he does not go into detail in any of these matters, his chapter provides an important agenda-setting piece, and an interesting array of research and theorisation of leadership in local government has since emerged. The rest of this section reviews the most relevant studies in this regard.

3.5.2.1 How participation is understood

A review of the literature indicates that participation is understood in a variety of ways. It is associated with: participatory governance (Davids, 2015:44); democratic voice, rights and empowerment (Sindane & Nambalirwa, 2012:699; Davids, 2015:48; Ndlovu, 2012:22); the delivery and improvement of services (Edwards, 2010:103; Madumo, 2012:91); building community relationships (Edwards, 2010:95); and providing customer services (Govender, 2017:428). It is understood as a means for service delivery, goal attainment, and trust-building (Ndlovu, 2012:112; Madumo, 2012:91); but also as an outcome of “effective service delivery” and improved employee performance and motivation (Edwards, 2010:103).

In his study of transformational leadership in the City of Cape Town, Davids (2015:44) provides the most in-depth discussion of participation, recognising it as both a political and managerial responsibility. He also explores how the roles of citizens are understood differently through different governance paradigms, notably between a rules-based bureaucracy, the market-based perspective of new public management, and alternative approaches such as new public values and new public governance (2015:iii). The latter, he argues, posits citizens as “allies, partners and co-innovators”, rather than customers to be served (ibid.:52). Despite his discussion of participation, Davids’ study remains internally focused, analysing senior and middle manager perceptions and self-perceptions of organisational culture and leadership style (Davids, 2015:202, 205). Community participation thus remains a contextual and aspirational aspect of leadership, rather than a potentially integrated element in the leadership process.

3.5.2.2 The role of leadership and public officials in participation

In terms of the role of leadership for participation, the literature also emphasises political and administrative leadership to varying degrees (see column three of Table 3.3 above). Some authors recognise participation as both a political and managerial responsibility (Davids, 2015:44; Madumo; Edwards, 2010:94-5; Sindane & Nambalirwa, 2012:702); whilst Ndlovu (2012:42) and Mthembu (2012:28) emphasise the relationship between political leaders/councillors with communities.

Although participation is never the primary focus, the literature does recognise a distinct role of public leaders for participation. Through a New Public Values lens, Davids describes public administrators as “facilitator[s] of discourse and communication”, with the

responsibility “to prioritise equality among social groups”, as well as ensure empowerment through political and social participation (Davids, 2015:48). Sindane & Nambalirwa, (2012:699-700) similarly claim both politicians and public managers must address the failures of current participation mechanisms and the limitations of a customer-service orientation in order to enable poor communities to voice their interests and determine their needs. Citing Brooks (2008:701), they describe public leadership as “a form of collective leadership in which public bodies and agencies collaborate in achieving a shared vision” (ibid.). Their final emphasis is on the importance of objectivity and impartiality of public leaders, to remain service-oriented and uphold an attitude and sense of “duty” in promotion of “the public good” (ibid.:702).

Both Edwards (2010:94, 103) and Ndlovu (2012:39, 42) prescribe ethical and servant leadership typologies, noting in particular the link between servant leadership and building community relations, serving the needs and improving the lives of communities. Although Ndlovu (2012:22, 41) focuses on elected leaders (the Mayor and ward councillors) in the City of Tshwane, he calls communities both “owners of power” and “followers”, eliciting the leader-follower relation. He does not, however, consider any potential tensions or challenges this may create (in theory and/or practice) in how citizens take on these dual roles, or in the leader-follower relation. Madumo (2012:83) also explores the leader-follower relation, with a focus on executive mayors and municipal managers on the one hand, and municipal officials and the community, on the other. He calls for “strategic leadership” by the municipal manager to ensure proper skills development among staff, in order to achieve effective and efficient service delivery, as well as to “ensure consistent and sustainable goal attainment by encouraging the participation of the community” (ibid.:91). Although Madumo does not elaborate on this last point, this brief mention of participation seems to situate it within, and as a means to achieve, efficient service delivery.

3.5.2.3 Leadership and participation for the public good

Evident throughout the literature is how the articulation of participation and the leadership role therein, are informed by notions of efficient and effective service delivery as well as the public good. For instance, Edwards (2010:94-5, 103) defines ethical leadership as necessary for effective service delivery and good governance, and servant leadership as leadership “for the common good”. Although Edwards rightly recognises issues of power and self-interest that plague current leadership practices (leadership here being associated with formal

positions of power), he seems to gloss over the complexities of what “effective service delivery” and “good governance” entail as interpretations of the “common good”. He does give some indication of what this might entail when he defines unethical leadership as the inability “to create an institutional environment that encourages and promotes growth and development” (ibid.:103). But he neglects the way in which “growth and development” as institutional goals may be ambiguous and contested, if not problematic in serving the needs of the most poor and marginalised. He also seems to presuppose that “community building” and “community relationships” necessarily follow from “effective service delivery” (ibid.), but he does not unpack the role of community engagement in the process of service delivery in the first place. Analyses of the motivations behind public protest, for instance, provide evidence that community frustrations are not simply a matter of ineffective service delivery, but also the lack of community inclusion in governance and service delivery decision-making processes (Chigwata et al., 2017:15).

Madumo (2012:91) similarly seems to situate participation within, and as a means to achieve efficient service delivery. He, however, recognises the increasing number of public protests as signalling challenges and shortcomings in local government, especially poor or improper leadership (ibid.:87). But he does not discuss the complexities of participatory processes, how to navigate the nature and goals of participation vis-à-vis the attainment of predefined service delivery goals, or the relation between participation and leadership. These are not necessarily shortcomings as much as they reflect the tendency in much of the South African leadership literature to give prominence to the service delivery and governance mandate of municipalities and public leaders, rather than to the participatory element therein.

This section has examined the emerging literature on leadership in the South African local government sphere, and the extent to which participation is recognised as an important responsibility for public officials, as well as an area of concern. Although participation is in fact recognised by scholars as an important aspect of local governance and service delivery, it is rarely the primary focus in studies on leadership. Given the nature of the issues with participation noted in Section 3.3, it is also noteworthy that studies of leadership tend to focus on senior leaders, and apply typologies that emphasise individual leader qualities. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, there is a much broader range of leadership theories and approaches, with potential for elucidating the complexities of participatory contexts.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the concept and practice of participation. It first defined participation in terms of citizen agency and influence, as well as government accountability and responsiveness. Whilst this brings to the fore the ability of citizens to act and influence government decisions, it also emphasises the importance of working on “both sides of the equation” (Gaventa, 2002), giving attention to community and government actors alike, as well as the relations and interactions between them.

The chapter then traced these aspects of participation in the relevant legislative and policy documents for local government in South Africa, and examined how these have been formally prescribed and institutionalised through specific participatory structures and processes in this context. These structures and processes can be mapped in accordance with three areas of local governance: city-wide integrated development planning; ward and sub-council structures; and departmental projects and service delivery. Although participation has become fairly institutionalised across these areas, there is considerable evidence and literature pointing to numerous shortcomings of formal participation to enable citizen agency and enhance government responsiveness and accountability. This suggests merely having established structures and processes in place are insufficient for ensuring the realisation of participatory ideals and outcomes.

Arnstein’s (1969) theorisation of participation through the “ladder of participation” further emphasises the notion of citizen agency as an exercise of power and the effort to transform existing power relations. In addition, through the critical participatory development literature, this conceptualisation of citizen agency in terms of the transformation of power relations presents a view of participation as a political practice and process, rather than a technical or managerial one. Scholars in this literature have pointed to the transformational and emancipatory ideals embedded in the notion of participation: that poor communities would be able to determine decisions around the distribution of resources and broader economic patterns, and thus transform social conditions and relations. They have also, however, observed how such changes have failed to materialise through formal participatory development interventions, despite being framed through the language of participation. Participation is thus frequently reduced to technocratic efforts to ensure “buy-in”, thereby side-lining the very political nature of power and transformation.

This literature further underscores the extent to which micro-level participatory structures and processes (and the relations therein) remain situated in, and shaped by, macro-level structural conditions and power relations. The dynamics of participation at the local level must therefore be understood in relation to what Strange (1998) terms “structural power”. As the power to determine the structures within which interactions occur, structural power is arguably at the heart of power imbalances. This ‘power to structure’ can be understood as the power to influence the space of action itself. This resonates with Cornwall’s (2004) distinction between invited and invented spaces, and the argument that the initiator and leader of a participatory process ultimately sets the parameters of participation, including who and how to engage, and on what. The lack of structural power of those invited into the process serves to maintain existing power relations in favour of the initiators. The roles of the poor and marginalised in participatory processes are therefore often subject to, and circumscribed by, the structures of participation, the interests of those who determine those structures, and the broader socio-structural conditions that inform their positions in the first place.

The participatory development literature and the concept of structural power raises a number of questions regarding the roles and challenges for public leadership in participation, as well as its potential to balance unequal power relations. Insofar as power is understood as distributed across organisations and stakeholders, public leaders are expected to act without formal positional power or authority, and are purported to ‘navigate’ the complexities of participation and collaboration through key practices. The participatory development literature, however, brings attention to the potential influence of structural factors, and broader structural conditions and power relations, to inform leadership practices and agency. Furthermore, it shows the importance of structural power as a potential key element in public leader practices. In other words, the public leader practices may be said to encompass in different ways the practice of structuring the space of action, as an exercise of power.

Through the social constructionist lens, scholars examining public leadership in collaboration also recognise this. They note, for instance, how collaborative structures and processes dictate who can participate, who can influence the issues under discussion and the interpretation of problems, and how decisions are finally made. In the broader public leadership and leadership literatures, however, this perspective receives much less attention in comparison to the predominant emphasis on leader agency and individual leader traits, skills and behavioural styles. This is evident in the predominance of leader-centric typologies alongside the limited

application of collective, relational, constructionist and practice-oriented approaches, in both international and South African public leadership studies. Furthermore, where it is recognised, for instance with regard to the macro-environment of collaborative governance (see Chapter 2), the existence and persistence of this context is taken as a given. This is despite recognition of the different governance frameworks or institutional logics that create tensions between the goals of democratic processes and the aims of efficiency. Where the primary role of leadership is to “make things happen” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202), questions of doing ‘what’ and ‘for whom’ appear less central.

Bringing together the literatures on public leadership in collaboration and participatory development raises questions regarding the scope for public leader to address the challenges of participation. In particular, to what extent are the four public leader practices, as identified in Chapter 2, shaped by structural constraints and opportunities in the exercise of power? This is particularly relevant to the South African local government context given the mandate for local officials to initiate, design and lead participatory processes, the existence of well-established structures of participation, yet the general failure of these efforts to realise the ideals of participation as outlined in this chapter. These questions are addressed in the rest of this thesis through the analysis of officials’ practices in the context of local participation. The next chapter describes this study’s social constructionist paradigm, as well as the research design and methods of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the empirical component of the research was designed and conducted. Whilst leadership has been studied from numerous theoretical paradigms, this study follows a social constructionist approach. This aligns with the study's focus on practices and context, which is also suited by a qualitative case study design as this enables the exploration of unexpected contextual details, nuances and tensions. Qualitative research furthermore allows a more direct concern with the experiences and interpretations of participants than a large quantitative survey would. The case study in this research comprised a South African metropolitan municipality – 'the City' – that participated in a multi-year and multi-layered research project funded by the National Treasury's Cities Support Programme (CSP) and conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The data collection process relevant to this thesis included a series of interviews and focus groups that examined City officials' views, practices and challenges with public participation.

The data from the previous study was re-purposed for this dissertation, and re-analysed through the lens of public leadership and public leader practices, as well as the participatory development literature discussed in the previous chapter. Data analysis was conducted in an 'abductive' manner through a continual 'moving back and forth' between the empirical and the theoretical (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014:5; Klag & Langley, 2013:149). The chapter concludes with a reflection on the limitations of the research design and methods, the positionality of the researcher, and the ethics and trustworthiness of the research.

4.2 Theoretical paradigm

Ontological and epistemological paradigms underpin any research design and methods. A researcher's alignment to a particular perspective regarding reality and human nature (ontology), and what and how we can know (epistemology), direct "the way we view problems, ask questions, conduct research, construct theories, [and] create solutions" (Sorenson, Goethals & Haber, 2011:33). This section locates the study within a social constructionist ontology and epistemology, as well as in social constructionist approaches within leadership studies.

4.2.1 Social constructionist ontology

The social constructionist paradigm describes the philosophical foundations of this research. This paradigm includes a broad variety of positions, with links to phenomenology, postmodernism, critical theory and hermeneutics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009:23), and has emerged largely as an alternative to positivism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005:191). In particular, it challenges the notion that an objective reality exists in a coherent and stable form, and outside the realm of human inter-subjectivity and interpretation (ibid.). The origins of social constructionism are often ascribed to Berger and Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:173).⁵⁵ It has since evolved into one of the prevailing paradigms in the social and human sciences, and is increasingly recognised and applied in leadership studies as well (see for instance Ospina & Uhl-Bien's assessment of research paradigms in top leadership journals, 2012b:5).

The basic tenet of social constructionism can be summarised as follows: "people make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:173). In other words, the characteristics of the social world – meanings, concepts, structures, institutions, beliefs, behaviours, etc. – do not exist as independent or objective phenomena. Rather, these emerge from, and are shaped and defined through, myriad relationships and interactions. Social constructionists thus understand the social world as inter-subjective or relational, as well as fluid and "conflicting in all its messiness" (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b:16, 24). This paradigm brings social processes to the fore, where social order emerges as "an ongoing human product" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009:24).

The social constructionist paradigm does not necessarily posit that a world does not exist outside of human subjectivity or consciousness (Crotty, 1998:18-19). This study agrees with Crotty's (1998:63) assertion, made in *The Foundations of Social Research*, that, "to say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real". There are, indeed, different variants of social constructionism, including "moderate" (Järvensivu and Törnroos, 2010:100) and "realist" constructionism (Elder-Vass, 2012:9). It is therefore possible, according to Crotty, to maintain that a material reality exists outside the human mind, but it does not hold any objective meaning outside of social processes of meaning-making (Crotty,

⁵⁵ Although it is also rooted in symbolic interactionism and phenomenology (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:173).

1998:18-19). Crotty gives the example of a tree that certainly exists as a “real” thing, but “will hold very distinct meanings for different groups of people, for example, artists, loggers, or people with no other sources of heating” (Crafford, 2015:120; Crotty, 1998:68-9). The social constructionist stance, therefore, emphasises the contextual relations through which meaningful realities are produced, negotiated, contested and institutionalised (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:174; Berger & Luckmann, 1966:65). It acknowledges and focuses on how we co-construct reality by making sense of it.

4.2.2 Social constructionist epistemology

From an epistemological perspective, social constructionists allow that we cannot fully access and define reality (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b:14; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:174). Both research subjects and researchers remain embedded in social and cultural contexts, which are themselves changing over time. The world is thus not ‘out there’, waiting to be studied objectively, but is always “local and constructed” (Laverty, 2006:26). Given human embeddedness in this social world, there can always be different, if not competing, interpretations. As Grint (2005:1471) explains, “what counts as ‘true’, as ‘objective’ and as ‘fact’ are the result of contending accounts of ‘reality’”.

In contrast to positivist paradigms, social constructionism does not view data as something that can be gathered and systematised in a neutral and objective way (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:15). The aim of research is also not to identify and predict law-like structures and immanent truths of human behaviour (Holden & Lynch, 2004:403). Rather, research may aim to explore “how social constructions happen” or “how reality is socially constructed” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:15, 23), and to provide understandings of phenomena, where context and interpretation are significant aspects thereof. Scholars may therefore describe patterns and explain why and how phenomena are related, without attempting to describe specific causal relations (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b:21; see also Tourish & Barge, 2010:329). The role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge is to find helpful or insightful ways to explain what seems to be going on.

4.2.3 Social constructionist approaches in leadership

The social constructionist paradigm has gained some traction in leadership studies over the past few decades, especially as a response to more positivist orientations of mainstream leadership theories, which remain the norm (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183). Its application has

resulted in a literature that is “multifaceted, philosophically complex, and methodologically variant” (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:172, 177).

Leadership scholars working within a social constructionist perspective do not presume a singular, ‘natural’ essence of leadership (Ospina & Schall, 2001:3). It allows that articulations of ‘what’ leadership ‘is’ emerges and may change over time and across contexts (Crevani, 2011:26). For studies that take this approach, the purpose is not to describe or evaluate individual leaders, cognition or personalities (Drivdal, 2016:280), or to categorise leaders as good or bad, or to determine how much leaders matter, as is often the case (Collinson, 2005, 2014; Munro, 2008:163). Rather, they tend to avoid leader-centric approaches (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:175), and focus instead on how leaders and leadership are socially situated and constructed, and the processes and outcomes of interactions (Drivdal, 2014:6). This may include examining the “communicative practice of individuals and the construction of social arrangements” (Tourish & Barge, 2010:327). According to Eacott (2015:7), this is about observing “specific occurrences in organising” as moments of “situated action”. Scholars working within this paradigm may therefore explore “what challenges, tensions, and paradoxes constitute the way leadership is constructed and the consequences it invites” (Tourish & Barge, (2010:333), or “how actors read their situation and surroundings and how this, in turn affects what they do” (Munro, 2008:163). Such an approach further attends to “the how and the why behind the what” (Dodge, Ospina & Foldy, 2005:289).

This theoretical approach also informs the level of analysis with regard to the leadership construct. This may involve examining leadership through a focus on collective processes or practices, as well as recognising the constitutive role of context. Some scholars posit ‘the situation’ as the unit of analysis, with the aim to articulate “the multiple voices that comprise a situation” (Tourish & Barge, 2010:334-5; see also Grint, 2005, 2011). The level or unit of analysis of this study is individual leader practices. This provides an entry point for examining how practices are socially constructed through various actors, but also through relations and structures.⁵⁶ Thus, the scope of analysis extends beyond the individual as well.

⁵⁶ In leadership studies, levels of units or analyses have included persons, dyads, groups and collectives (Dionne et al., 2014:8). In their review article, “A 25-year perspective on levels of analysis in leadership research”, Dionne et al. (2014:30), call for scholars to apply multi-level frameworks in order to account for the complexity of organisations and the relations across what are often organic and flexible organisational levels and units.

In this case, officials' reported perceptions and experiences are understood as situated expressions of organisational and social cultures, arrangements and relations, rather than 'truths' about either leadership (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2003:365) or participation. These are "both pragmatic and symbolic reflections of contextual and historical norms/discourses" (Drivdal, 2014:7).

The shift towards examining practices, processes and relations is also evident, although less prominent, in public leadership studies. In their analysis of nearly 800 journal articles on the topic of leadership in public administration, in all years up to and including 2011, Vogel and Masal (2015:1183) find that public leadership studies pay insufficient attention to social constructionist and relational approaches. Similarly, in their review of leadership studies within public administration journals between 1987 and 2012, Chapman et al. (2015:8, 11, 13), find "little consistency" in how leadership is theorised and operationalised. However, they also find "30 per cent of the articles examine leadership as either a narrative or a process rather than as discrete variables" (ibid.:11), thus indicating some incorporation of more constructionist and relational approaches.

4.3 Research design and data collection methods

This study involved the re-purposing of data collected through a completed research project on community participation and engagement in a South African metro. The original study was conducted during 2015 and 2016 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), as part of the Cities Support Programme (CSP) led by National Treasury. The aim of the project was to support South African cities to review their existing approaches to participation and engagement, and to experiment with alternative methods. The project comprised several phases, including a general review of metro government and civil society experiences with participation and engagement that included a series of interviews with officials from each of the nine metros as well as with civil society representatives. This was followed by more in-depth research in one metro, which took the form of action research through the piloting of a community-based monitoring initiative in partnership with key departments and officials in the metro. The final phase involved extensive interviews and focus groups with officials from the metro (beyond those involved in the pilot) to assess their views and participatory strategies and practices. It is this final phase of research that formed the basis of this study.

The original study was designed as a qualitative case study, and the primary data collection methods were interviews and focus groups. This is represented in Figure 4.1 below. This

original research design and methods employed are suitable for answering the research question of this study, and is in line with the social constructionist paradigm.

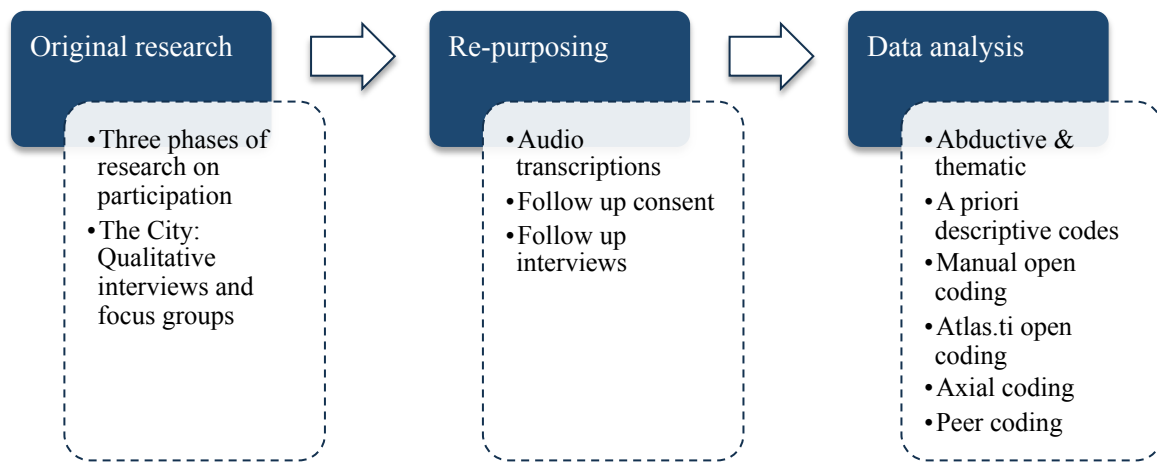


Figure 4.1: Overview of research design and methodology

4.3.1 Re-purposing data

Re-purposing or re-using data is not unheard of in research.⁵⁷ As a form of secondary analysis, it may involve re-analysing data in order to validate the original findings, re-analysing data according to a new research question, or re-analysing data from someone else’s research project and potentially combining it with data from other sources (Hammersley, 2010:2). In this case, re-using and re-purposing data involved the re-analysis of data according to a new research question.

The original research used semi-structured interviews and focus groups (see Appendix B for the questionnaire) to inquire into City officials’ perceptions, practices and constraints with regard to public participation. This makes it directly relevant to the research question of this study, although the original study purpose and analysis did not examine leadership as such. In fact, specific leadership themes were largely absent from the study. The analysis of practices in and for participation were, however, understood to involve leadership practices based on: (1) the formal leadership roles of officials in initiating, designing and leading participation in

⁵⁷ In the SAGE Open 2017 Special Issue on Reusing Qualitative Data, Bishop and Kuula-Lummi (2017:1-2) trace the practice of data re-use to better data sharing practices and capabilities. First described as “secondary analysis”, the authors acknowledge a 2004 chapter by Corti and Thompson in the Sage publication, *Qualitative Research Practice* (updated in 2011) as one of the first examples. Silverman’s 2011 textbook, *Qualitative Research*, also includes a chapter on the re-use of qualitative data. Bishop and Kuula-Lummi conclude that qualitative data reuse has become “an established and recognized research method” (ibid.).

the City; and (2) the identification of similar key practices in the public leadership literature. That leadership was not explicitly addressed in the research was also counter-balanced through the inductive analysis of officials' reported practices and challenges, in order to infer key factors informing the social construction of their practices.

There are a number of potential issues and risks that could arise when re-purposing data. First, ethical concerns may be raised with regard to the protection of participant confidentiality and anonymity, especially if data are made publicly available for wider use by others (O'Conner & Goodwin, 2010:7). This was not a risk in this study as an additional ethical clearance process was undertaken. Both the City and the Human Sciences Research Council, as the research organisation that conducted the original project, agreed to the use of the data for the purpose of this dissertation. From the City, the Executive Director: Directorate of the Mayor granted overall permission (on condition that the City not be named), whilst most individual participants also provided written consent to use their recorded interviews. Only five participants either did not provide consent or were unreachable.

A second concern with repurposing data is epistemological and relates to the collection and interpretation of data. A potential risk is that the researcher does not have the same access to and knowledge of the original research context within which to interpret the data (Mauthner, Parry & Backett-Milburn, 1998:733; Bishop, 2014:170). However, as I was part of the original research process, this is not applicable in this case. I was part of both the conceptualisation and implementation of the research from 2014 to 2016. This involved developing questions for the interviews and focus groups, conducting interviews, and analysing the data. A similar argument regarding lack of sufficient access could, however, still be made since I worked within a team of researchers and did not conduct all the interviews myself. Although working in a research team can have shortcomings, this is not an unusual way to conduct research (O'Conner & Goodwin, 2010:9). It can, in fact, be a helpful way to create "analytical distance" (Mason, 2007:3) and enhance critical reflexivity. Indeed, the original research process involved inputs from colleagues on the interview questions to be asked, the respondents to be included, and the interpretation of the data. The process of 're-purposing' the data also involved re-listening to every recorded interview and focus group, transcribing and re-reading transcriptions, and even conducting follow-up interviews with key individuals in order to fill particular gaps.

Alongside these practicalities of collecting and interpreting data, a further epistemological question concerns how data is collected, generated and analysed in the first place. Mason (2007:3), for instance, challenges the view that “only those involved in initial data generation can understand the context enough to interpret the data.” This, he argues, is anti-historical and also incorrectly privileges the reflexivity of the original researchers (ibid). Hammersley (2010:1) similarly points out while data may be collected, any analysis is always a construction, and thus the original process of analysis should not be granted any ‘better’ or different epistemic status than a re-analysis or re-construction thereof (see also Bishop, 2014:170). This is of course within the scope of what questions the data are able to address (ibid.:3). On this latter point, the limitations of the data in answering the research question are discussed in Section 4.5.1 below, as well as in Chapter 8.

4.3.2 Qualitative research design

Qualitative research endeavours to examine and understand phenomena, particularly “how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives” (Berg, 2001:7; Creswell, 2014:19). Its aims are therefore distinct from those of quantitative research, which aims to measure particular phenomenal properties, or to test particular hypotheses. Qualitative research instead allows researchers to explore the complexities, intricacies and contours of social processes (Berg, 2001:7), with an emphasis on rich description and understanding of everyday practices, which cannot necessarily be reduced to set variables and quantities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:12). In this way, a qualitative design aligns with the social constructionist paradigm.

Empirical studies in leadership are often quantitative, with researchers conducting large surveys based on particular leadership typologies and focused on a single level of analysis (Conger, 1998:109; Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden & Hu, 2014:53). However, qualitative methods are becoming increasingly recognised as relevant and appropriate (Antonakis et al., 2004:54; Bryman, 2004:749). According to Conger (1998:107, 109), qualitative research “is the methodology of choice for topics as contextually rich as leadership”, especially to examine how it involves multiple levels of phenomena. Vogel and Masal (2015:1180) have made similar claims regarding public leadership studies, noting that qualitative studies are better suited to examine the complex relationships between multiple aspects or variables of leadership.

A qualitative research design is also most appropriate given the aims of this research, which is not to apply or test a specific leadership theory, but rather to explore and describe the

perspectives, practices and contexts of public leaders in relation to participation. A qualitative approach can provide rich experiences and “unexpected insights” into the dynamics and nuances of leadership practices – what people do and how and why they do it, and thus illuminate how leadership is socially constructed (Wang, 2012:50). It can also open up opportunities for further probing, elaboration and reflection from participants (ibid.).

4.3.3 A case study approach

The original research project comprised a case study that explored – through interviews, focus groups, workshops and document analysis – the City’s various mechanisms and challenges with participation. However, re-purposing only the interview and focus group data for the purpose of this thesis, and under the conditions of anonymity as required by the City, limited the scope for a full case study analysis. There are therefore limitations to the case study approach undertaken in the research for this thesis. It is necessary to acknowledge these limitations, and to consider the extent to which the study may be described differently.

A case study refers to the in-depth study of a social phenomenon or component thereof, be it a specific society, community, organisation, process, person, policy, programme or institution, etc. (Thomas, 2011:512). Case studies are particularly suited to the study of a phenomenon in context, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context might not be immediately clear (Yin, 2009:18). Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:30) use the term ‘site’ to capture the fact that individual cases always occur in a particular context. Indeed, case studies are often used in qualitative research to explore the details of how things happen in order to better understand the broader context (Munro, 2008:129), and to allow for unexpected aspects of phenomena to emerge (George and Bennett, 2004:21). Thus it enables detailed examination of individual experiences, as well as of relationships, processes and contextual elements that form the substance and broader picture of those experiences (Stake, 2005:445). According to Vogel and Masal (2015:1180), more qualitative case studies are needed in the study of public leadership in order to account for the more complex relationships between, in particular, the processes and contexts of leadership.

Given the attention of this research to leadership and participation in context, a case study reflects the approach taken. It falls within what Stake (2005:445) describes as an instrumental case, where the aim is to gain insight into an issue or problem through the case, rather than an intrinsic case that is itself of particular interest. In other words, the City in this thesis plays a support role towards advancing understanding of the problems with participation and public

leadership, rather than understanding of the City itself. It may constitute a typical example of these problems, but also not necessarily (ibid.).

Case study research generally involves the collection of multiple forms and sources of data as well as repeated observation (Jansen, 2010:17). In this research, however, only interview and focus group material collected over a brief period was used. Although three follow-up interviews were conducted a year later, the main source of material is the original data collected through this method. The anonymity requirements from the City also made it especially difficult to include any analysis of City documentation. Given the limited reliance on multiple sources and forms of data, the research approach may also be described as a qualitative survey.

Although surveys are often associated with quantitative research, the qualitative survey has been identified as a legitimate research design in its own right (see for example, Fink, 2003; Jansen, 2010; Crafford, 2015). A qualitative survey is defined as “a systematic collection of information from a sample of people from a larger population”, with the aim of covering the diversity of the population and describing their diversity (Jansen, 2010:17). The sources of data collected in a qualitative survey are therefore limited, and the timespan of the research is also much briefer than would be expected in a case study (ibid.:18). A qualitative survey is further distinguished from a quantitative survey in that the qualitative approach still prioritises contextualisation over generalisation, and thus does not involve statistical analysis to identify frequency distribution (Crafford, 2015:123; Fink, 2003:61). Whether qualitative surveys take the form of written responses or interviews and focus groups seems to be a matter of debate. Berg (2001:71) for example contrasts qualitative interviews and “questionnaire surveys”, although allows that such surveys may capture linguistic rather than numerical results. In this research, interviews and focus groups were guided by a set of semi-structured questions that elicited specific responses that fit within predetermined categories, but also allowed participants to answer as widely as they preferred. It therefore has elements of a qualitative survey, conducted through interviews and focus groups as the primary method of data collection.

This research veers away from a qualitative survey, however, given the sampling methods employed. Whereas a qualitative survey relies on purposive sampling on the basis of identification of the population and diversity therein, this study relied on purposive, snowball and convenience sampling. Finally, although a qualitative survey is suited to obtain detailed

information on individuals' feelings, opinions, and the meanings they attach to their experiences, in their own words (Fink, 2003:62), Jansen (2010: 17) explains it is not ideal for the analysis of social structures and processes, or patterns of interaction, as one would glean through an ethnographic approach. In this regard, this research tends towards the case study design. Given the overall aims, sampling procedures and data collection and analysis methods underpinning this thesis, the overall design may be described as a qualitative survey within a case study. Notwithstanding the limitations of the research as a case study, for the purpose of simplicity, it will hereafter be referred to as a case study, with the City constituting the overall case.

The 'case' in this thesis is the South African metropolitan municipality ('the City') that participated in the original project. The City was selected due to the willingness and interest of senior officials to reflect on and experiment with participatory methods, as well as the support of the City's political leadership for the research. It was therefore not chosen based on its performance with regard to participation and whether it does so "successfully" or not. The City did have various formal participatory structures and processes in place at the time, but was also experiencing 'backlash' from various communities and civic actors, in the form of public protest and other civic initiatives. Officials therefore recognised (to the researchers at the time) that the City was experiencing challenges with regard to participation and engagement.

The focus of this research is on the City's various structures and processes of participation, through the lens of City officials' perceptions, practices and experiences. The thesis does not present a complete "thick description" (Geertz, 1973:7) of the City's institutional or participatory governance culture, nor of any one particular participatory process. Rather, the aim is to describe leadership practices in and for participation, taking into account the various contextual relations and structures within which the practices occur. This includes a variety of participatory projects and processes in the City, over an extended period of time (as presented by officials in their interviews and focus groups), and as part of the broader participatory governance approach within the City. In accordance with the focus of the research, the study was not confined to practices within the organisation, but was specifically interested in officials' practices with external stakeholders and communities. Defining the stakeholders, communities and project examples (including temporal and geographical focus) was left up to

interviewees in order to allow the multiplicity of experiences and individual perceptions to guide discussions.

4.3.4 Research methods: Interviews and focus groups

The primary research methods used in this study were interviews and focus groups. The focus groups included small group discussions with City officials (often from the same department). This section describes the sample of City officials who participated in the research, how data was collected in interviews and focus groups, including the broad questions comprising the semi-structured questionnaire.

4.3.4.1 Research sample

A mixture of purposive, snowball and convenience sampling was used to select officials for interviews and focus groups. The objective was to engage officials from a broad range of departments and units, and from across the administrative hierarchy, in order to ensure the research investigated participation across different governance processes, from planning to project implementation and on-going service delivery. It was also important to include any departments with a specific role in participation (e.g. Public Participation Unit, Communications and Media unit, and Integrated Development Planning unit). Provincial and national government departments were excluded given the study's focus on the relation between the local government and its citizens/communities (i.e. downward accountability).

The City's Strategic Policy Unit in the Directorate of the Mayor was the main point of contact and support for the research. The researchers identified key departments and positions for interviews, and where needed, the Strategic Policy Unit assisted with securing interviews. The Unit also provided valuable insight into additional directorates, departments and units to be approached. The City's Public Participation Unit was also supportive, both in participating in interviews and in assisting to identify further departments and officials to contact. In addition, interviewees were asked to recommend any officials who they believed could provide valuable insights to the study. Figure 4.2 below lists the departments and units who participated in the original research. A total of 64 officials participated, and of these, 59 agreed to the use of their interview for the purposes of this study. Appendix A provides a complete reference list of the interviews and focus groups.

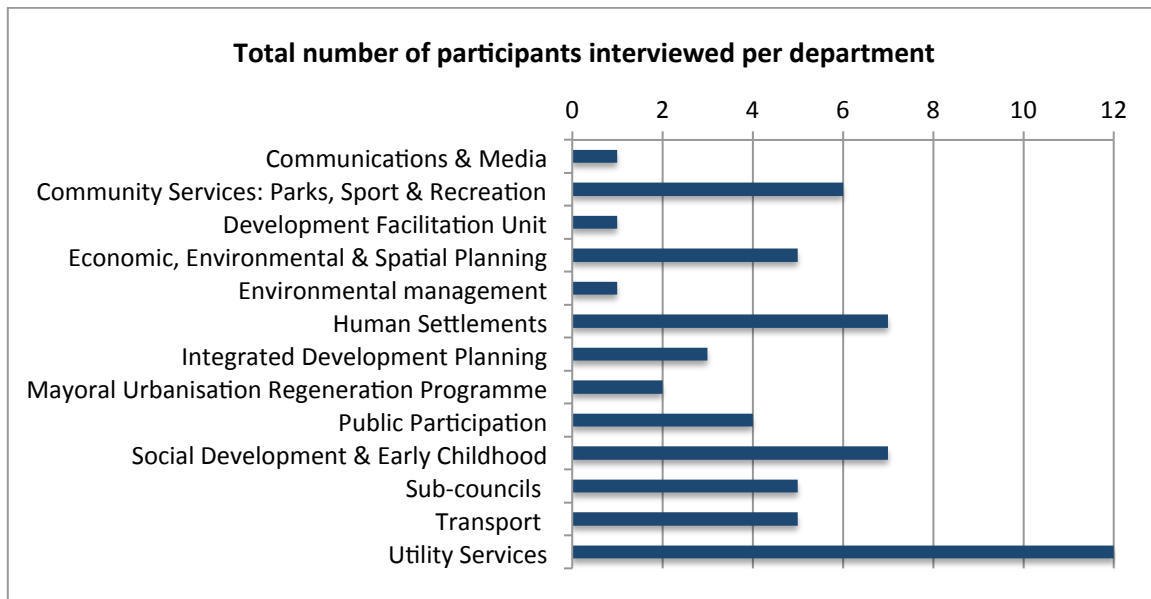


Figure 4.2: Total number of research participants per department

As the figure indicates, key departments included were line departments, corporate units and sub-council structures. Line departments are generally expected to involve communities in their project and service delivery work, whilst some corporate departments are specifically involved in communications, special projects and public participation. Finally, the sub-council structures (cluster managers and managers) participated due to the key role they play in bridging communities and the administration.

Higher-level interviewees, such as Executive Directors and Directors, were specifically approached for individual interviews. Focus groups were used within specific departments or units when convenient, and provided a space for participants to interact with one another and together discuss and reflect on the questions. The focus group approach illuminated where there was camaraderie and shared experiences among officials, and, in some cases, where there were clear differences in interpretation and opinion regarding the City's approach and performance regarding participation.

4.3.4.2 Data collection: Interviews and focus groups

Interviewees were contacted via email by an HSRC researcher. I was responsible for developing the interview questionnaire, which was then reviewed and refined by fellow researchers in the project. Whilst the questionnaire was standardised and used in all interviews and focus groups, where relevant, certain aspects were adapted to particular

departments and structures (e.g. for the Public Participation Unit and for sub-council managers) that have a specific, unique role and responsibility in participation.

The HSRC research team comprised four researchers (including myself and the project leader). Interviews were conducted over a period of four months (April – July 2016), and were conducted either in pairs, by the project leader, or by myself. All interviews were audio recorded. Table 4.1 below presents the summary of the number of people who participated in an interview or focus group in each department and who also gave approval for the re-use of data for this study.

Table 4.1: Number of interviews and focus groups per department

Department	Number of individual interviews	Number of focus groups	Total number of participants
Communications and Media	1		1
Community Services: Parks; Sport, Recreation and Amenities		2	6
Development Facilitation Unit	1		1
Economic, Environmental and Spatial Planning	1	1	5*
Environmental management	1		1
Human Settlements	2	2	7*
Integrated Development Plan Unit		1	3
Mayoral Urbanisation Regeneration Programme	2		2
Public Participation Unit	2	1	4
Social Development and Early Childhood Development		1	7
Sub-councils	3	1	5
Transport	1	1	5*
Utility Services		4	12
Total participants:			59

*Where follow-up interviews were conducted with one person in each department.

Three follow-up interviews were also conducted as part of this study. Interviewees were identified based on the information given in their original contributions, and the identification of areas for further investigation and points of clarity.

The interviews and focus groups focused on four broad questions:

- How do you understand public participation/community engagement in your work?

- What institutional arrangements, methodologies and practices do you utilise in public participation/community engagement?
- How do you evaluate the success or impact of your participation/engagement efforts?
- What are the institutional challenges and good practices that you encounter?

The research design meant data was collected retrospectively and based on City officials' narratives and reflections of their experiences and practices. It did not examine actual interactions and dialogical practices, although it did allow for the analysis of officials' discursive practices and the surfacing of the 'official narrative' regarding participation. Appendix B presents the standard interview and focus group questionnaire that was used for the research. Through the course of conducting the interviews, I was responsible for collating and reviewing the data as it was being collected. With the project leader, the emerging findings were subjected to on-going discussion and reflection in order to delineate key findings in line with the objectives of the original project (more details on this are provided in Section 4.4.1 below).

4.4 Data analysis

In this study, analysing data and generating knowledge followed an abductive (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014:5; Klag & Langley, 2013:149) or adaptive (Layder, 1998:37) analytical approach. This involved an iterative process of moving between the empirical and theoretical, or between observation and theorisation. Whilst, traditionally, research is considered to be either deductive (theory testing) or inductive (theory generating), it is also increasingly recognised that these approaches are more fluid and interlinked in practice (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014:2). Thus, the theoretical background and knowledge of the researcher informs the kinds of questions that are posed, and the ways that empirical information is interpreted. Conversely, empirical material, although interpreted, also provides a basis for reflecting back on theory.

The extent of this moving back and forth between the empirical and theoretical especially comes to the fore in the process of data analysis. In qualitative data analysis, this involves a process of condensing, interpreting and transforming data through systematic coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:12, 73). Since this study emanated out of prior years of my research on local government and public participation, and encompassed the re-analysis of existing data, the excursions into theory (and leadership theory in particular) were informed

by my empirical observations, whilst the theory, in turn, continued to shape my readings and interpretation of the empirical material. The data analysis process is presented in the figure below, which involved abductive analysis through a priori descriptive coding, open coding and thematic/axial coding, which was conducted through both manual coding of hard copy transcripts and eventual coding in Atlas.ti software. This process is discussed in the next four sub-sections.

4.4.1 Overview of the data analysis process

In the original research study, the data were analysed with the aim of delineating officials' views and experiences. The data were organised and analysed descriptively per question (a process that I led), discussed within the research team, and presented to the client in a final report. The report summarised the various aspects of how officials understand and implement participation, how they evaluate participation, and what they experience as the main constraints and challenges to participation.

Although the depth and framing of the analysis for the purpose of this thesis was different, this first 'round' of analysis allowed me to become quite familiar with the data. At the same time, the data analysis for this thesis commenced nearly six months after completing the original data analysis and reporting. This distance away from the material therefore also enabled renewed reflection and interpretation. By this time, my reading and attention in the realm of theory included, inter alia, critical and relational leadership theories, studies in public leadership and leadership practices, as well as more critical studies of participation and participatory development. Thus, while this thesis retains the interest in officials' views and experiences of participation, the data is approached through a different, and more critical, theoretical framework.

The data analysis process began with data organising. Not all the interviews and focus groups had been transcribed (or transcribed verbatim) during the original project, and it was therefore necessary to ensure this was done. I transcribed several interviews verbatim, and also hired outside assistance. I continued to listen to each interview recording over the course of the next year. I then analysed the data per transcript (rather than per question as before), which provided a sense of officials' experiences within particular departments, as well as with particular kinds of governance processes and forms participation. These also allowed for the identification of themes across the interview questions and across separate interviews. Where focus groups were conducted, the audio recordings also provided a reminder of some of the

dynamics in the room during the discussions, and pointed to areas of dissonance among officials.

4.4.2 From manual to Atlas.ti coding

I began the data analysis process with five interview transcripts. I first read through printed versions of the transcripts and then conducted manual open coding. Doing manual coding on hard copies provided tangible, visual access to the data. Practically, this made it easier to: flip through the pages and potentially see connections across the text as a whole; see specific parts of the text within its broader context; and place texts/transcripts next to one another for further thematic analysis. Once the manual coding of the five interviews was complete, the codes were transferred into the original Microsoft Word documents. The codes and relevant data extracts were also transferred into Microsoft Excel in order to more easily combine and compare across the transcripts. However, this three-step process and the amount of coded data this produced quickly became unwieldy and difficult to manage. I therefore decided to use Atlas.ti.

For the already analysed transcripts, this involved transferring the manually written codes into the software. This process also allowed for refining codes and identifying further codes. Although this was a tedious process, it allowed me to become more familiar with the data. Using Atlas.ti also made it easier to move across documents, extract codes and quotes from the data, and probe into specific themes. However, over the course of the process and duration of the study, I continued to return to hard copy transcripts, especially to re-read lengthier sections of text and to remain attentive to the broader contexts of specific quotes and text segments. The rest of this section describes the open and axial coding processes in more detail.

4.4.3 Descriptive open coding

The interview and focus group data provided insights into the perceptions, narratives and practices of officials regarding several aspects of participation in the City. This included: (1) the existing structures and processes of participation in the City; (2) how officials perceive the purpose of participation, and the roles and responsibilities of officials and communities therein; (3) how officials initiate, design and lead participation; and (4) what they experience as key constraints on participation (whether individual, institutional, social, political, etc.).

Given these multiple aspects to be gleaned from the data, I created two layers of what Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:74) refer to as *a priori* descriptive codes, in order to organise the data. This first layer of codes comprised: “PP (public participation) purpose”; “City PP practices”; and “City constraints”. This is shown in the first column in Table 4.2 below. The second column in Table 4.2 below shows how the *a priori* descriptive codes were combined with open coding in a data-driven way. This included a form of ‘process coding’ or ‘action coding’ to identify “observable or conceptual action in the data” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:75). This was done predominantly at a semantic level, where codes were informed by the language and content of the interviewees’ responses, with less interpretative analysis at this stage. Codes were assigned to any amount of text or chunk of data, from one word or one sentence to longer paragraphs, or even exchanges between different respondents. Where multiple meanings or interpretations were evident, several codes were applied to a single piece of text.

Table 4.2: Summary of A priori and open codes used in data analysis

A priori codes	Open codes
PP purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PP purpose: buy-in • PP purpose: consensus • PP purpose: educate & behaviour change • PP purpose: compliance • PP purpose: community involvement
City PP practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City PP practice: advertise • City PP practice: balance interests • City PP practice: introduce contractor • City PP practice: identify representatives • City PP practice: listen • City PP practice: manage relationships • City PP practice: setup steering committee • City PP practice: hold meetings • City PP practice: set agenda
City constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City constraints: institutional • City constraints: community responsiveness • City constraints: leadership • City constraints: legal • City constraints: trust • City constraints: resources • City constraints: safety

Not all open codes were attached to these descriptive codes. Open codes that were not categorised by the descriptive codes included thematic codes such as ‘voice’, ‘bureaucracy’,

‘accountability’, and were applied either when the exact word was used, or when it could be inferred from the content.

A process of review followed this initial stage of coding. This included defining the codes more precisely and then revising and ‘cleaning’ the codes where necessary (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:81-2). For instance, I had applied a large number of open codes to the ‘City constraints’ category that needed further sub-categorisation. A wider variety of sub-codes were therefore applied. I also checked for any duplicates or codes that could be combined or separated out. In addition, brief memos were written per transcript. This was intended to capture any salient issues, additional commentary and preliminary analyses, questions or ideas that emerged in the analysis process.

4.4.4 Axial coding to identify themes across the data

The second stage of coding involved the development of axial codes from the open codes. Axial coding (or abstracting) was used to explore the possible ways the identified sub-themes and concepts interrelate, and to identify a “core category or construct around which the other concepts revolve” (Goulding, 2002:78). For instance, the data pertaining to officials’ views on the purpose of participation, organised under “PP purpose”, were reviewed and organised into broader categories. These revealed different values and objectives that could be attached to participation. These are presented in Chapter 5, and included: compliance; democratic empowerment; customer service; project and service delivery; and labour brokering. The categories used to capture these differences were not part of the interview questions (which were much more open-ended), and yet these different ways of understanding the purpose of participation were clearly evident in the data, and also correspond with existing theories and debates in the participation literature.

A similar process was followed with officials’ reported practices, as well as their discussions on the practices of others (e.g. communities, community leaders, ward councillors, etc.). The data pertaining to officials’ practices were extensive and varied. Here the public leadership literature (and some community leadership studies in the South African context) were used to extrapolate potential axial codes from the open codes. During the coding stages, I also continued to read across the leadership and public leadership literatures, and thus the identification of key leader practices (as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.5) emerged in an iterative and abductive way. In other words, whilst reading both transcripts and academic

articles, I noticed resonances between the key practices officials were describing in their talk, and the key practices identified by public leadership scholars.

One of the challenges I had with organising the practice codes was that participation is such a broad mandate for officials, and applied across a variety of governance and development processes. These could therefore also be organised according to participation as a form of communication, as part of long-term planning and budgeting, as a component of individual capital projects, or as an aspect of on-going maintenance, repair and management. Some interviewees also provided extensive information on specific projects, whereas others gave insights into how they do things more generally. It was therefore necessary to decide how to combine these different kinds of information. I opted to use the areas governance as the first organising category, and include both general reflections and project-specific examples within these.

Finally, at an early stage of the coding process, I asked two colleagues to each review and code three transcripts in order to enhance the validity of the study. One colleague had been part of the original research project and thus had some familiarity with the data. The other colleague had not been part of the original research, but is a qualitative researcher with experience in coding this type of data. Their inputs confirmed the relevance and reliability of the codes I had developed, and helped identify some further codes and nuances that had not yet been considered.

In summary, the coding and data analysis involved an iterative and interactive process of capturing emergent ideas, impressions and questions through repeated readings, writing, and trial and error. It confirmed Klag and Langley's (2013:150) claim that qualitative research often involves a "conceptual leap" that emerges through the combination of imagination and discipline, "seeing" and "articulating".

4.5 Reflections on research design, ethics and trustworthiness

This final section of the chapter reflects on the limitations of the study, particularly in the research design and data collection methods. This is followed by a discussion on the positionality of the researcher in relation to the study. This is an important component of research conducted within a social constructionist paradigm that recognises the role of the researcher in the design, frame and analysis of the research. The final two sections examine ethics and trustworthiness.

4.5.1 Study limitations

There were a number of limitations to the research, specifically in the sampling and data collection methods. With regard to the sample of participants, the officials who participated included a range of senior, middle and lower management staff. It did not, however, include on-the-ground technicians or any councillors (i.e. political representatives). Yet their experiences could have provided additional perspectives regarding the relations and interactions between local government and communities within project delivery processes. Also, neither the Executive Mayor nor the Municipal Manager were interviewed, even though studies in public leadership often focus on these two positions as the primary leaders of a municipality. However, the study was specifically interested in the experiences of local officials across frontline and corporate departments at different managerial levels, thus justifying this focus. By the time I embarked on follow-up interviews for this research, the municipality was also facing a number of governance crises that made it difficult to approach the Executive Mayor or Municipal Manager. In addition to internal stakeholders, the sample also excluded various external stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, community-based organisations and community leaders. Again, this is a gap in collecting a broad variety of perspectives on how the City engages citizens and communities. Nevertheless, there is considerable research and literature on public participation in South Africa, and in this City in particular, that brings the community and civil society perspective to the fore. This literature was used to fill this gap.

The collection of data through interviews and focus groups also presented certain limitations. One of the risks of these methods is that participants will simply say what they think the interviewer wants to hear, or what they believe would be socially acceptable answers (i.e., ‘social desirability bias’). It is then the job of the interviewer to build a sufficient rapport with participants and to prompt them to speak freely. The fact that the interviews were conducted under the auspices of the Cities Support Programme, an initiative of National Treasury, and supported by the Directorate of the Mayor, may have influenced interviewees’ perceptions of the research objectives. Still, that many expressed frustrations, either with how the City does things, or with how communities do things, may indicate some level of honesty from participants.

A second limitation of the interview and focus group method is that this relies on participants’ reported views and practices. Because participants were sometimes recounting past

experiences, they may not have fully remembered what happened. Such reported practices also do not provide the researcher with insights into the ways communicative practices (between officials, councillors, community leaders and residents) unfold as they occur. Ethnographic research and the observation of practices *in situ* would have enabled such a closer examination. The current data therefore raises a number of further questions regarding the intricacies of how officials do certain things, and how decisions are shaped over time.

In addition, the fact that the interviews and focus groups were conducted by different researchers means that each discussion was subject to the different positions and interpretations of the researchers in the room, and their inclinations to follow-up responses in particular ways. Although the audio recordings allowed me to listen to all the interviews and to pick up on interviewees' tones of voice as well as tensions within focus groups, I could not observe their physical behaviour and body language. Conducting research through a research team in this manner will always bring particular benefits and limitations to the study. Personally, this provided me an opportunity to learn and reflect on the processes of conducting research as a team, the importance of recording research design decisions, and of continually discussing and managing data collection methods and techniques.

Finally, the permission granted by the City for use of the original research data for the purpose of this thesis was granted on condition that the City's name and brand not be used. This has limited the extent to which the City could be properly contextualised and some of the more interesting details of the City's political leadership, spatial development planning and cross-sectoral relationships could be explored.

4.5.2 Ethical considerations

The original research project conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council was subject to specific ethical guidelines and procedures. The research received ethical approval from the HSRC Research Ethics Committee, as well as approval from the City. In order to re-purpose the data for this thesis, a research proposal was also submitted to the University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee for further ethical clearance. The University of Pretoria's Policy on Research Ethics and Research Ethics Application process address issues of confidentiality of information and protection of privacy, procedures for obtaining informed consent, conflict of interest, and safekeeping of data. Through this process, the study received formal, written permission from the HSRC, the City and each individual participant to re-use the data for the purposes of this study.

Permission from the City was obtained at an organisational level (from the Directorate of the Mayor), and from each individual participant. The permission from the City was provided on the condition that the name and brand of the City not be used. In respect of this condition, certain contextual and historical details of the City have also not been included, although this has limited the depth of the analysis possible. At an individual level, each person who participated in the original research was approached by email, phone and, where possible, in person, with a new information and consent form (see Appendix C for the information and consent form). The form described the aims of the study, as well as terms of confidentiality and safekeeping of data. For the purpose of confidentiality, no names are used in this thesis; rather, codes have been applied to each interviewee, focus group and focus group participant. These are reference as ‘Int#:pg’ and ‘Fg#:pg’ (e.g. Int3:15 and Fg2:7), for interviews and focus groups respectively. As far as possible, identification of departments and individuals has been limited to the general mandate (e.g. frontline services, corporate) and managerial level (e.g. executive director, project manager, etc.) of the participant. Some of the findings and discussions in the following chapters indicate specific services or projects (e.g. road, housing, electricity, public transport, etc.), where the inclusion of the reference code to the interview would make it possible to identify the relevant department and potentially even the individual official. In such instances, references to interviews or focus groups have been excluded in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality.

4.5.3 Position of the researcher

It is necessary to acknowledge and reflect on my role in this research. The researcher can influence and shape the research in many ways; this is an indelible part of qualitative studies, and the social constructionist paradigm in particular (Guba & Lincoln, 2005:210). As Munro (2008:167) points out, “in the same way that actors are understood as situated agents, the researcher should similarly be acknowledged and conceived as a situated researcher.” This ‘situatedness’ informs one’s research interests and research questions, the kind of rapport one may build with interviewees, and how the information received from interviewees is responded to and interpreted.

A couple of years before embarking on this research, I attended a public meeting hosted by a social movement organisation working on sanitation issues in the township and informal settlement of Khayelitsha. In attendance were community residents, senior political and administrative leadership of the municipality, as well as civil society ‘observers’. The purpose

of the meeting was to present findings from a series of community-based audits that had been conducted around sanitation services. I was struck by the stark disconnect between the social activists on the one hand, and the City leaders, on the other. They seemed to be speaking past each other, even speaking in different languages (figuratively but also literally, and using different interpreters in the process). I had the privilege to meet with both the social activists and some of the senior officials, separately and on several occasions. Again, the disconnect was illuminating. In light of the social activist critiques of the government agenda and politics, I developed an interest in the public administration experience, especially of officials who must implement engagement processes and services apart from high-level political decision-making, and in the face of the distrust and disappointment from citizens, communities and local activists. Whilst I agree with the social justice cause of the organisation, as well as their criticisms of the state, one of my ‘hypotheses’ at the time was that the organisational and political context constrains City officials in ways that citizens and communities may not necessarily grasp fully. My original interest in this research was therefore to give voice to these experiences.

My experiences in designing and facilitating engagements between City officials and community leaders (as part of an earlier phase of the original HSRC research project) also provided me with additional insights into the complexities and difficulties of ‘designing for participation’. Whilst the original project objective was to create a platform for communities to have a meaningful voice, where City officials would hear and listen, the practicalities of doing so seemed to inevitably define the contours of what is acceptable as ‘engagement’, and what is not. This brought to the fore the way in which existing power relations and differences may remain in place and even be reinforced, despite the best intentions to transform them.

4.5.4 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is an important aspect of ensuring the rigour of the research and the value of the findings (Krefting, 1991:215). Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are four criteria regarded as key to ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:24).

4.5.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth value of the findings (Krefting, 1991:215), or the extent to which the findings are congruent with reality (Shenton, 2004:64) and resonate with relevant

audiences (Dodge et al., 2005:295). Since social constructionist and qualitative research recognises there is not one truth or reality, the role of the researcher is to represent the multiple realities of participants “as adequately as possible” (Krefting, 1991:215). Qualitative findings are therefore deemed credible when others who share that experience can relate to the interpretation thereof (Cope, 2014:89).

A number of strategies to ensure credibility were applied in this research. First, the original research project involved an action research project with City officials and community leaders, and which created relationships of trust and camaraderie. An effort was made to include these officials in the interviews that comprised the basis of this study. This created a type of “prolonged field experience” (Krefting, 1991:215) that made these officials more comfortable to speak openly and honestly, and for the researcher to pick up potential inconsistencies. This also provided the researcher with additional insight into the culture of the organisation (Shenton, 2004:65). In many of the interviews, hypothetical cases were also used to elicit more detailed or reflective responses.

To ensure the credibility of the analysis, a variety of sources were used to triangulate the data (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:313). This included the primary interviews and focus groups, follow-up interviews, and secondary literature. Peer examination, member checks and researcher reflections (Shenton, 2004:67) were also conducted. Peer examination was used in the development of the research instruments, as well as in the coding stages of the analysis. Draft findings chapters were shared with select participants to review and provide member checks. Finally, credibility is addressed through the presentation of rich and vivid quotes (in Chapters 5 and 6) to give substantive evidence for the interpretation of themes (Cope, 2014:90).

4.5.4.2 Transferability

Transferability (or applicability) refers to the relevance of the findings to other contexts (Krefting, 1991:216). In quantitative research this is referred to as generalisability, but the ability to generalise to larger populations is not necessarily the objective of a qualitative study (Shenton, 2004:69). Although a relevant question to ask of qualitative research is whether the findings are transferable to other contexts, Shenton (2004:70) cautions against an over-emphasis on transferability that may undermine the significance of contextual factors. In this regard, it is important to be clear about the boundaries and conditions of the study to enable comparison with other studies or situations (*ibid.*). For Miles, Huberman and Saldaña

(2014:314), this could involve detailed description of the original sample, settings, research process and limits.

In order to ensure transferability of the study, detailed documentation of the research process and decisions are provided in Sections 4.3 and 4.4 above. Details of the City as the research site had to be limited to the general local government/metro government context, and to the descriptive analyses in Chapters 5 and 6. Follow-up interviews with key informants were also conducted and provide a form of ‘member-checking’ (Krefting, 1991:221) through which to test and further explore certain interpretations of the original interviews, which is also a way to strengthen transferability.

4.5.4.3 Dependability

The third criterion, dependability, relates to the consistency of findings, with the expectation that a replication of the study would provide the same results (Krefting, 1991:216). In qualitative research, the phenomena under study are likely dynamic rather than static, and therefore it may not be reasonable to expect a repeat of the study to obtain the exact same results (Shenton, 2004:71). What becomes important, however, is to ensure the study is replicable, as well as to be able to account, as much as possible, for variation in findings (Krefting, 1991:216). In this regard, it is necessary to sufficiently document the research methods, as done in Sections 4.3 and 4.4. This requires addressing any potential issues of bias, whether due to access to the research site, potential influence of researchers on data collection through reflexivity, or practical issues in documentation of methods (Dodge et al., 2005:295).

Another useful strategy to ensure consistency of findings and to account for variations is to follow a “code-recode” process (Krefting, 1991:221). In this study, a code-recode approach emerged practically by accident. Changing the analysis approach from hard copies to Atlas.ti provided an opportunity to re-code those transcripts, thereby validating but also improving the original interpretation of the data and codes used. I also went back to the original transcripts and audio recordings several times throughout the course of the study, to re-listen, re-read and re-analyse the data again. In this regard I have tried to present the methods and data analysis process in as much detail as possible.

4.5.4.4 Confirmability

The final criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability. In quantitative research, this is about researcher neutrality and objectivity (Krefting, 1991:216). In qualitative research, the researcher is understood to be part of the social construction of the research, thus it is recognised that research is not wholly neutral or objective. It is still possible and important, however, to protect against researcher bias (Shenton, 2004:72). Factors that could potentially influence the research process include the researcher's emotional involvement in the topic or research site, how interactions with participants are conducted, and presuppositions formed through the reading of literature (Morrow, 2005:254). There are a number of ways to protect against any such undue influence. Again, the triangulation of data sources can strengthen confirmability (Krefting, 1991:221), as do the use of relevant quotes (Cope, 2014:90). Detailed description of procedures, and consideration of different interpretations or conclusions can also indicate confirmability (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:312).

In this study, the fact that the original research was designed and conducted by a team of qualitative researchers helped to mitigate against excessive influence of a single researcher on the data (Krefting, 1991:221). Reflexive analysis (see section 4.5.2) was also used to acknowledge my personal and intellectual interests and influences as the lens through which I undertook this study. I have also tried to explain the process of analysis interpretation, and the rationale behind specific choices made in relation to the data. These are important aspects for addressing potential researcher bias (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:312).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has located the study within a social constructionist paradigm, and described its qualitative case study research design. Together these provide the foundations for examining how leadership practices emerge, are conducted and shaped in a City context. Insofar as the study involved the re-purposing of data collected through a previous research project, the contribution of this study has been to re-analyse the data through the lens of public leader practices, alongside the critical participatory development literature. The data collection comprised semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 59 City officials, with three additional follow-up interviews conducted for the purpose of this thesis. Together, these interviews explored City officials' views, practices and experiences with public participation, and provided a range of retrospective individual and shared accounts thereof. Through open and axial descriptive and thematic coding, the data were analysed with the aim to identify

officials' perceptions of the purpose of participation, the main City structures and processes in place (and their functioning), as well as key practices and constraints in initiating, designing and leading participatory processes.

The next two chapters present the key findings that emerged from the data analysis. Chapter 5 unpacks how officials understand the purpose, aims and value of participation. It also describes the City's formal participation structures and processes in line with the key governance processes defined in Chapter 3. The chapter's descriptive analysis sets the basis for Chapter 6, which develops a deeper examination of officials' leadership practices in project processes.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: STRUCTURES, PROCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION

5.1 Introduction

Participatory practices in South African metros have been institutionalised through a range of structures and processes. The first part of this chapter examines officials' views regarding the purpose and value of participation and engagement. This is an important indicator of how officials understand their roles, and the roles and relations between the City and communities in participatory processes. As the chapter will show, although officials understand participation and engagement in a variety of ways, they hold predominantly instrumental views and perceive the purpose of engagement in terms of project and service delivery success. The chapter also indicates what officials believe the outcomes of participation ought to be and what the City's participation agenda is, both of which are likely to inform their practices.

The second part of the chapter describes the City's current participatory governance system, and begins to delineate City officials' key practices and challenges in designing and implementing participatory processes. It is divided into three sections reflecting the three areas of local governance where the City engages citizens, communities and civic actors (as defined in Chapter 3 Section 3.3). At the city-wide level, the City invites citizens to participate in its integrated development planning and budgeting processes. This is where the City formally frames, sets, and pursues the agenda for local development. At the ward committee and sub-council level, councillors and community representatives identify and inform priorities for specific investments and projects. Citizens are also able to raise issues or make service delivery requests via these structures. Finally, at the departmental level, officials identify and inform investment and project priorities, and decide how to bring citizens and communities into the planning and implementation of these processes. The City also has a number of additional structures and platforms in place to support engagement and communication, and these are discussed in relation to the above processes.

The chapter elucidates a City environment characterised by multiple institutional logics, but also a predominant emphasis on compliance and efficient and effective service delivery. And whilst the City has a comprehensive range of structures and processes in place for participation, officials noted a number of issues and limitations that suggest these are

inadequate for eliciting community inputs and translating these into policy outcomes. The chapter therefore raises questions regarding how this context informs the roles and practices of City officials in project processes.

5.2 Perceptions of the purpose and value of participation and engagement

Many officials distinguish between “public participation”, as that which is defined in national policy and legislation, and “engagement” or “community engagement”, as the various ways in which officials involve citizens in actual projects and service delivery (Fg11:1-2; Fg2:1-2; Fg4:1-4; Int12:6; Fg5:3). Officials in this case study also generally associate participation with five different outcomes: legal compliance; democratic empowerment; customer service; project and service delivery; and labour brokering and employment creation. Among these, officials primarily understand engagement in terms of project and service delivery. This may be attributable to their role as “implementing agents” (Fg2:20) for government policy, where project and service delivery is their primary mandate. However, some officials do recognise the democratic ideals embedded in the notion of engagement, and the limitations of mere compliance practices. Each of these understandings also reflects a particular form of relation between the City and local communities, as well as a particular type of change the engagement is expected to achieve. The section examines each understanding of the objective and value of participation/engagement, and its associated relation and type of change.

5.2.1 To comply with policy and legislation

Many officials generally agree that the City overall undertakes “public participation” as a matter of legislative compliance (Int12:8; Int13:8; Fg4; Fg1; Fg6:2).⁵⁸ This applies to city-wide planning and budgeting processes, opportunities for public comment (e.g. on draft by-laws), and project implementation across departments and sectors. Officials are required, for instance, to advertise invitations to public meetings and opportunities for comments in specific sites (e.g. two local newspapers and local libraries), and for a designated period of time (Fg4; Int16:11).

⁵⁸ This has also been recognised in the literature on participation in South Africa. See, for example, van Donk (2013:16), who describes compliance in relation to participation as a pervasive feature of local government culture. This has also been recognised in the National Development Plan (NDP) (NPC, 2011:275).

There is a sense among officials that these prescribed procedures, and the emphasis on compliance therewith, is both ineffective and constraining (Fg4:7; Fg6:10; Int16:16; Fg1:16). Strict adherence to the prescribed time periods for advertising and public commenting, for instance, limits officials' flexibility (Fg4:16). Using the required platforms for advertising also does not sufficiently reach or encourage community involvement in projects (Int17:4). A lot of time and resources can therefore be spent on circulating documents and requesting public inputs, but "without it necessarily being useful" (Fg5:3). Inputs received in this way may be "passive" and "arbitrary" (Fg5:3). One official connected this with an overall culture of compliance in the City, saying, "we're running at 20 kilometres per hour. Don't worry about delivery, forget delivery. We want to win clean audits, so we must comply, comply, comply" (Fg10:32-3).

Another official notes that even the public perceive the City's participatory procedures as "more of a rubber stamping" (Int2:2-3). Some associate communities' negative views of the City's participation processes, as well as the high number of public protests, with the City's effort to simply tick boxes (Int16:6; Int12:6; Int1:2). Another noted how following policy prescripts does not ensure inclusive processes, especially if communications are generally only accessible to "a select group", i.e. those who are registered in the right place, have internet access, are sufficiently literate and educated, etc. (Int16:6).

This compliance mind-set also manifests in officials' own practices. According to one focus group, departments may resort to "bureaucratic minimalism" (Fg6:9). This is confirmed by other officials' admissions that, "we just follow the guidelines" (Int12:6) and that "best practice would be compliance" (Int13:8). In practice, this might involve putting out a small newspaper advert on a Tuesday evening requesting public inputs, or sending an email to 2000 people, but without subsequent consideration of how many inputs are actually received (Int16:6, 13). Or an "open day on the beach in winter when it was raining. [...] No one came, but it's okay because we had the open day" (ibid.).

It is noteworthy that officials both recognise and critique this compliance mind-set within the City. However, in terms of the type of City-community relation and change this approach and practice produces, it is arguably concerned with bureaucratic compliance and not about the relation with communities at all.

5.2.2 To empower democratic voice

Although it was not a dominant view, some officials appealed to democratic notions and ideals in defining the purpose of engagement, and especially whilst critiquing the City's tendency towards compliance. References were made, for instance, to: citizen voice and the right to speak (Int7:7; Fg6:2; Int1:2); dialogue (Fg5:3); inclusion (Int4:9, 17; Fg6:2;); empowerment (Int12:6; Fg6:3); trust (Fg1:3); and ownership (Fg10:11; Fg2:2; Int12:6).

From this perspective, engagement goes far beyond mere compliance with statutory requirements. Rather, engagement is embedded in people's "right to speak to the City and to raise their issues to the City" (Int7:7). A few officials regarded engagement as a process of transforming how communities interact with government and the state, especially for those who, "have been hurt over time by big brother just coming in and doing stuff" (Fg12:4). This can be understood in the context of apartheid, which excluded the poor majority from both physical development and political processes. The "right to speak" thus resonates with notions of citizenship and suggests building a relationship between the City and its citizens. The City's responsibility in this case is to provide inclusive platforms for citizen voice and a "bottom-up approach" (Fg6:3; Int6:4). One official emphasised the importance of being "on the ground with the communities", but attributed this responsibility to ward councillors as the elected political representatives (Int16:13).

These kinds of reflections suggest a relationship between government and citizens that is not simply a one-way flow of information, but also one of interaction and dialogue. It means answering questions rather than "throwing data" or simply sending out messages (Fg14:3). It means going to communities "with an open mind" rather than with predetermined plans (Int17:2-3), and trying to get people "to design facilities with us" (Fg5:3). This entails involving people in all phases of development projects (Int11:4). And it is through such dialogue that communities are empowered to "take ownership" (Int12:6). These perspectives resonate with the concept of co-production, understood as the "joint and direct involvement" of citizens in processes of co-design, co-planning and/or co-delivery (Joshi & Moore, 2004:33; Loffler, Parrado, Bovaird & Van Ryzin, 2008:12; Boyle & Harris, 2009:16).⁵⁹ These

⁵⁹ For a detailed review on citizen co-production, see Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers (2014). Notably, the authors find much of the extant literature examines factors that influence co-production, with little attention to outcomes.

articulations of engagement also reverberate with those discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2 in relation to participatory development, where citizen agency and empowerment entail influence in development decisions and processes. For instance, one interviewee describes participation as the process “where we are going to build a solid ground and solid communities through vibrant and speaking out”, where communities become involved “in developing their own areas” (Fg6:2-3).

Although these views resonate with key democratic ideals, some officials questioned the extent to which this is, or could be, realised in practice. For example, one official described the notion of citizen ownership as “nice in theory” but “not always correct in terms of practical application” (Fg2:2). In fact, project plans and policy proposals are often “predetermined,” with little scope for substantial changes to be made through public inputs (Int16:5-6; Fg8:4). Some officials also talked about ‘voice’ and ‘empowerment’ in ways that suggest a narrow view. One official associated the expression of voice with the City’s call centre as a mechanism to report service faults (Int7:7), which suggests a partial understanding and experience of the ways in which communities can and should contribute as citizens. Another official described the City’s engagements as “*allow[ing]* communities to have a say”, and attributed this to legislative requirements (Fg4:10; emphasis added). In other words, for some, the importance of community engagement may be less about democratic rights and processes, but again rather a matter of compliance.

5.2.3 To improve customer services

The third notable view of participation presented by interviewees was that it is intended to improve customer services. Several officials referred to citizens as “customers” or “clients,” and understood the relationship between the City and communities in these terms (Fg12; Int1:19; Fg2:20; Fg11:4; Int4:8). From this perspective, the City administration provides “products” (Fg2:20) to communities who, as customers, pay to use such products. One official called it a “duty” of the City to “sell the product to the community” (Fg2:20). The City’s customer-service responsibility was also associated with a range of services, from utilities and water/electricity meters to roads and housing. A few officials argued that the City needs a stronger ‘customer-centred’ approach, describing this in terms of more efficient delivery of services, and better accessibility through, for instance, one central access point for citizens to interact with the City for all needs and purposes (Fg12:2; Int1:19). This is expected to

improve City performance through more efficient and cost-effective services, at least for paying customers.⁶⁰

Through the customer service lens, the City's relation with communities is constituted by a transactional relationship between service providers and service users. As noted in Chapter 3, a customer-centred orientation may serve to delimit the roles and agency of citizens in terms of making service payments and reporting service issues (Storey, 2014:405; Naidoo, 2007:60). This presupposes the ability to pay, as the basis for the relationship. At the same time, however, as one official recognised, for some types of services, "every person is actually a client" (Fg12:2). For example, "you don't choose whether you want water or not" (ibid.). This means everyone in the City must be served by the departments of such services, and no one opts in or out. Even where roles are defined in this way, however, the service user's power to hold the provider to account for the quality of the service remains linked to their ability either to pay or to opt out. Where neither is available (e.g. for the urban poor), there is little recourse for service users. There is also little recognition or space provided for engagement in other ways. The notion of participation in terms of customer services may therefore further neglect the scope for community involvement or influence in making decisions around the types of services required, the mechanisms to be used for delivery, and the assessment of quality outcomes and accountability.

5.2.4 To achieve project and service delivery

By far the most common understanding of engagement situated it within the framework of service and project delivery. Many City officials described engagement as "a tool" to promote projects (Int2:12), "to try to avert problems" (Fg5:14), and "to realise the City's priorities" (Fg4:10). This is particularly evident in how officials understand and determine the success of engagement. On the one hand, many officials reported that they do not explicitly evaluate the effectiveness or success of engagement (Fg13:7; Fg4:7-8; Fg6:4; Int12:7; Int3:20; Fg1:8). On the other hand, many described engagement as successful when projects can be completed and services and operations can be effectively maintained (Int15:9; Int7:9; Fg2:18; Fg3:12). Thus, "success is if the project runs smooth and budget is spent" (Int7:9). This does not mean

⁶⁰ There are obvious linkages between this perspective and new public management principles, although there was rarely any explicit mention thereof. It does, however, raise questions regarding the distinction between "public goods" and "products".

officials do not value engagement. On the contrary, engagement is perceived as essential for project and service delivery success (Int7:1). Without engagement, “projects fail; projects come to a halt” (Int6:18). At the same time, however, some officials also experienced engagement as potentially disruptive, where it can “count for too much and bring things to a standstill” (Fg12:3).

Within their project and service delivery objectives, officials described the role of participation in ways that can be organised into three sub-objectives: (1) to inform and educate communities and change community behaviours; (2) to consult communities and get their inputs; and (3) to secure community buy-in and responsibility for projects and services.

5.2.4.1 To inform and educate: Changing perceptions and behaviour

Officials across various line departments shared the notion that citizens need to be informed and educated about how services work, how infrastructure should be used and resources taken care of, and why new service delivery approaches or mechanisms are needed (Fg14; Int17:5; Fg5; Int10). From this perspective, engagement aims to transform community perceptions and behaviours (Int1; Int10; Int17; Fg5; Fg14). As one official explained, “people won’t conserve something if they don’t understand it, or if they don’t love it. [...] And so it’s raising awareness” (Int4:9).

The City thus tries to educate citizens and transform behaviours in various ways. This occurs through city-wide or department, sector and project-level information campaigns (Int1; Fg14). The City also uses public meetings to convince people to change their perceptions and behaviour (Fg14:2). Issues raised include, inter alia: how to prevent water leaks and to use water meters (Int17:5-6); how to use new rubbish bins and what not to throw in it (Fg14); how to protect informal structures from floods and fires (Int1:5); and even “how to bury” (i.e. burial versus cremation) due to the scarcity of land for cemeteries (Fg5:2, 8). The emphasis on changing attitudes and behaviours resonates with leadership and public leadership theories, especially that of transformational leadership, which emphasises the role of leadership in transforming the vision, values and behaviours of followers (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1).

5.2.4.2 To receive community inputs and respond to local knowledge

Beyond informing citizens and communities, many officials also understand engagement as a process to receive community inputs. Local inputs and knowledge is considered crucial to identify the correct project beneficiaries (Fg2:1); to assess the impact of a particular service or

development (Fg11:4); to get inputs on policy proposals (Int16:6); and to ensure projects and services are appropriate and acceptable for communities (Fg13; Fg2:1; Int3; Fg5:2; Fg14). Local knowledge is also valued in the context of the diversity of communities and conditions across the City. As one official explained:

We need different perspectives. [...] We sit here in the civic centre and all of us are relatively affluent, and we are not going to be able to make the right decisions for the community unless we have the right advice from the community (Int1:5).

Another official working in informal settlement processes similarly argued:

Our communities [...] out there, they have got all the solutions if we are just prepared to listen. They might not have the educational, you know, standards, or actually the formal qualification, but they do have all things that we actually need to transform their lives. We just need to listen and give them a platform (Int6:4-5).

Some departments' experiences testify to this potential gap between the knowledge and experiences of City officials and communities, as well as the failure of participatory practices to engage community inputs.⁶¹ In one project (and as discussed by a number of officials from various departments), the City's transport department reportedly failed to properly engage residents in designing a bus rapid transport system, which resulted in major adverse consequences for commuters (Fg11:9; Fg10:6, 9). In one particular area, an insufficient number of bus stops were developed, and those that were established were placed in high crime areas, resulting in an outcry from commuters. It required three months of follow-up to identify the issues and eventually change the affected bus routes and bus stops.

Engaging with local knowledge and community inputs aligns with notions of civic voice and government responsiveness, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2. However, it does not in practice necessarily amount to communities having actual decision-making power. According to officials, the City cannot simply agree with and provide whatever is asked (Int1:2; Fg2:1). Rather, it is about "responsive governance" (Fg10:9) that involves "taking them on a journey,

⁶¹ There were exceptions, however, with officials also claiming they must (and do) know their communities and the relevant role players within them, and must know them better than consultants who work on City projects, for instance (Fg3:17; Fg1:13).

hearing their comments, absorbing them and formally responding to them” (Fg12:3; see also Fg8:3).

5.2.4.3 To secure community buy-in and responsibility

Finally, the need to secure buy-in for projects and services drives officials’ efforts to inform and consult communities. In fact, officials regularly employ the notion of ‘buy-in’ to explain both the purpose and importance of engagement (Int11:6; Fg2:1; Fg12; Fg11:5; Fg2:1; Fg5:2; Fg14; Fg1; Int4:22). Proceeding without community buy-in risks project delays and cost increases (Fg2:1), and potentially results in project disruptions as well as vandalism of infrastructure (Fg11:12; Fg13:8; Fg5:10; Fg8:15; Fg10:17):“We’ve seen parks, wonderful parks developed for the community and trashed because the community don’t feel that they’re part of it” (Int4:22).

This also resonates with how officials understand engagement success in terms of project delivery. As one official noted:

... it will actually be less, for lack of a better word, stressful for the City if we go as early as possible to get the public involved. It will really, because as we go down the line, those people's been involved, they sort of own all these projects and things, and then it will go smoothly (Int15:2).

In this quote, the interviewee associates ‘buy-in’ with ‘ownership’. This notion alludes to the concept of co-production, as discussed in Section 5.2.2 above. However, in this case, ownership also seems to imply understanding one’s role and responsibility, which again may be implicitly understood as not disrupting or vandalising provided structures (Fg11:3; Fg10:2, 30), despite, as will be discussed in section 5.3 below, having limited influence in final decision-making.

What is also evident in the above quote is the extent to which the City’s engagement efforts may be proactive (as called for above) or reactive. Engaging communities in response to project disruptions or vandalism of infrastructure (Fg11:3) are ultimately reactionary efforts when service delivery is under threat. One interviewee even described their engagement efforts as top-down crisis management, essentially “putting out fires”, although the interviewee did recognise that this is far from what it should be (Fg14:11, 14).

To the extent that officials understand engagement as a way to achieve project and service delivery, this suggests a relation with communities similar to that between the City and its

customers, albeit with less emphasis on their ‘ability to pay’ than on their roles as ‘beneficiaries’. Engagement ensures projects accommodate local needs and conditions, and secures a community willing to ‘take care’ of the infrastructure as their own. In terms of the kind of change this approach and practice produces, one official perceived this work as transformative given the disparate levels of development across the city (Int6:12). Improving service delivery is also seen as the City’s “one common goal” (Int15:2) and “for the public good” (Int2:10).

5.2.5 To provide and broker labour and contract opportunities

A major component of engagements at the project level relate to opportunities for employment. This is true across departments and service sectors. Although officials do not directly define the purpose and value engagement in terms of employment, this has become a central part of community interactions for many. One official noted that, “job creation is a massive issue” (Fg10:28); another described it as “a form of engagement that needs to happen” (Fg5:7-8). Officials also understand this as a reflection of the desperation of many communities (Fg5:7-8; Fg10:17), a part of the fact that “socio-economics is driving basically everything these days” (Fg10:16).

Employment in this context refers to work made available either to individual labourers or local companies who are sub-contracted by a main contractor on a project-specific basis, or as part of the national Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which provides temporary, short-term and low-skilled employment opportunities (Department of Public Works, 2011:6; see also RSA, 2012). The EPWP constitutes a national government effort to reduce unemployment and poverty. In many cases, the national grants used to fund projects require the employment of local labour, thus giving officials no option in the matter (Fg5:7-8). Other national grants may also specify use of the EPWP.⁶²

Although arranging work allocations is highly instrumental and transactional, none of the interviewees in this study discussed whether it may be contradictory to any of the above objectives associated with engagement. It is even associated with creating a “sense of ownership” that potentially reduces vandalism (Fg10:16). However, as officials’ experiences

⁶² For further analysis of the implementation and impact of the Expanded Public Works Programme, see McCutcheon and Padayachee (2011), Hemson (2008), and Meth 2011.

show, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, it is often in response to disruption and the threat of vandalism that work allocations are made (Fg5:11; Fg11:7).

5.2.6 Reflections on the organisational context and its participation agenda

This section has shown that officials hold predominantly instrumental views of the purpose and value of participation and engagement as means to provide development projects and services. However, officials' understandings of participation and engagement also reveal different priorities, accountability structures, and normative frames that inform the City's institutional context. These different aims and outcomes affirm the prevalence of multiple 'institutional logics' that characterise the City environment. This is recognised in the public leadership literature as part of the complexities of the collaborative governance context, and the extent to which public leaders are subject to multiple and potentially competing objectives or agendas (Van Wart, 2013:522; Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i87). These include preserving institutional stability, and being entrepreneurial, pursuing innovation, and enhancing efficiencies, as well as facilitating democratic processes. Furthermore, these different understandings and aims of participation can also be associated with particular roles of citizens and communities, whether as political actors, customers, beneficiaries or labourers. These, in turn, correspond with different forms of relation or relating between government and communities.

These agendas come to the fore in the pressures officials experience to spend their budgets efficiently, to deliver projects cost-effectively, but also to involve (and employ) communities in the process. Although difficult to generalise to all officials given the variety of roles and perspectives, there was a clear sense among interviewees that they (and the City) ought to be responsive to community needs and interests, but this does not always ensure projects and services get delivered efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, there was a general experience of the organisational context – its systems, procedures, policies and top-down pressures, especially to be efficient and achieve clean audits – as a constraint to their participation work.

5.3 Formal city participation structures, processes and challenges

This section presents the main participatory structures and processes in place in the City. Figure 5.1 below depicts the general institutional structure of the City.

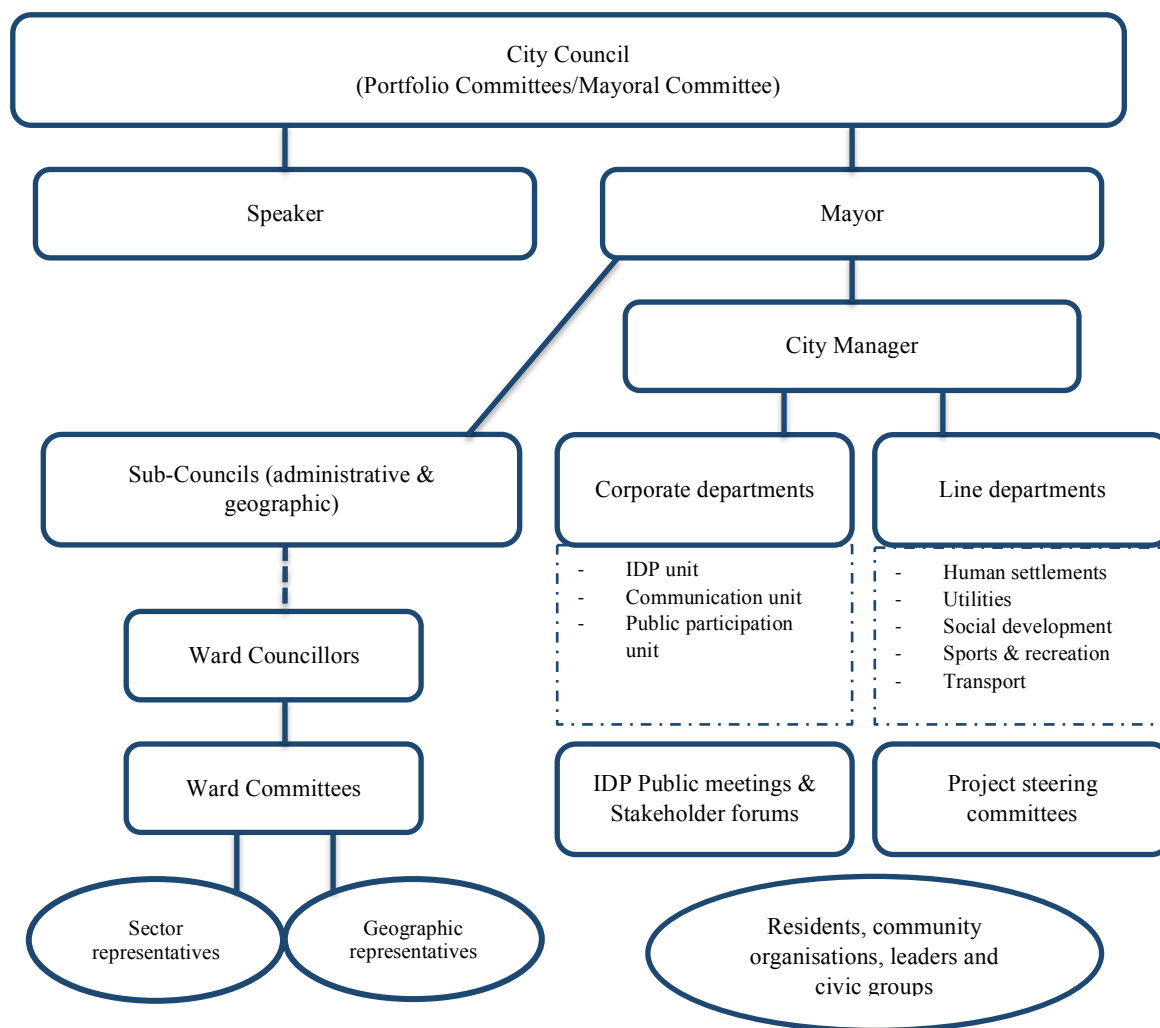


Figure 5.1: Overview of City organisational structure

Source: own design

With the exception of the Mayor, the right side of the figure represents the administrative part of the City, with Corporate and Line departments reporting to the City Manager. Only corporate departments relevant to participation and engagement that were included in this study are listed. The key participatory structures utilised through the administration, notably IDP public meetings and stakeholder forums (as part of city-wide engagements) and project steering committees (in departmental and project-related work) are shown on the right side well.

Key political structures also responsible for community engagements include the Speaker, ward councillors and ward committees. Sub-councils are administrative structures. They are indicated on the left side because they work at the ward level (each sub-council working in 3-5 wards), often working with ward councillors or directly with communities. There are three main participatory structures or ‘invited spaces’ in the City: (1) those part of citywide IDP

processes; (2) ward and sub-council structures; and (3) project-related steering committees. Community actors, including community representatives, organisations, leaders and residents, are indicated by the ovals at the bottom of the figure. Other points of engagement also exist but are not shown in the figure, such as direct communications with the Mayor, or with the Speaker's Office.

The rest of this section unpacks the key participatory structures according to three areas of local government where they operate: (1) as part of city-wide participation in the integrated development plan; (2) as part of ward councillor and ward committee engagements; (3) and as part of departmental and project level infrastructure and service provision. Key structures, processes and challenges are summarised in Table 5.1 below and discussed in the rest of this section.

Table 5.1: Findings: Participatory structures, processes and challenges

Governance area	Purported purpose	City structures	Formal processes	Main challenges
City-wide planning and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive/respond to community inputs on local priorities to inform the IDP (5-year & annual review) To receive/respond to inputs into the budget (3-year & annual review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor Councillors Sub-council managers IDP unit Stakeholder/business forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community meetings Stakeholder forums Social media Annual reporting in Council Draft IDP and budget submitted for public written comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misalignment of City and community agendas City agenda perceived as too distant/strategic City emphasis on efficiency and financial accountability Unclear how/where decisions are made
Ward and sub-council structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive/respond to reported service faults & maintenance needs To receive/respond to inputs on how to spend ward allocation budget To receive/ respond to requests for infrastructure upgrades & developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward councillors Ward committees Sub-council managers Stakeholder database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward committee /sub-council meetings (quarterly, monthly) Ward allocation budget Ad hoc (phone, email) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear how priorities or budgets are decided Reliability of database questioned Meetings/structures may not provide equitable access and representation Party politicisation of structures & processes
Departmental planning, projects and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive/respond to reported service faults & maintenance needs To receive/respond to inputs into local projects (housing, utilities, parks, transport, etc.) To provide/facilitate contracts & labour opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line departments Public participation unit Communications unit Ward councillors Sub-council managers Project steering committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door-to-door visits Focus groups Workshops Community meetings Sub-council meetings Open houses Project steering committees Call centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions to allocate funds made elsewhere Budgets & grant requirements can be constraining Regulatory & procedural requirements (e.g. SCM) are time-consuming & create delays Poor internal coordination Call centre used for difficult issues (e.g. request house)

5.3.1 Participation in city-wide planning and budgeting

A key first step in local governance and development is to establish core development objectives, and to select and prioritise projects and services that would serve those objectives. In local government in South Africa, this is supposed to occur as per national legislation via the integrated development plan (IDP) (see RSA, 2000a: Chapter 5). The IDP is purported to be the primary channel through which citizens, communities and other stakeholders voice their concerns and issues, as well as influence the City's five-year plan and three-year and annual budget. In principle, it is in this space where citizens and communities ought to be able to engage, not on 'minor' service issues such as broken streetlights or potholes, but on the City's major investment decisions.

Many officials acknowledged the importance of the IDP (Fg11:11; Fg6; Int7; Fg4; Int1). It was described as: "the blueprint of what we do" (Int1:11); "the strategic document for the City" (Fg6:6); even "a holy grail" (Int7:8). The IDP establishes the City's priority areas and main challenges to be addressed over a five-year period (which is also reviewed annually), and combines sector-specific plans (e.g. transport, housing, water services, etc.) into an 'integrated' vision. It also indicates the City's five key "pillars" (e.g. economic opportunity, safety, inclusivity, good governance, social development) within which all projects must be framed (Int1:11; Fg4:3). In this way, participation in the IDP may be considered the City's ultimate 'agenda framing' process through which a collective vision for the City is supposed to be developed and articulated. Through this process, the City asks people, "What [development] would they like to see in the next five years?" (Fg6:6), to "give direction to the City" (Fg4:1).

Structurally, the City has an IDP unit that manages the public engagements in this process; the role of officials within this unit is largely administrative. They are responsible for organising venues, notifying residents of meetings, and engaging councillors to assist with informing and mobilising people for meetings. In relation to other invited spaces, the reach of the IDP process is expected to be as wide as possible. In order to inform people of upcoming IDP and budget meetings, officials and sub-council managers use email, advertisements in local newspapers, announcements at sub-council meetings, as well as word of mouth, pamphlet drops and loud hailing (Int15:6). These engagements are legislated by the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000a), which also designates the minimum periods for community consultations, as well as for taking comments on proposed amendments (DPLG, 2007:34-5; RSA, 1998a:

Section 25(4)). Engagements may take the form of high level meetings facilitated by the Mayor, or local community meetings in specific sub-councils or wards where councillors facilitate discussions in order to elicit public inputs (Fg4:4). Such community meetings often target the socio-economically ‘depressed’ areas (Fg6:6). Senior officials (e.g. Executive Directors) and senior councillors (Mayoral Committee and portfolio committee members) may attend the meetings to answer questions. Where necessary, specific comments or issues received are forwarded to relevant departments (Fg4:6, 16; Fg9:12). Officials in the IDP unit do not set the agenda of engagements, however. And although they may forward specific issues raised to relevant line departments, they have no authority or responsibility to ensure the department responds (Fg4:16).

Aside from the officials in the IDP unit and the senior officials who attend IDP meetings to answer questions, officials in line departments appear to be largely removed from the process (Int17:8; Fg10:22). They do, however, engage the priorities identified in the IDP, as these must translate into other planning documents, in particular the budget, the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), the Built Environment Performance Plan (BEPP), the Spatial Development Framework (SDF), and department-specific plans such as the informal settlement upgrade plan. Line departments must therefore comment on the priorities identified through the various engagements, compare these to existing plans, and identify any inconsistencies that might suggest a specific issue or area that should be added or removed. In addition, the language of the IDP permeates the language of all City communications, and officials must include reference to the IDP pillars in applications for funding as well as project advertisements (Int1:11; Int3:20).

Despite recognising the role of the IDP as the City’s ‘vision statement’ and development plan, some officials question whether the participation process for the IDP is actually useful or meaningful. A few expressed frustrations with the way the process fails to respond to issues raised and inputs made (Int16:16; Int3:28). In the following excerpt, an official discusses the lack of City responsiveness in the IDP and budget process, even in well-developed, middle-income areas:

The trouble is, [...] in their homes they’ve been having issues: water leaks, their telephone, their internet. There can be all kinds of things that are City and not-City related. They try to phone the call centre, they try to get hold of their ward councillor or their sub-council manager. No one’s answering the phone, no one’s giving me help. They tell me to phone

this number but then the number is engaged or out of service and then they get very frustrated. So they come to these meetings and [the City] says, 'Oh, the budget for next year is R27 billion', and they go, 'Well, I just want to ask you a question. I live in such and such a road and I've got a problem with my neighbour...' And they go, 'No, we're not here to talk about that'. And then it goes mad because people are frustrated [...] and they want their voices to be heard. [...] And [the City] says, 'Oh no, you know, write your name on a comment, put it in this envelope, and we'll get back to you' (Int16:16).

The situation described above suggests a disjuncture between the City's agenda for engaging citizens for the IDP, and the agendas that citizens may bring to public meetings. This is confirmed by another official:

The challenges are more in [...] getting the community to respond on that particular issue. One of the things that's probably most frustrating in our process is, because there is very little opportunity for the community to just air whatever they want. [...] Whatever process we're running [...] is about a very specific thing. The community, because they're not getting a lot of other opportunities just to air their view, for example on the budget, I will then come to you about an issue about my curtain rail in the house that I'm renting from council that needs to be replaced, and we're really talking about council's proposed new budget for the next year, and the relevance isn't what we set out to achieve. I think that would probably be one of our most frustrating things. [...] We get a bulk of comments that aren't directed to that process. And perhaps it is educating the community about the different processes that's there [...] and then also in educating them to the expectations of the specific process that we're running (Fg4:9).

In this quote, the issue of citizen agendas that do not align with the City's meeting agenda is understood as a failure of the City to properly frame and inform people of the agenda. This resonates with the way agenda framing is conceptualised as a leadership practice in the literature: public leaders must effectively frame agendas in order to establish the focus of the discussion on a specific problem or matter (and by implication to exclude matters that the City deems irrelevant) (see for example, Page, 2010:251-2).⁶³ It also shows how agenda

⁶³ In his analysis of a city-wide 'education summit' in Seattle, Page (2010:251-2) describes how the way the Mayor and his planning group deliberately established the agenda for city-wide and community discussions in a particular way helped to move the process towards 'success'. For instance, they used a participatory visioning exercise in order to elicit views on city-wide goals and community aspirations, rather than on specific programmes and individual needs (ibid:253, 256). For Page, this marks a well-framed approach with high potential to produce a sense of shared vision and thus commitment to finding appropriate solutions. How dialogues at the micro-level ensured non-related issues did not derail the process is not, however, discussed.

framing within specific engagement processes (e.g. a public meeting on the budget) may be affected by how well the City communicates and responds to citizen/community issues in an on-going way (i.e. by broader experiences and relations between residents and the City). What this suggests regarding the interdependence of the different components of the City's participatory governance system is discussed further in Chapter 7.

What is also noteworthy in the above examples is the perceived disconnect between strategic planning and decision-making, on the one hand, and communities' issues, concerns and understandings, on the other hand. One official explained the situation as follows:

These big strategic things, even the Spatial Development Framework, it means nothing; people can't engage with it. The only people who are able to engage are developers who have an interest, who will benefit materially from the project. Then they engage with the public participation process but no one else does. So what is public participation? How do you actually get [something] into the IDP? I don't know. And I work here (Int3:28).

A number of issues are evident in this quote. First, the IDP as a mechanism of agenda framing for the City potentially privileges some stakeholders over others. Despite it constituting a broad engagement aimed at involving as many voices and interests across the City as possible, and despite physical opportunities and spaces for different kinds of stakeholders to engage (residents, civic actors, business, etc.), this may not be sufficient to ensure a balance of access and voice. Second, it is worth noting that there was little information from interviewees on how inputs and interests are negotiated and taken into account. As per the public leadership literature, agenda framing as a leadership practice should enable better shared understanding of different views and inputs in order to produce, or at least direct people towards, a sense of collective purpose and commitment (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:219; Ansell & Gash, 2007:547; Page, 2010:249). In this way, the path towards specific decisions should become clearer. However, it is not apparent from the interviews and focus groups where the ultimate decisions regarding the City's agenda are made. How are different needs and interests balanced and prioritised? This does not mean it does not happen, and may rather reflect a gap in the data collection. However, there does appear to be a lack of clarity, even among City staff, regarding how residents can influence investments and interventions. Given the limited formal role of officials in leading these engagements, what is pertinent to the analysis is how the scope of officials' and citizens' agenda framing practices in projects are

confined within the IDP and budget, which appear to be beyond their space of action and influence. This is unpacked further in Chapters 6 and 7.

In addition to these challenges, the City's 'internal agenda' is also perceived by some to be increasingly "geared towards efficiency and accountability", whilst public engagement is not experienced as a priority (Fg4:15, 10). This emphasis on efficiency (in line with the NPM approach to governance) is experienced as a constraint on the potential for engaging in meaningful conversations with citizens (ibid.). Ultimately, for "almost everything that we do, we have to show that [...] we are making a difference [in terms of productivity]" (ibid.). This efficiency agenda filters into the City's approach to participation and engagement, producing the strong compliance-orientation, as discussed in Section 5.2.1.

How the City frames its own agenda in relation to participation is therefore also crucial. This manifests in particular in the way the effectiveness of the City's participatory processes are measured, and the lack of clarity around what success looks like. This was specifically noted as a gap for the IDP, but also across units and line departments (Fg4; Fg13:7; Fg4:7-8; Fg6:4; Int12:7; Int3:20; Fg1:8). Asked how participation is evaluated, one interviewee described formal reports and spreadsheets that indicate the number of people who attended a meeting, the number of comments received, and the number of comments addressed or still outstanding (Fg4:8-9; see also Fg1:5-6; Int6:18). Participation in the IDP is similarly perceived as a success because it was "extensive", i.e. it reached a broad number of people, again as determined by attendance registers and the reach of social media (Fg4:11). But there is also a strong recognition among officials that "we don't know what 'successful' means. Does it mean someone is actually giving us a response? Or is it that the community feels satisfied that they were consulted? That we don't know" (Fg4:10). Without a clear understanding of what success looks like, "we're really just measuring logistics and logistics doesn't measure the impact of it" (Fg4:7).

Despite these challenges, the City has in place a number of structures and processes for engaging citizens and communities on a more regular basis, particularly through formal representative structures such as ward committees and sub-councils. The next section describes the opportunities for engagement and participation through these structures.

5.3.2 Participation in ward and sub-council structures

Beyond the formal city-wide planning process, identification and prioritisation of projects and programmes can also happen at ward or sub-council level. This is an important opportunity for citizens and civic actors to influence the City agenda through their ward councillor, ward committee and/or sub-council. In fact, ward committees and sub-councils “are not supposed to duplicate the same agenda as the City, [but are] supposed to be emanating from communities” (Int14:8). Although these structures are also important in department-level projects (see Section 5.3.3 below), the focus in this section is on participation and agenda framing *prior to* project implementation.

Ward committees constitute the primary structure for formal representation at local level (Int15:4). As discussed in Chapter 3, they are suggested, but not required, by the Municipal Structures Act (RSA, 1998a: Section 73). It is also up to individual municipalities to decide how to determine ward committee membership. The committee comprises the ward councillor as chairperson, plus a maximum of ten members, each of whom represents a particular sector (e.g. business, ratepayers, health, and youth), and are members of a registered civic or community organisation (RSA, 1998a: Section 73(2)). In the case of this City, the sub-council manager recommends ward committee members to the Speaker, who normally accepts the recommendation (Int15:4). Sub-councils are administrative structures that comprise three to five wards and their committees. A sub-council manager or chairperson heads each sub-council. This is an appointed official with the responsibility to coordinate communications and engagements, as well as to assist with addressing service issues in their respective sub-councils. Two sub-council coordinators oversee the work of all the sub-council managers.

Participation through these structures includes community meetings and other forms of communication, with the purpose of discussing and deciding on area-specific issues. One platform the sub-councils use is a “stakeholder database” where NGOs and CBOs register with the City (Int15:8; Fg1:10). The database constitutes a key source for communicating information to NGOs and other community organisations, including upcoming meetings and invitations for public comment (e.g. on proposed by-laws, building applications or land use/re-zoning requests) (Int15:8; Fg1:12). However, some officials noted the information is likely out of date and even “suspect” (Int4:17). This can have repercussions for the stakeholders who may be excluded from the City’s communications and notifications

processes (Fg1:12). As will be discussed in Chapter 6, officials also rely on the stakeholder database in their mobilisation work.

Ward councillors mainly engage communities via ward committee meetings, but sub-council managers also run regular monthly meetings to which residents are invited. Some departments and officials use the monthly sub-council meetings to report on project progress or other service-related matters (Fg11:13). Some, however, raised concerns regarding attendance and representation, claiming that it is often the same people who come to meetings (Int16:17). Sometimes it is even “mostly officials” at the meetings, rather than residents or community representatives (ibid.). The way these are structured are therefore important; if a meeting is late in the evening on a week night, it may be only people who don’t have children, are finished with work, have transport, etc. (ibid.).

Another difficulty with formal meetings is that they cover a large geographic area, which might be quite disparate as well. For many residents, it is unlikely that meetings are held in their areas, in which case “economically it’s not viable for them just to come to listen to a meeting where they’re in their minds saying, it might not even benefit me” (Fg11:14). This shows the challenge of relying wholly on these formal invited spaces, which are not necessarily responsive to local differences and needs.⁶⁴ Also apparent is the sense among officials that the public do not necessarily find such meetings effective in addressing their issues: “people prefer to wait until they see a City vehicle in their area and raise their issues with them then” (Fg11:13). Chapter 3, Section 3.3.3 discussed the literature on the limitations of the ward committee system. What is of concern here is how citizens and officials may frame the City’s agenda through these structures.

One way the City agenda can be framed through these structures is in the identification of projects or programmes for the ‘ward allocation budget’. This is a budget of approximately R700,000 (at the time of the research) that is allocated per ward, 18 months in advance of its designated financial year (Int16:8). Where and how to spend this budget is facilitated (and

⁶⁴ For notable studies on the limits of ward and sub-council level structures and processes, see Buire (2011), Lemanski (2017), Storey (2015), and Oldfield (2008). Lemanski (2017) in particular critiques the geo-political demarcation of wards as the primary determinant of participatory structures and representation, and finds that these generally reinforce existing inequalities. For example, meetings are often located in well-developed areas, making it more difficult for urban poor residents already disadvantaged by limited resources and transport options.

potentially decided), by the ward councillor. In principle, the ward councillor and ward committee discuss and decide how to spend the money (ibid.). The ward councillor may also ask for inputs from associations registered in the stakeholder database and who may not be formally part of the ward committee. This money may be allocated to various small projects, such as the installation of speed humps in a particular road, or hiring a “rent-a-cop” to provide additional security (Int16:8). It may also be used for larger projects such as the development of a new park (Fg5:21). Procedurally, ward councillors then engage their sub-council manager to write an application for the project to the City council for approval (Int14:13). Crucial to the application is to show how the project aligns with at least one of the City’s IDP pillars (Int3:20). Once approved, the ward councillor engages the relevant line departments to implement the selected projects.

Since this research did not include discussions with ward councillors or ward committees, it is again not clear how different interests and proposals for projects are negotiated between the ward councillor and ward committee members or other civic associations.⁶⁵ In fact, most information from interviewees focused on the procedural aspects. According to one official, this process could take up to six months, with repercussions for project implementation timeframes (including any necessary community engagement therein) (Fg5:21). The success of ward allocation projects is also crucial for ward councillors as this reflects on their performance and delivery to their wards, which is further tied to their 5-year terms (ibid.).

In addition to identifying projects for ward allocations⁶⁶, residents may raise issues to their ward councillor or sub-council manager on an ad hoc basis (Int15:4). For example, residents can raise issues in one of the regular sub-council meetings (which are open to the public but require that agenda items be set beforehand), or they may write to their councillor or sub-council office to make specific requests (Int16:7). Ward committee meetings similarly provide a space for community representatives to bring attention to specific issues, which should then be transferred to the sub-council to either take administrative action (if feasible),

⁶⁵ As noted in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.3, Council and/or the Mayoral Committee often determine agendas, whilst ward councillors may lack the power to influence Council/Mayoral decisions (OECD, 2008:285), or manipulate these structures and processes to realise their own agendas (Buire, 2011:471).

⁶⁶ Public comments can be made through sub-councils, which are then directed to line departments and portfolio committees, or directly to line departments as invited through advertisements and website notices (Fg9:12-13). Public inputs must be invited on proposed by-laws, the budget, or project-related processes.

or escalate the issue to the sub-council coordinators to refer it to the relevant department, Executive Director, or portfolio committee (Fg9:13). Sub-council managers may also convene a meeting between community representatives and a specific line department or political leaders, to make presentations or “to get their issues out” (ibid.). These seem to be dependent on the initiative of individual sub-council managers, however, and are therefore “sporadic” and a “nice to have” (Fg1:13).

Depending on the nature of an issue raised, sub-council managers may select to chair the meeting (Fg9:7). As one sub-council official explained, the ideal is:

... to keep the politics out of it, so that it doesn't become a political meeting. Then we have a pure admin technical meeting. Sometimes we don't even invite the councillors, because the councillor might be the main issue that is causing these type of So then we have a pure technical meeting with the community, with the line departments, and the sub-council manager, listen to the community's concerns, and the line department says, 'we can do that or we can't do this, we can do this, let us look at that and try to find solutions for their concerns' (Fg9:7).

The need to address community concerns administratively rather than politically is a common point raised across the interviews, as part of service and project delivery across service sectors (Fg14; Fg2:18; Int6:6). It is discussed at greater length in Chapters 6 and 7.

Issues raised via ward councillors, ward committees or sub-councils could very well result in specific infrastructure projects coming onto the City's capital budget. For instance, continued pressure from a ratepayers association for expansion of a major road eventually resulted in the City committing to a road upgrade (Int15:4). This was, however, after years of complaints to the ward councillor, sub-council manager, and during budget and IDP processes (ibid.).

Another constraint to community requests received in this way involves the process of deliberating over different views, interests and interpretations. Making a decision can “become very difficult at times” (Fg11:6). Although there was again no detailed discussion of how precisely inputs are considered and mediated, this appears to be limited to an internal assessment within the City. Examples provided by officials indicate that, whether issues are raised formally in meetings or through ad hoc requests to the ward councillor or sub-council manager (e.g. for an area to be fenced, or for improved lighting or specific sanitation services), the process of balancing interests and issues (both between different residents and

between different departments) appears to occur internally (Int16:7; Fg11:6). Such decisions also depend on budget availability (Int16:8). As will become evident in the next chapter, these issues also emerge in other participatory spaces, notably in departmental planning, service delivery and projects, where the roles of officials in participation are most prominent.

5.3.3 Participation in departmental planning, projects and services

This final section examines how officials involve citizens and communities in departmental planning, projects and service delivery. This speaks to how officials and communities frame the City's agenda in more specific ways than the IDP and budget allow, and particularly *within* the project selection and implementation process. At the departmental level, projects are identified and selected in a variety of ways. It is here that officials can themselves propose specific projects for council approval and inclusion in the capital budget. There are also "political processes" that influence how a project makes it onto the budget (Fg5:6). Although officials at various points make reference to such "political processes" (Fg14:18; Fg13:7; Fg10:20; Int3:2-3, 14), they do not elaborate on what this means. One official explains that, of course, officials are "implementers" who receive projects as prioritised through the Council and sub-council system (Fg2:13). But there are also instances where prioritisation and agenda framing occurs in particular departments.

At the departmental and project level, there is no specific uniform process prescribed for engaging communities. There is, however, both a discernable pattern of practices and a diversity of methodologies evident within the City. Some of the main methods used are: door-to-door visits, focus groups and workshops, large community meetings, open houses and project steering committees (PSCs). Some departments have developed their own general flow-charts or follow a Terms of Reference (e.g. for a project steering committee), whilst others simply proceed in an ad hoc way without any formal method (Fg11:5). Some projects may even be implemented without any engagement whatsoever (Int3:27). This seems to depend on the project leader and department ethos, and the need for engagements to be made "fit for purpose" (Fg2:27; Int7:4-5; Fg10:16; Fg5:7). In the Human Settlements department, for instance, officials claim political and community buy-in is an absolute necessity prior to even attaching a budget to a project. This is attributed to the nature of human settlements and especially informal settlement projects, which may require relocating households to different areas, thereby transforming their living situations and affecting their livelihoods and social networks. On the other hand, utility services are seen as a 'must-have' that no one can opt out

of, which means project decisions are less about *whether* to provide a service to a particular area than it is about *how* to provide it. Some, in turn, see this as a largely technical question based on professional or specialised knowledge, which should be informed by various geographic, legal and financial constraints and options, but with less need for community engagement.

Decisions on how to engage appear to depend largely on the nature of the project and objectives of the project leader. For instance, a process that aims simply to develop ideas as part of the planning process would be different from engagement that occurs post-planning where there is a confirmed budget for implementation (Int3:22). Some departments work through local area planning. The unit for special urban renewal projects, for instance, works in specific areas where they establish a formal community representative committee, and engages the committee to develop a ‘community action plan’. Through the community action plan, key service and infrastructure priorities are identified, with a particular focus on improving safety. The spatial planning department similarly begins with local area planning through which they work with community representatives to prioritise key capital projects and develop “business plans”.

Most departments, however, engage citizens and communities in specific, pre-determined projects, and decide how to structure engagements within the scope of the project cycle and project objectives. This appears to be on the assumption that projects are in principle embedded in the IDP and budget and therefore already reflect community priorities. Again, within these processes, different methods or ways of doing things offer different ‘benefits’, according to City officials. An open house for instance can give officials better ‘control’ over the issues that communities are able to raise, which one official reported is a problem that arises with large public meetings (Int3:10). In many cases, the project leader would first appoint and engage external stakeholders such as consultants or facilitators, which is discussed further in Chapter 6. This points, on the one hand, to the need for officials to be cognizant of the types of stakeholders involved, their abilities, the project ‘needs’, and thus how to design the process (Int3:22). On the other hand, it also points to the underlying question of who benefits from a particular method, or whose objectives will be better suited through a particular structure.

Other governance processes can also inform how a process is designed and implemented. For instance, there may be regulatory steps that must be followed prior to or alongside the

participation process, such as land use applications and environmental impact assessments (Fg5:13). Several officials noted how supply chain management processes can easily take up half of the entire project timeframe, and create delays within the implementation and engagement process (Fg5:20; Int3:18, 25; Int7:10; Int11:8). The scale and resources that departments face – specifically hundreds of projects and very tight project cycles – also constrain officials’ options (Fg5:20). Ultimately, the ability to source funding for a project, whether through a department’s capital budget or through an application for national grant funding, is a critical determinant of whether a project proceeds to implementation (Fg5:22).

In addition to departmental structures and processes, the City also has a number of corporate units that get involved in participation and engagement, either directly or as support to departments. Most relevant here are the communications and media unit and the public participation unit. The communications unit is responsible for responding to media inquiries and matters as they arise. It also puts out information campaigns on particular issues, such as “knowing one’s rights”, or how to protect informal settlement structures from floods and fires. Any communications going out from line departments must also first be approved via the communications unit, in order to “get the wording right”, framing any city initiatives according to the IDP pillars, and including the right “political slogans and jargon” (Int16:14).

The Public Participation unit is responsible for managing participation processes within the City. It does so by: providing procedural guidelines and support to line departments; managing a City schedule of participation processes; assisting with line department advertisements; organising logistics for public meetings; and sharing information between communities, community organisations and line departments (via ward committees and sub-councils). Despite the scope of their work, the unit is fairly under-utilised, with some interviewees even being unaware of its existence and/or purpose (Fg13:4; Fg14:14; Int2:8). Few officials seem to work regularly with the unit or know that departments are formally required to report their engagement activities to the unit at the end of the year (Fg11:21; Fg12:13; Fg2:22). Some working with the unit described it as overly procedural and compliance-driven, attending mainly to advertising requirements and the submission of reports (Fg6:9; Fg1; 9; Int7:4; Fg10:35; Fg5:4; Int13:6). From the perspective of officials in the Public Participation unit, however, line departments fail to plan properly for engagements and for the required advertisements that must go out. Thus the unit works under severe

pressure and time constraints. Officials within the unit also experience the City's overall approach to participation as overly compliance-driven.

Finally, the City has a central call centre where residents can report service-related issues through a phone call or SMS, to which they receive a reference number and the 'job' is allocated to the appropriate City structures. This kind of invited space is intended to strengthen the link between the City and individual residents, and to improve individual service issues. But some issues and priorities cannot be engaged with or addressed at the level of the individual. Hence there are more community-oriented engagements intended for project, service and city-wide planning and budgeting. However, it is noteworthy that residents also use the City's call centre system, intended to deal with very specific service issues (e.g. electricity outages, sewage blockages, etc.), to make requests for new services or raise broader issues, such as, "I need a house, I need a toilet, I need a car, I need a job" (Int7:6). This may be indicative of the limitations of the City's other invited spaces, namely for community engagements in planning, prioritising and project processes. These different types of invited spaces also shape City-community relations differently, as discussed in Section 5.2.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a descriptive analysis of the City's participatory governance system, as well as of the 'official narratives' accompanying it as reflected in officials' views regarding the purpose of participation. The data revealed, firstly, that officials attach five different objectives to participation, often simultaneously. These were: policy compliance; democratic empowerment; customer service; service and project delivery; and labour brokering. Each of these suggests a different set of expected outcomes of participation and engagement, as well as different roles and forms of relation between the City and communities. By far the most common perception was that participation is a means for ensuring successful service and project delivery. This view reverberates with the emphasis on problem-solving evident in the literature on public leadership in contexts of collaboration (Connelly, 2007:1231; Armistead et al., 2007:212; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211). Participation and engagement are therefore understood as a means to address a particular issue, especially when it cannot be addressed by a single individual, group or organisation (Morse, 2010:231). It becomes the role of public leadership to facilitate the process of bringing together different stakeholders, resources, ideas and interests, in an effort to effectively share 'power' and tackle the issue (Crosby, 2010:S70).

In this case, such problems primarily relate to the provision of infrastructure and service delivery in informal settlements or other marginalised communities. The dominant understanding of participation in terms of project and service delivery also emphasises a particular aspect of organisational performance (and thus notion of success).

That officials provided multiple perspectives on the purpose and value of participation, however, points to the presence of multiple ‘institutional logics’ or governance systems within the City. These correspond, in the South African context, with the developmental and democratic mandate ascribed to local government, as noted in Chapter 1. They also correspond with observations made in the public leadership literature that the public sector context encompasses multiple, potentially competing institutional logics, discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:367; Van Wart & Suino, 2012:24; Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i87). These, in turn, are likely to produce and structure relations in different ways. A case in point is the relation between a government and citizens as political agents, in contrast to the relation between a service provider and clients or customers.

Although the chapter did not examine in depth how the City’s institutional and governance systems and arrangements inform participation in practice (especially at the service delivery and project level), it described key aspects of the City’s participatory governance system. These included structures and processes for engaging in: city-wide integrated development planning; ward and sub-council representative structures; departmental projects and service delivery. The City, in fact, has a well-established participatory governance system that includes the prescribed structures and processes as set out in relevant policy and legislation. The City therefore generally complies with policy and legislative requirements for public participation and engagement. These different areas of participation constitute the City’s main “invited spaces”, and are purported to enable citizens and communities to engage in agenda framing processes and ultimately influence City decision-making.

Officials raised a variety of issues regarding the functioning of these structures and processes, as well as the opportunities for citizens and communities to influence the City’s agenda, especially through the integrated development plan (IDP). These findings corroborate those of existing studies on participation in South African local government, and the range of issues and challenges identified therein (as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3). It is also noteworthy that officials exhibited a level of awareness and acknowledgment of some of the limitations of the City’s formal participatory structures and compliance-oriented approach.

Although leadership has not been a main theme in this chapter, the findings from the chapter raise important questions regarding the role and challenges of public leaders. What is not yet clear from the findings, for instance, is the extent to which (and how) officials engage in the four practices deduced from the literature. The next chapter examines how the rhetoric of participation and engagement is realised in practice, specifically in how officials lead engagements at the project level. It therefore examines officials' practices in involving citizens and communities in further detail. This includes how officials mobilise communities, structure engagement within specific projects, navigate multiple stakeholder relations, and ultimately frame project and City agendas. The chapter will begin to show how officials' experiences are shaped by broader institutional and governance arrangements, and thus begin to open up the view of leader practices towards a more constructionist and relational perspective. Through this wider lens, the chapter will elucidate how formal and informal structures, processes and relations influence the public leader practices, and thus construct leadership influence.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: CITY OFFICIALS' PRACTICES: MOBILISING, STRUCTURING, WEAVING AND FRAMING

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the City's formal structures and processes for engaging communities across three main areas of local governance. It also presented officials' understandings of the purpose of participation and engagement, which included policy compliance, democratic empowerment, customer service, efficient service and project delivery, and labour brokering. Both formal structures and processes, and perceptions of participation and engagement, illuminate the 'official narrative' or rhetoric regarding participation and City-community relations, and suggest the influence of particular institutional logics.

This chapter discusses how officials involve citizens and communities in project planning and implementation. It therefore picks up where the previous chapter left off regarding participation in departmental project and service delivery. Drawing on the four public leader practices delineated in Chapter 2, this chapter explores officials' practices to mobilise and structure engagement, as well as practices to weave together and navigate relations between communities and other stakeholders, notably external consultants and contractors. Although agenda framing is not addressed as a distinct practice, the chapter shows how officials' mobilising, structuring and weaving practices also contribute to shaping project agendas. Through this lens, the chapter elucidates how formal and informal City and community structures, processes and relations influence the four practices. This will provide the basis for analysing how public leadership is constructed through and beyond individual leader practices, and how this influences participation.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses how officials mobilise communities and structure participatory processes. This involves working through formal mechanisms and structures, including ward councillors and community organisations and leaders. It also entails a variety of informal efforts and tactics to adapt formal requirements to local conditions. The second section focuses on how City officials enlist external organisations as partners or collaborators in their project work. This may involve external NGOs or facilitators to support community engagements, or planning and engineering experts as consultants on project design and implementation. It also addresses the

challenges of navigating between communities and contractors who are required to make provisions for local employment opportunities. These practices provide the entry point for the analysis, in the next chapter, of how officials exercise power and address power issues, and how this is informed by the structural conditions, constraints and opportunities provided by the City's institutional and governance environment.

A caveat is in order at this point. This study is based on interviews with 59 officials from different departments and in different positions within the City administrative hierarchy. This means their roles and experiences in participation vary considerably. Given the primary focus of this chapter on participation in project processes, the roles of officials as project leaders are prominent. Much of the analysis in this chapter is therefore drawn from interviews and examples that specifically elucidate this context. Where relevant, more generalisable findings will be indicated.

6.2 Mobilising, convening and structuring practices

This section examines how officials mobilise communities for engagement in projects, and how they structure engagement processes and mechanisms. Because they are intertwined in reality, mobilising and structuring practices are examined together.

According to officials, there are a number of factors that influence how they inform and mobilise communities for a particular project or participatory process. These include local contextual conditions, City structures and platforms, as well as other actors and their inputs. In terms of context, officials purport to believe that understanding the local context is crucial to deciding how to engage, mobilise and structure any engagement process (Fg8:3; Fg10:21; Int4:8; Fg5:13; Int10:14; Int17:7). This includes understanding local community dynamics as well as relevant City structures and people involved. As one official explained, it's about:

... trying to get a sense of the climate. So you start with sub-council – where am I here?
And what are the kinds of issues that come up here? What does one need to do? Then ask yourself – who? Sub-council chairperson? Sub-council manager? Ward councillor?
(Fg5:13).

Although the nature of the project also guides the approach, for engagement in informal settlement projects in particular, “there is no blueprint” (Fg3:2). It is important, however, “to latch on to the setup of the community as quickly as possible” (ibid.). This initial stage of assessing the context and mobilising residents is seen as “laying your foundation”, and a

crucial step to prevent “too many problems down the line” (Fg5:10). In many cases, the project leader first appoints and engages external stakeholders such as consultants or facilitators, which is discussed further in Section 6.3 below. This resonates with Chrislip and Larson’s (1994:59) emphasis on the importance of public leaders assessing the initial context in order to identify key stakeholders.

6.2.1 Mobilising communities via formal mechanisms and informal practices

Although City officials follow the legislated prescripts for informing and mobilising people to participate (usually for a public meeting or to invite comments on a by-law, for example), many are of the view that this is generally ineffective (Fg5:8; Int3:10; Fg1:14). One of the major legacies of apartheid is a highly differentiated spatial form, reflecting and reinforcing racial, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural differences. Some mobilising mechanisms and tactics may therefore be more appropriate for one segment of the population than for others. Individually, officials seem to grasp this. At a City level, however, the City may not sufficiently account for this, as one official claimed:

My personal view is that we do not have a good grasp of the hard reality that this city is actually three different cities in one. It’s really hard for people to understand that it’s not a one size fits all city. [...] Sometimes we make legislative decisions that one size fits all, because we say, ‘what is good for the one is good for the other.’ That’s okay if you’re dealing apples with apples, but we’re not dealing apples with apples (Fg8:3).

This disjuncture manifests in the limited reach of what is considered standard practice for mobilising and advertising participation opportunities, which includes advertising online, in local newspapers, on radio, and in libraries. Poorer segments of the population are potentially excluded: “A lot of people don’t go to the library. The poor don’t buy a newspaper” (Fg5:8; Fg6:10). Some officials raised similar concerns about who the City should be targeting, noting that increased use of electronic documentation, social media and websites to market specific projects is unlikely to provide adequate reach (Fg8:3; cf Int4:12). Although the City also publishes adverts in community newspapers, these are also not a sufficient form of mobilisation. As one official recalled: “we noticed in one community hall that all of the community newspapers that were meant to be distributed in the community were just being left in a room somewhere, thousands of them from months and months ago” (Int10:7). Some officials again acknowledged the compliance-mindset in the City, explaining that, “we just advertise and go through the motions” (Int17:4).

But it is not only the type of mechanisms used that can be problematic; whether the content is accessible also matters:

It's too complex. If you read those notices on what you need to participate in, you read the first three paragraphs, you're lost already. If you're a layman, [...] even me working in the City, reading some of those notices, [...] you're not sure what you just read because the notice is written in such a compliance manner. [...] You can put too much information on there and in the end it can bamboozle them. Or you can put very little information and they say, 'you didn't tell me anything.' It's flawed (Fg1:14).

One of the challenges to departmental mobilisation is that the communications unit must first approve public notices and posters (Int16:14; see Section 5.2.3). There is, in other words, a degree of centralised internal control over any messaging from the City, which frustrated some officials as they found that messages can become cryptic and devoid of useful content (Fg1:9). Alongside the official rhetoric of participation, these kinds of strategies may indicate the tendency towards compliance.

Sometimes officials take creative measures to advertise engagement opportunities in the hope of ensuring good attendance and representation at public meetings. This can involve putting up posters, or organising loud hailing in an area (Int3:10; Fg10:7). In informal settlements, loud hailing is perceived to be one of the most effective methods, although it is not 'officially' recognised as ticking the box of prescribed communication procedures (Int3:11). In some cases, officials may already be familiar with local community organisations and engage them directly to assist with informing residents of an upcoming meeting or event (Int3:13; Int4:10). In one such case, officials went beyond the requirements by standing in front of busy shopping centre during peak hours to inform passers-by of an upcoming public meeting and show them posters about the meeting (Fg5:25).

Finally, departments and officials rely on the City's stakeholder database, despite concerns regarding its accuracy (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2). Some departments have also developed their own databases of relevant organisations and stakeholders (e.g. schools, faith-based organisations, CBOs/NGOs, sports clubs, businesses, etc.), recognising that, "you can't really engage with them if you don't know them" (Int4:8; Fg5:4). Others have used community household surveys to map service and satisfaction levels in preparation for project planning (Fg8:11; Int7:3). These examples are indicative of the pragmatic ways in which officials and

individual departments work to enhance the reach of their mobilisation efforts. These also tend to take the form of technical methods intended to establish the presence of formal organisations or the levels of service needs of households. In contrast, a few officials spoke about more informal and relational ways through which they have tried to understand communities' perspectives and experiences, and to build relations of trust. This included, for instance, spending time physically in communities, attending community-led initiatives against crime, and making the effort to speak the local language (Int11:4; Fg10:9).

6.2.2 Working with ward councillors

To bring communities into project processes, most officials first engage the City's formal representative structures (i.e. ward councillors and sub-council managers) to assist with identifying and mobilising communities and community organisations and leadership structures (Fg1:13; Fg2:16; Fg5:9; Fg8:6; Fg10:13; Fg11:2; Fg13:4; Fg14:4; Int3:4; Int16:11; Int17:2). Although engaging councillors is not legally required (Fg12:9), it has developed into a fairly established practice.

Councillors may advise officials as to the best method for advertising a meeting, suggesting, for instance, the use of community radio and loud hailers rather than printing pamphlets (Fg5:24). They may put officials in contact with local community leaders (Fg11:2), or assist with getting community leaders to distribute pamphlets (Fg2:16). A committed councillor may even organise and chair community meetings for a specific project (Fg10:13). According to one official, councillors can be useful to "bring a crowd", as well as to make a community more "receptive" to a project (Fg14:4). In fact, "a political stamp of approval" can help to secure community buy-in for a project, especially if it is a strategic project for the City, or one that changes service delivery circumstances for people and may potentially be resisted (e.g. the introduction of pre-paid water or electricity meters) (Int17:5).

The support and involvement of councillors is not, however, a given (Fg11:11; Fg5:13). Councillors may politicise project meetings (Int3:4), or they may simply make no effort to get involved (Fg10:13). They may act, or be perceived to act, as gatekeepers by selecting who to inform and mobilise, and possibly not informing ward committees or local community structures at all (Int3:4). They may even try to block a project if they believe it could undermine their authority in the community (Fg11:9). In one case, a ward councillor rejected a proposed housing upgrade outright, claiming 'the community' was not interested. When one

of the officials in the project sidestepped the councillor by going door to door to speak to residents, many were reportedly interested and the project continued (Int6:22).⁶⁷

Although this example shows how councillors can subvert projects, it also illuminates a key tension within officials' rhetoric and practices of engagement. On the one hand, officials work through political structures, especially where this can secure better "buy in" from communities. On the other, officials may actively work to depoliticise project plans and claim a position of political neutrality (Fg14:19; Fg2:18; Int6:6). This entails being clear with communities "that you are an official and not a politician" (Fg2:18), and that, "I'm here as an administrator, I'm here to make a change for you" (Fg14:18). This is believed to be important to get people to "actually understand what you're saying" and not "see you as a threat" (Fg14:18-19). It is worth quoting one official at length as an example of how this kind of agenda framing occurs:

I always try and coach people in a way. We say, don't just bring politics into your lives, don't just say to the City, 'no,' because you perceive it to be like this or that. Think of your children, think of yourself. Ask yourself how long are you still going to be in the informal settlements? [...] And then people will start to actually shift their mindset from a political way into the reality, into, 'what is it that my children need, what is it that I need?' [...] And when you engage people on that level, [...] then they support us. And sometimes they stand up to their councillors to say, 'this is what we want'. So it's just dependent on how we engage, how we communicate. It goes around mutual respect and being neutral as an official (Int6:6).

As this quote illustrates, claiming political neutrality constitutes an important agenda framing practice whereby officials try to frame developments by and from the City. The intention is ultimately for communities to "buy-in" to a specific project or service, because it will develop and change their lives. An indirect or implicit consequence of this manoeuvre is the framing of officials' practices as largely administrative or technical decisions around methods and services, but at the same time as part of a broader vision of development and social change.

⁶⁷ That officials may circumvent local councillors in this manner can be understood in relation to the way local political representation has been formally structured in South Africa, as well as the realities confronting ward councillors on the ground. As detailed by Oldfield (2008:491), councillors' "structural abilities" to address concerns and priorities in their wards are "bound up by municipal, provincial and national priorities for service delivery". Ward committees themselves are structurally unable to ensure council addresses a particular issue (ibid.). There may also be tensions between ward councillors from parties different from the majority party in Council.

Thus it resonates with perspectives of participation as a means to ensure service delivery, but also as a process linked to ‘transformation’. However, this is evidently interpreted in terms of physical development (as noted by Oldfield in the literature, 2008:488).

What seems to be left out of the explicit framing, however, is the form and quality of this transformation and development, and whether there are alternative visions and options for change. This suggests such engagement processes do not necessarily enable communities to critique proposed project plans, or to introduce and consider alternatives. In this instance, it is less about a deliberative process to grasp different perspectives of the problem (as collaboration is defined by Ansell & Gash, 2007:547), than it is about deliberate contextualising (Corvellec & Risberg, 2007:313) by officials. The extent to which officials’ are themselves constrained in this process, and what this suggests regarding public leadership, are examined in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.4.

6.2.3 Working with community leadership structures

Whether or not officials rely on ward councillors or sub-council managers to mobilise broader communities or to identify local community structures, they do generally work through community organisations and leaders. This is crucial to secure permission to engage residents in the first place (Fg10:13). Informal settlement areas in particular tend to operate via organised community structures (Int17:2). These may take the form of street committees or residents’ committees, community development forums, or specific organisational structures such as the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) (Int4:10; Fg5:24). Although such structures vary from area to area, these are an essential point of contact for officials, both for engagement and for project and service delivery work (Fg13:4; Fg11:2; Fg12:5; Fg14:2; Fg8:13). Having “a good working relationship” with community leaders is therefore a core aspect of officials’ own ability to mobilise and engage people in service delivery and development projects (Fg2:16). Some officials thus lamented the fact that local leadership structures are not always “cooperative or stable” (Fg12:5).

Working with community leaders is not necessarily easy and straightforward, however. Even knowing (and deciding) who to work with can be difficult. One official recounted an experience of ‘entering’ a specific informal settlement where he was familiar with a local crèche run by a “remarkable” local leader (Int4:10). The official decided to work through this leader to engage the broader community at her facilities, only to find well-structured, formal leadership committees in place, and whose representatives were extremely upset the official

did not come to them first (Int4:10-11). Although in the interview the official explained how he tried to ‘make things right’, the example illustrates how identifying local leadership structures often involves a process of selection by officials (for a similar observation, see Thompson et al., 2018).⁶⁸

The question of who officials work with also filters into more formal structures of engagement. Most project-level engagements led by departments involve communities in open public meetings, as well as through the establishment of a representative community structure that would exist for the duration of the project. This is usually referred to as the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The primary role of the PSC is to provide inputs into project decisions (hence to “steer” the project). Although this suggests a clear mechanism for ‘power-sharing’ between the City and communities, what the PSC does in practice varies by project and appears to be somewhat limited. In informal settlement housing or upgrading projects, a PSC might meet regularly and give inputs into the layout and design of houses, commenting on “as much detail about the plan” as is possible (Fg2:3). However, as will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.2, the power of such a structure to influence actual decisions remains limited at the outset. In fact, “the project steering committee can recommend, but the decisions are taken institutionally by the City by way of internal processes” (Fg2:14).

How and when a PSC is established varies by department, and depends on the nature of the project and service. In some projects, a PSC is setup at the very beginning; in others, only once a contractor has been appointed (Fg2:5). Some use the broader public meeting to nominate representatives; others work through existing community leadership structures to elect a smaller group for the PSC (Int17:11; Int3:2; Int6:22; Fg2:8; Fg3:4). There may also be representatives from the ward committee included. Some departments also use a Terms of Reference for setting up and running the PSC (Fg2:13).

As the main vehicle to inform decisions at the project level, the composition of the PSC matters. It is important for ensuring the legitimacy and balance of representation, and thus of

⁶⁸ In community workshops as part of a Human Sciences Research Council project on community engagement in cities undertaken in 2014-2015, it was evident based on the concerns of participating community leaders that the City’s interactions with some leaders are perceived by others as ‘preferential treatment’, especially when resources are made available and used in favour of that leader (Vivier, 2014: field notes).

the process as a whole. Project leaders usually set the maximum size of the committee (ranging from six to fifteen members). Some officials further noted the risk of box-ticking when it comes to getting the “legally required people” involved, since these may not necessarily be “the affected people” (Fg2:4). A project leader may thus identify a particular stakeholder as a key beneficiary – whether from a specific sector (e.g. taxi association) or even a specific organisation (e.g. ‘this NGO working here’) – that they believe should be on the committee. Some officials also, however, explained that it is not up to them to decide who is legitimate or not:

You find there’s more than one civic organisation, and each organisation will want to be represented, and you will find in some they can be duplicated because of their own different factions. It’s not our role as officials to say this one is the legitimate one and this one is not (Fg2:7).

Various examples from officials suggest there are instances where the project leader allows adjustments in the composition of the PSC in order to accommodate ‘local realities’. For instance, if more organisations or more representatives from one organisation claim a place, the designated number of spots may be increased (Fg2:8).

At the same time, officials are wary of any possible gatekeeping by community leaders, given that there may be multiple types and factions of organisations, sometimes characterised by different housing and socio-economic situations (e.g. shack settlements, backyard shacks, hostels, council rental housing, formal housing, etc.).⁶⁹ Committee members may therefore try to control access to any resource allocations made available through the project (discussed further in Section 6.3.3 below), or to City services and facilities (Fg8:15). Ultimately, “there is no straightforward answer to it” (ibid.). One official recounted a project that spanned across two ward and sub-council boundaries, represented by two different political parties (Int3:4). This created considerable conflict between the councillors, as well as severe project delays

⁶⁹ In yet another project, the researcher was part of a meeting with community leaders to introduce the project and establish a smaller team comprising community representatives. The approximately 50 leaders in attendance were familiar with the concept and terminology of a steering committee, but raised many issues regarding the ability of individuals from certain areas to represent others, specifically due to the different living and housing conditions (e.g. shack settlements, backyarders, hostels, etc.). The discussion to agree on the number of representatives to be on the steering committee took a full hour (Vivier, 2016: field notes).

because the councillors disagreed about what the representation on the project steering committee should be.

In relation to projects, one official explained that it is not uncommon for a group of people to try to plant themselves onto a project steering committee, claiming to not have been part of the original engagement and selection process (Fg2:27). Although the official believed, “there is not much you can do about it”, he also pointed to the need to “keep your records from the first stage of your participation” (ibid.). Another official noted the importance of asking community leaders present in a meeting what other organisations or leaders should be involved, and being cognizant of possible tensions or gatekeeping, especially where someone seems especially insistent that a particular organisation need not be there (Int17:2-3). These issues illustrate some of the mobilising and structuring tactics that are enacted by both officials and community leaders.

In one example, an official recounted inheriting a project steering committee from a project that had run into severe delays. The project objective was to formalise an informal settlement situated within a relatively well-developed ward. The PSC therefore included representatives from beyond the informal settlement area, including a few strong ratepayers associations that used the PSC to resist and stall the initiative. The new project leader decided to re-establish the steering committee, with special attention to representation of the informal residents:

We ended up with a lot of ratepayers whose only interest really was to remove the informal settlement that’s located next to them, so they’re not interested in the units or what we’re going to build. From the informal settlement there were only two people, so they would be completely outvoted. So I went back to the informal settlement, had a public meeting to get representatives from them; now they’re four (Fg2:9).

In this example, the official made an effort to influence the composition of the PSC in order to balance the power in the steering committee. This arguably comprises important power balancing work, at the heart of the role of public leadership in contexts of participation and collaboration (Van Wart, 2013:535; Page, 2010:251).

This example also suggests that officials’ decisions are not necessarily neutral, as some may claim. Rather, the action described above served to increase the influence of some, whilst decreasing the influence of others. It appears justified in this context on the basis of the unequal distribution of power that emerged in the original setup of the steering committee, as

well as the power imbalance between the socio-economically privileged members represented by the ratepayers associations, and the residents of the informal settlement. It may therefore also be justified on the basis that the informal settlement upgrade (the purpose of the project) contributes towards the broader public interest of improving social well-being and addressing inequalities. The efforts of the ratepayers associations to block the project may thus be perceived, in this context, as a private interest holding public interest at bay. The actions of the official to mobilise a particular community – informal residents – can therefore be construed as an effort to shape the structural representation on the PSC in order to preserve and promote the public interest.

In discussing this example and related issues around the project steering committee, this study is less interested in the possibility of achieving full or legitimate community representation, than in how officials use structures like the project steering committee, and how their practices inform opportunities and scope for representation and influence. Some officials presented an awareness of, and sensitivity towards their role in doing so, as in the above example. And yet, most officials' reflections in this regard involved claims of neutrality: i.e. that it is not for them to decide who is legitimate or not. As will be discussed further in Chapter 7, this distancing from such decision-making conceals the way the very existence of a structure like the PSC – a City invited space – operates as a mechanism that confers and withholds legitimacy: it legitimises members of the committee and their views and interests, and thereby implicitly de-legitimises other avenues of engagement and representation.

6.3 Weaving and navigating relations

Beyond and in between their mobilising and structuring practices, officials who lead projects must also fulfil an important mediation and facilitation role. They must mediate between community needs and interests, City priorities, and the interests and expertise of other organisational partners and consultants. Such external partners include non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that may support or conduct community engagement processes on behalf of the City, or consultants and contractors who are involved in the actual implementation of projects (i.e. planning, design and construction/delivery). The latter often also entails the provision of employment or sub-contracting opportunities.

Navigating between these different stakeholders is at the heart of many of the challenges with collaboration identified in the public leadership literature (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2). This requires mediating between different, if not competing, interests, addressing power

imbalances, and facilitating power-sharing and deliberations towards mutual understanding and agreed solutions. Although the literature tends to emphasise relationship-building elements of this practice, as expressed in the term ‘weaving’, the data from this study suggest that City officials’ work can be better understood as practices of ‘navigating’. The next three sections discuss how officials navigate the roles and relations between different ‘partners’ towards project delivery.

6.3.1 Roles and relations between the City and external partners

As with other practices and methods, the use of external partnering among City officials, and the benefits and challenges experienced, vary widely throughout the City (Int7:9; Int3:28; Fg1:10; Fg11:23; Fg14:18; Fg2:14; Fg10:12). With regard to NGOs and facilitation support, some officials reported hardly ever working with NGOs (Fg11:23), whilst others described well-established and functioning relationships (Fg2:22; Int6:8). Such partnerships tend to focus on supporting and facilitating community engagements, with NGOs often doing the work of mobilising and ‘preparing’ communities before the City gets involved in the process (Int7:9; Fg3:22). Some officials find this valuable, especially where NGO partners have better knowledge of the local communities, can speak the local language, will set up community meetings, provide translation for the project leader, or even advise the project leader on how to respond during a meeting based on “cultural” insights (Fg10:12-13).

However, many concerns were also raised regarding the role and work of NGOs in City projects, especially with regard to their engagements with communities and the impact this has on agenda framing. In some processes, the NGO partner may spend considerable time engaging the community without the City’s involvement, but on behalf of a particular City project. From City experiences, NGO partners may thus raise community expectations around what the City can deliver:

When you as a City official get to be part of it, you have to then start backtracking and say, ‘No, but we can’t give you this, and that’s going to take much longer’. And then, ‘Ja, but we were told we were going to get everything.’ So that also creates conflict, and you have to go back meeting after meeting after meeting to get them to understand there is such a

thing as legislation, there is such a thing as supply chain, there is such a thing as MFMA⁷⁰.
[...] And the NGOs, when they go out there, they've got a different agenda (Int7:9).

As this quote shows, where NGOs do most of the engagement work at the start of a project, this can have a major impact on how community agendas are framed. Working through NGOs can therefore be risky for officials insofar as NGOs work on behalf of the City (being representatives of the City and partners with the City for a project), but also on behalf of communities, as well as their own organisational mandates (see also Fg2:32). The result for the City can be a project 'in progress' but essentially delayed for many years:

In this case, they've promised a community of three thousand-odd households that we're going to give you everything you need [and] nobody's going to move an inch. And just by the density of the settlement, the typography, the way they're sitting there, there's no practical way of us servicing and upgrading a settlement of that magnitude without some people moving, making way for a road. 'No, no, no, we'll just tar the cow paths in-between.' I said, 'Then how are you going to get your waste collection through here? How are you going to get your vehicles in for emergency services? How are you going to collect your sanitation points that you want to roll out one-on-one for every household?' *So the technical side of the 'do' part, versus what you sell the community on the soft side, it's got to gel somewhere.* Otherwise it's going to sit seven years later with nothing to show for it (Int7:9; emphasis added).

A key challenge, as this example makes clear, is the balance or distribution of roles in relation to the negotiation of interests, needs and various types of knowledge. This may be a matter of how the overall process is structured, how the 'partnership' between the City and the NGO is structured, and how clear the details of the 'partnership' have been made. Arguably, the latter ought to include details regarding responsibilities and understandings of one another's process requirements, technical constraints, organisational priorities, etc.

Similar concerns were raised in another focus group where an official noted challenges with NGO partnerships when the City is not paying for their services, and there is no legislative framework to support the relationship (Fg3:22). The result is that the City doesn't "have control over the NGOs"; "they do their thing and we do our thing" (ibid.:23). As in the above example, the outcome at the project level in such a situation is severe delays due to on-going

⁷⁰ Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003 (RSA, 2003).

“community conflicts” that the NGO has not been able to resolve (ibid.).⁷¹ Further limitations to working with external stakeholders and partners were also noted. This included stringent procurement policies and supply chain management processes (Int3:28; Fg2:31). There is also the risk of contracting in an NGO who is likely to have other funders, which may raise questions regarding the City’s association with them, overlapping roles and potential conflicts of interests, etc. (Int3:29).

Despite these risks and limitations, officials also recognised the value and importance of facilitation capacity, often expressing a desire for greater external facilitation support, as well as a need for better internal facilitation skills (Int4:20; Fg12:12; Fg2:28; Int7:12; Fg3:16). External facilitation was noted to play a significant role where there is low trust in the City (Fg5:16). Where external consultants facilitate meetings, the project leader is able to “speak in his [sic] capacity as an official rather than be an arbiter or a chairperson at the same time” (ibid.). Another interviewee concurred, describing the role of the consultant as a kind of mediator in a family argument:

You’re a family, you have an argument, you can be talking and you don’t hear; but somebody else comes in who’s not part of that dynamic and suddenly you can hear what you weren’t able to hear. It’s exactly the same, but it’s just because somebody else is saying it. So, sometimes it is helpful to get somebody else, who’s not in the thick of it [...] If there is a conflict or a difficult arrangement between the City and a group, whatever they are, they might not be able to kind of finesse the process all the way through in quite the same way, as someone who is not part of it (Int2:9).

It is not immediately clear from the above quote whether such a mediator would speak on behalf of both parties, to “finesse the process” as a whole rather than to finesse one of the parties. In addition, these reflections suggest it is not necessarily or only about someone having specific facilitation skills, but also about being a third party, i.e. being located (structurally) outside of the City. An interesting contrast to this point was a claim by another interviewee that it is important for City officials to have proper facilitation skills, defined as the capacity to “chair a meeting with authority, or deal with a situation with authority, or deal with that community with confidence” (Fg2:28). In other words, the alternative approach for

⁷¹ This research did not include any non-governmental or civil society organisations as part of the data collection. This is therefore only one perspective of the challenges of such partnerships and collaborations.

the City is to take charge and embrace its role and position of authority vis-à-vis the community.

6.3.2 Navigating relations in project design

Another form of partnership and collaboration occurs when the City brings consultants on board, particularly as part of the planning, design and implementation of projects. Although not many officials discussed such scenarios in detail, a few key examples are illustrative of how City officials navigate the relations between communities and such consultants, and how they balance community interests, City priorities and the technical expertise of departments and consultants. This sheds further light on the extent to which this enables “shared power” constituted by community agency and government responsiveness, and ultimately, on how decisions are made.

6.3.2.1 Multi-stakeholder development planning

Projects involving external organisational partners are often arranged into different structures, such as a project management team (PMT), a project steering committee (PSC), and the consultants. The decision-making process would then involve several iterations between the two committees and consultants in order to gather inputs, and develop and revise options.

In one project example, the City is itself a partner in a multi-stakeholder development planning project, where it sits on the Project Management Team (PMT) with provincial government. Broader stakeholder engagements in the project are conducted via an “association” organised and structured by the consultants on the project (Int2:6-8). The project is unique, however, as it involves a long-term planning process for the development of a crucial geographic area in the City. It thus includes multiple sectors, stakeholders and stages, where the City is one among several partners involved in different collaborative structures within the project (Int2:3). Being geographically oriented, the project includes several public landowners (including local, provincial and national government departments), several private landowners and leaseholders, and a consortium of five consulting companies (Int2:4). Residents and interest groups are also represented in the “association” through various organisations. The PMT meets on a monthly basis to work out options and details of possible proposals, which are then discussed at broader stakeholder engagements (Int2:7). Notably, the members of the PMT are not all required to attend the broader engagements (ibid.:8). Parallel to this project, a local NGO has also initiated additional engagements to

support project discussions, and to educate especially the community participants on some of the critical issues informing the project, such as density and transport-oriented development (ibid.:16).

Although the project was, at the time of the research, still within the “visioning” phase, a number of concerns were raised with regard to roles and responsibilities, implying challenges around the leadership of the project. The project was initiated in 2003, but was still in the early stages of planning in 2016, at the time of this research. Decisions still had to be made on who all to consider as affected stakeholders, and therefore who to bring into the project. Some key groups, although identified, were still excluded. Challenges were also experienced around how to manage information flows in order to facilitate discussions, and whether all participants were capable of engaging on complex matters and technical discussions (ibid.:13, 17). Although the interviewee noted lack of clarity around the role and purpose of the formal association, the data did not provide much detail on how the City (or even the PMT) worked to build relations between the different partners in order to address this.

6.3.2.2 Community park design

Another example involved the design and development of a park as a component of a broader urban development/area planning process. In this example, a similar approach was used in running parallel processes with a project management team (PMT) (in this case involving relevant City departments) and a project steering committee (PSC). The project leader organised for the design and engineering consultants to present plans to the respective committees at key points in the process (Int20:1). The official noted a number of reasons for running the two committee processes separately: so that technical issues and “dirty laundry” from departments can be worked out without communities, as this would be a waste of their time given the technical nature, but also so that officials may discuss openly the constraints to a specific proposal from the perspective of different services/sectors (ibid.). It is also, “from an efficiency point of view”, better to exclude all the relevant departments in the community meetings in order to prevent residents being side-tracked onto other issues and needs (ibid.).

An iterative process between committees and planning was then followed. Whilst the consultants and PMT provided technical expertise, the community, via the PSC, was expected “to provide inputs and local knowledge into the process” (Int20:2). At the start, this entailed identifying local issues and priorities for which the consultants would later provide technical analysis and produce viable options, e.g. a new clinic, a park, etc. Another iteration with the

PSC then elicited further comments until three options were agreed. Through this process, the project leader explained, “people must be able to make decisions or influence decisions [...] otherwise what is the point?” (ibid.). That the PSC in this case was able to identify and decide on the final priorities for the development of their community may thus be taken as an example of success in terms of community contribution to agenda framing in a participatory planning process.

The outcome of the above planning process was a ‘precinct plan’ and the development of five business plans by relevant departments for the implementation of the identified priorities (Int20:3). Through this process, the available City budget and financial viability of each priority was determined, which resulted in one request (for a market for traders) being rejected (ibid.). The business case for one of the other requests – a park – was taken forward by the same project leader, and is the focus of the rest of the section.

The design and building of the park included its own participatory component through the establishment of a new Project Steering Committee and a Project Management Team.⁷² A similar iterative process then followed, beginning with identification of community issues and aspirations related to the park, conceptual design of options, community participation on proposals, and detailed design (Int20:4; Int3:24). An open house and survey of priorities were used to elicit broader community ideas and “requests” to be considered in the project. At the same time, engineering consultants were hired to design and build the park in a parallel process. The perception was that there are aspects of the design that the community will not be able to decide, such as, “what tree or what irrigation bubbler” to use (Int3:24). In this particular case, the consultants were, according to the project leader, motivated by the desire “to win [design] awards” (Int3:16).

Whilst the consultants made presentations to the PSC and PMT, and technical discussions and decisions were confined to the PMT (as before), the project leader mediated the process between different stakeholders and interests, thus interpreting and ‘translating’ agendas

⁷² In the interview, the official who led the project describes the challenges around getting inputs, presenting his/her own agenda in terms of delivering the service: “there’s a service we need to deliver and in this case the service is the park”; “you need to design your public participation process to deliver the service” (Int3:14). At the start of the design process, the ward councillor (who had been part of the original planning process), insisted on a swimming pool rather than a park. Clearly exacerbated, the official pushed back, explaining “the community” decided on a park in the previous participation process, and this could no longer be changed (Int3:14).

towards a final design. This role of the project leader was described in a similar way by another department: the project leader acts as facilitator and takes information from the technical meetings and “make[s] it less technical” “so that the project steering committee members will understand what exactly the consultants are up to” (Fg2:20). It is also the responsibility of the project leader to give direction to the consultants, based on knowledge of the settlements and engagements with the PSC (Fg3:17). The PSC is then given the opportunity to comment, on behalf of the community, on the more detailed park plans. In this case, the PSC rejected proposals for fancy timber play equipment surrounded by sandpits, citing the risk of theft and likely misuse of the sandpit by cats and dogs (Int3:15). In this way, the project leader explained that he “actually used the project steering committee to moderate the consultants” (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the opportunity provided to the PSC to engage with the proposed design, the final decisions on the project reveal their limited decision-making power, and hence the constraints to power-sharing in the overall process. In fact, the project leader explained how the final design exceeded the project budget, a mistake he attributed to the consultants:

I was furious. You’ve taken this project through public participation, you’ve made these commitments to pump tracks and splash pads and all these fancy things, and now we’re twenty five percent over. We now need to go back to the project steering committee and say, ‘Sorry’, cap in hand, ‘We made a mistake, the consultants have made a mistake, we’ve got all these additional costs, what do we need to take out?’ See, that is, in a lot of the instances, it’s when you let your consultants go too far (Int3:15-16).

This mistake, and its attribution to the consultants, may be indicative of a local governance context where ‘collaboration’ and sub-contracting are used to deliver projects and engage communities, rendering power and responsibility increasingly diffuse rather than ‘shared’ (discussed further in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.3.3). Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring the project design remains within the available budget, and to ensure this informs the engagement and design process? The official continued:

The consultants then kick back because they say, ‘Oh, the City must commit money to these poor areas’. It’s not the fact that we can’t afford to maintain a R20 million park. We need that park. [But] if we can do a park for R20 million, we can do two parks for R10 million. [...] They’re not being pragmatic about it (Int3:16).

As this quote suggests, from the perspective of the official, there are important trade-offs that need to be made and which consultants do not necessarily understand. The official also picks up on questions of the ‘public good’ and how best to achieve that (through one or multiple parks). But this question cannot, by virtue of structure and design, feature in discussions during project design and implementation within a specific geographic area.⁷³ It is finally critical to note how the issue of cost was finally addressed:

I had to go back, and I said to the community, ‘Listen, we need to take some things out’. We took out the pump track. It’s unfortunate, it’s what people were really excited about, but it hadn’t been detailed in the design and costed properly.

In other words, regardless of final project cost issues, and despite the process of eliciting community ideas and experience for the park design, these inputs had not actually been “detailed” and “costed” in the first place. This suggests that, whilst the rhetoric about participation in the process noted the importance of community voice and inputs, the reality of the process may have been much less a forum for sharing the decision-making and more for securing buy-in to realise City priorities, ultimately determined and enforced through budgetary allocations.

6.3.2.3 Emergency housing provision

The final example illustrates how navigating relations and processes at the organisational level can, at times, take precedence over the relations and communications with communities. At first citing the example as a ‘success’ and later disqualifying it as such, an interviewee described a 2013 emergency housing case that the City had to manage after a fire destroyed 800 homes in an informal settlement, leaving 3000 people homeless (Fg3:17). Although housing is a major issue across the City, the situation in this case presented an immediate crisis requiring swift action. The decision was made to provide housing for the affected families by relocating them into another community.

The official recalling the project described the huge successes in negotiating agreements with the relevant national departments, completing the statutory processes to get planning approvals (which involved various consultants), and procuring a contractor in record time

⁷³ This may be the kind of prioritisation that occurs at the IDP and budget meetings.

(ibid.). An agreement was signed with the community to be relocated, but engagements with the identified ‘host’ community failed to garner their support. At the time of writing (2018), the affected residents are still living in a temporary relocation area, waiting for their promised housing development. Although the interviewee did not provide further details on the nature of interactions that took place, the sense of success regarding inter-organisational engagements and formal processes, on the one hand, stands in stark contrast to the failures of engagement and communication with the community, on the other.

6.3.3 Navigating relations in project labour allocations

This final section examines how officials navigate relations between communities and contractors. As discussed in Chapter 5, a major component of engagement at the project level relates to opportunities for employment and sub-contracting. This, therefore, becomes an important influence on, and lens into, the way public leader practices in participation take shape. As with mobilisation and structuring work, officials use both formal and informal structures and relations in the process.

6.3.3.1 The formal process: The job-seekers database and community liaison officers

Formally, two key mechanisms the City uses to manage the employment of local labour are community liaison officers (CLOs) appointed to projects, and a job-seekers database managed by the sub-councils.⁷⁴ The appointment of a CLO is a common practice across departments (Int3:20; Fg3:19; Int11:3; Fg10:20; Int17:11; Fg11:19). The CLO is drawn from the relevant community where the project will be implemented, and assists the City with, amongst other things, managing the allocation of jobs. In fact, as will be discussed below, the CLO can play a key role in the process through his/her knowledge of local community dynamics.

With regard to the job-seekers database, it is not clear to what extent this overall process of contracting through the database is well-known and accepted by community members and leaders. On the one hand, one official claimed that this is “fairly entrenched”, especially in black townships that are predominately ANC-run, and where the ward councillor works closely with communities (Int17:11). On the other hand, many officials questioned the reliability of the database, claiming that even some ward councillors believe, “that database

⁷⁴ The job-seekers database is different from the database used to register local and non-governmental organisations.

has got eyes” (Fg11:19). Whilst the database is supposed to provide a list of names through randomisation, some sub-councils appear to employ “the same people over and over again” (ibid.). Some officials also accused local councillors of manipulating the process, either by controlling whose forms are submitted or whose names are selected, or simply by claiming to control the process in return for support (Fg11:20). (Of course, it may also be CLOs themselves, who are sometimes relied on to identify labourers, and thus can become a channel for potential nepotism and cronyism).

Another challenge emerges from the fact that wards and sub-councils are geopolitical spaces that do not map neatly onto the dynamic, socially-constructed and ‘lived boundaries’ of actual communities. Whilst the database provides names of available workers within the sub-council area, projects are often more localised. Across communities, having workers in an area that do not also reside in that area has become a key issue (Fg10:8).⁷⁵ This means that, as one official explained, “we have in some communities a catch-22 where you cannot follow a sub-council process, but you have to. And then you have to mitigate the fall-out in the community. And I don’t think we’ve found a solution for that yet” (Fg10:18).

The usefulness and reliance of the sub-council database may be further thwarted by the fact that there are often factions and gangs that claim specific territories (Fg8:14; Fg7:11; Int10:2; Fg11:18). One official reported learning, through members in a community, of two factions that control specific government contracts in their area: one controls provincial contracts, the other City contracts (Fg10:17). The leaders of these factions take a cut from every job given to anyone in their respective areas. There can also be factions who refuse to register on the database, but will go to the project site during implementation, disrupt the work and demand to be allocated a portion of the project contract (Fg5:7-8). Small companies interested in sub-contracting opportunities may be unfamiliar with the formal database registration process, or claim to be unfamiliar and disrupt the work of the main contractor in hope of gaining work

⁷⁵ Similar findings emerged in The City Integrity Transparency, Accountability and Technology Project (InTAcT), an initiative of the Cities Support Programme (CSP) of National Treasury, which examined officials’ experiences with community engagement and local employment demands and practices in several South African metros (National Treasury, 2018). A key finding regarding procurement processes were challenges with ensuring a 30% allocation to local sub-contractors, with communities increasingly demanding opportunities only be given to those who are residents in their areas (ibid.:10).

opportunities in that way (Fg11:7-8).⁷⁶ Many officials have also had experiences with community leaders and local factions that circumvent the formal mechanisms in one way or another (Fg8:14; Fg7:11; Int10:2; Fg11:18).⁷⁷ In reflecting these experiences, officials expressed a sense of resignation about the situation, claiming that, given the socio-economic conditions of communities, “it’s never going to go away” (Fg10:17).

6.3.3.2 Mitigating tactics: pre-empting, responding and adapting

Despite these challenges, officials use various tactics to mitigate issues around sub-contracting and local employment. This involves being proactive rather than reactive: “We’ve built that into the process now where the first thing I ask a project manager is, ‘how many jobs? How many sub-contractors? How are you going to uplift this community with this project?’” (Fg10:28). Being proactive also means getting the timing right in terms of the appointment – and more importantly, the introduction – of the contractor to the community leaders or project steering committee. This is described as a “very important milestone” (Int17:10). It is also at this point that officials and community leaders discuss who the CLO will be, what the process for procuring labour will be, and how many labourers, with what skills, etc. (ibid.).

Mitigating tactics also include a keen awareness of ‘the employment question’ as it crops up throughout project processes. One official described it as an issue of gatekeeping: a community leader or particular community faction may raise a separate issue, to do with some aspect of the project or raise a complaint about the contract, and then insist they need to speak to the project leader or contractor alone (Int17:4). Their actual interest may, however, be to influence contracting decisions, either pushing for a greater number of jobs in the contract, or to secure those jobs for specific people. Pushing for a one-on-one discussion with either the project leader or the contractor raises red flags. The official’s tactic, then, is to persuade the community leaders that, since the issue they’ve raised also affects other members, it should therefore be discussed together (ibid.). This suggests an important element of public leadership is to be aware of, and to be able to elicit the interests and motivations that may underpin participants’ practices.

⁷⁶ Even community leaders may choose to “by-pass the sub-council”, resulting in officials having to respond to disruptions and demands (Fg11:8). People similarly disrupt work allocation for the EPWP (Fg11:8).

⁷⁷ There is also the possibility of community leaders and CLOs themselves becoming mechanisms for patronage.

As this general example illustrates, some officials are especially wary of relationships between communities and contractors, and are driven by the suspicion that “unholy alliances” will emerge (Fg14:6). Direct (and unmediated) interactions between community leaders and contractors could allow community leaders to influence who gets employed, potentially securing work for “their brothers and sisters” (Int17:4). Other officials described a similar strategy:

We try to keep the contractor away from the communities and the politicians. A good contractor is there to provide a service; a contractor is not there to go and engage. We are the face of the City. If the community’s got an issue, they need to address it with us as officials, because if they start dealing with the contractor, then they start manipulating the contractor. So we try and protect the contractor from that ourselves, instead of exposing the contractor (Fg14:6).

Procedurally, then, officials try to ensure contractors are introduced formally to the project steering committee, and to control the relationship in order to “protect” the contractor from undue influence.⁷⁸ Here, weaving relations rather entails navigating relations, and being aware of where and when to prevent the formation of relations.

This does not mean, however, that officials do not try to find ways to appease demands raised around employment. In one example, a relatively small utilities project that involved EPWP⁷⁹ workers was earmarked for an area with a number of gangs and gang boundaries (Fg11:19). In this case, it was “immaterial who you take off that database [because] you now need to screen them: where they stay, and who are they? Are they neutral to the community, or are they involved in the organisation?” (Fg11:20). The officials leading the project thus recognised the need to ‘respect’ the gang boundaries, and incorporated into the process a step to take cognizance of this reality. The CLO played an important role, “knew the community dynamics”, and could say, “one, two three, you can work in area K. Remember you must stop on your line” (ibid.).

⁷⁸ Notably, one of the focus groups criticised another department for often failing to introduce contractors at all, and even failing to plan for engagement, even when residents/households will have to be moved (FG3:25).

⁷⁹ Extended Public Works Programme.

In another example of a park development in a temporary housing settlement (different from the previous park example), the project leader described how, regardless of the fact that they had a seemingly successful engagement process to get community inputs into the design, employment issues still arose during implementation (Fg5:10). One week into construction, the project was disrupted by people on site threatening the workers and literally undoing their work by filling up the holes they had dug for the construction. The project leader, with the councillor, went back to the community to understand what was going on: “we stood there and was shouted at for about half an hour, and then everybody calmed down and we could actually have a conversation” (Fg5:11). Eventually it came out that the real issue was labour, and that people felt they had not been consulted in the matter.

According to the project leader, two things salvaged the situation. First, they used the attendance register from previous meetings to show the disruptors had in fact been present, and therefore could not claim to not have been consulted. Second, they had “a very good contractor” who was willing to find ways to provide more work opportunities within the project. He created two night watchman posts to guard the construction site through the night, and set up a rotation system so that more than two people would benefit from the additional position (ibid.). The official recounting the story described the experience as “one of the first ones” for him, but “when it happens now you don’t even worry about it, it’s part of the process” (Fg5:10). Still, “you’ve got to pick up the pieces in the way” (Fg5:11).

This section has shown how some officials seem to have found ways to work through the challenges of employment and sub-contracting (even seeing these as part of the process). It has also shown how residents, community leaders, even councillors and CLOs may try to exercise influence in this matter, or circumvent the formal process to apply pressure in other ways (i.e. disruption and intimidation). This indicates not simply irresponsible or criminal behaviour, but potentially also the failures of formal City processes to adequately administer employment opportunities, as well as of participatory processes to adequately engage communities in ways that give legitimacy to the decisions made. Furthermore, the ways in which officials describe their role in mediating between communities and contractors, and the importance of “protecting” contractors from communities, illuminates again the way the governance approach to project and service delivery (increasingly done via procurement of private contractors) shapes the City’s relations with communities. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

6.4 Reflections on the four public leader practices

Officials' efforts to involve citizens and communities in their project and service delivery work clearly involve the key leadership practices discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.6. These practices are also situated within, and produced through the City's organisational context as well as certain broader governance arrangements (e.g. outsourcing).

Mobilising and convening communities is an obvious important element, and was understood in the literature as especially requiring attendance to issues of inclusion, accessibility and representation. In the South African metro of this study, mobilising occurs broadly in relation to general public meetings, informing residents of opportunities to engage, or in more specific structures such as project steering committees. In line with the public leadership literature, these practices require leaders to have a sense of context, including knowledge of relevant formal organisations and local conditions (Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:218). Notably, both City structures and relations influence the ability of individual officials to identify and mobilise communities or community leaders. These include, respectively, the kinds of platforms used (especially the stakeholder database), as well as the relations between officials, ward councillors and community leaders. There is further evidence of the important championing role that councillors or local leaders may play for a project, alongside that of the project leader.

Important mobilisation and structuring work also happens at the level of project steering committees. Specific legislative requirements call for the representation of key stakeholder groups (e.g. women, people with disabilities, youth, elderly) in such structures. Yet this is not sufficient assurance that such structures are properly representative or provide "equitable governance mechanisms" (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:299). In this regard, officials navigate between allowing communities to elect their representatives, whilst also at times taking proactive measures to influence the representation of certain communities. In addition, the structuring of project steering committees alongside other structures and roles (e.g. project management team) suggests these are not always or necessarily "cross-boundary structures", as defined by Feldman et al. (2006:95), and Crosby and Bryson (2010b:220). Although there may be iterative planning and decision processes between different stakeholders, the data point to final decision-making that happens elsewhere.

At a micro-level, officials did report practices that cohere with those noted in the literature regarding how meetings may be run and how to ‘transfer ownership’ to participants (Page, 2010:250; Moore, 2014:98). This still remains limited in terms of decision-making, however. In many respects, there is a lack of clear structuring or establishment of roles and responsibilities, especially with regard to external facilitators and NGO partners. Yet clearly formalised agreements is recognised in the literature as an important element to guide the process (see for example, Hsieh & Liou, 2018:86).

With regard to weaving and navigating relations, this was defined in the literature as practices that involve the constructing of shared concerns and identities, but also acknowledging and preserving differences. In this case, officials’ experiences focus much more on navigating relations between different stakeholders and participatory structures than weaving relationships by naming and shaping identities (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:298; Mandell & Keast, 2009:169). This was especially evident in relation to the work of contractors, and the ways in which officials try to manage the roles and presence of contractors, even preventing any unmediated conversations and relations between community members and contractors. This may be attributed to the way services and projects are delivered through external contractors, and the way employment opportunities shape community agendas in participation.

Officials did, however, recognise the importance of facilitation, and the need for external facilitators or improved facilitation skills within the City. In some instances, such as in project steering committees and projects that carry over an extended period of time, officials expressed a sense of commitment and collaboration that resonates with the notion of “building “community” (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010:414) and building trust (Vangen & McGuire, 2015:17). At other times, however, it was rather about the translation of information between different stakeholders (e.g. communities and consultants) in the context of a lack of trust and different forms of knowledge. What appears to drive practices of shaping identities and weaving relations are, however, the desire to elicit community inputs and buy-in in order to achieve local ‘ownership’, which would help prevent vandalism and ultimately ensure efficient project delivery and sustained infrastructure services.

Finally, although not examined in a separate section, notable agenda framing practices were evident across the other three practices. From the literature, agenda framing pertains to the way the scope and objectives of a collaboration are established, how problems are interpreted and thus how solutions and responsibilities are further defined. Particular agenda-framing

efforts by officials include their claims to neutrality in setting up and selecting members of participatory structures/committees, and claims to neutrality regarding the purpose of specific projects. In line with the public leadership literature, these claims reflect particular interpretations of issues, roles and responsibilities.

The discussions on the work of NGOs who make ‘unrealistic promises’ are indicative of how the City’s role and responsibility are at times interpreted differently, which was perceived as a challenge for the City. Further, observations regarding the roles of communities, and the limits to the kinds of information and decisions they can influence, also suggest an interpretation (whether accurate or not) of roles and capabilities. Although the literature emphasises deliberative aspects of “meaning-making” processes (Page, 2010:248; Sullivan et al., 2012:44), the data in this study does not provide access to how discussions and deliberations in meetings actually unfold. It does, however, show how officials work to orient communities’ understanding of an issue “in a particular direction” (Corvellec & Risberg, 2007:315), potentially reflecting somewhat manipulative practices to “make things happen” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202). This is also evident in decisions regarding mobilisation and structuring.

In summary, the four practices emerge in the context of participation, in many ways aligning with the public leadership literature. However, these practices are clearly situated in the context of the City’s institutional structures, organisational objectives, and forms of delivery. Underpinning their efforts is the need to achieve certain outcomes, as defined by the City’s agenda for participation.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined officials’ experiences in departmental project and service delivery processes through the lens of the four leadership practices. The aim was to better understand the formal and informal practices employed to mobilise communities and stakeholders, structure participatory processes, weave and navigate relations between stakeholders, and ultimately frame City and project agendas. As those formally responsible for leading participation, the focus has been primarily on the roles of officials in these practices. Their reported experiences provide the entry point for examining what factors influence their decisions and practices.

The data suggest officials employ a combination of formal and informal activities or tactics that constitute and interconnect the four leader practices. Their formal practices are largely determined by relevant policies and legislation that prescribe timeframes and platforms for participation, including existing City structures and databases. Formal positions and structured roles are also important and utilised, notably that of ward councillors and sub-council managers, as well as formal community leaders. Engagements are thus undertaken via formally structured role relations between different City and community actors. However, discussions of potential gatekeeping, and the fact that officials do not always work through ward councillors and formal community leaders, suggest informal relationships at the individual level can also have an influence.

A number of informal practices overlay formal participatory structures and processes. These include, *inter alia*, pragmatic tactics to mobilise and build trust with communities, as well as discursive tactics to get project support, often through claiming political neutrality. Some officials even perform what may be described as ‘small acts of social activism’, such as influencing representation on a project steering committee. These kinds of seemingly technical or administrative decisions potentially impact how agendas are framed, supported and fulfilled. Implicit in some of these actions and narratives are also claims regarding the public good, and the characterisation of their work in terms of ‘making a change’ for people. Together, officials’ experiences and informal practices illuminate their agency in applying and adapting their participation work to specific project and community contexts.

However, evident across the four practices is also how individual agency in participation – whether of officials or communities/community leaders – is shaped (and at times constrained) in various ways. This includes, for instance, the requirements to use local institutional structures related to participation, such as the stakeholder and job seekers databases, as well as prescripts for project steering committees. It is often up to officials to navigate between the requirements of such structures and the dynamics within and between communities. Other structural influences included broader institutional and governance arrangements, such as the emphasis on outsourcing service delivery, which requires the involvement of consultants and contractors alongside communities. This shapes the form and content of officials’ practices in particular ways.

Finally, the data indicated that community participants’ formal influence on project or City agendas remain limited. This may result in people acting outside the City’s invited spaces

through alternative mechanisms and tactics (for example disrupting projects), in order to influence the allocation of resources and opportunities. In some instances, such disruptive tactics have been accepted by officials as part of the process, suggesting community members achieve a certain level of influence in structuring the City's own processes. Ultimately, however, the data confirm the literature on participation that government-led invited spaces generally determine the focus and form of engagement therein, with little real scope for participants to 'own' such spaces.

These initial findings raise questions regarding the scope for officials to address the challenges and limitations of participation, particularly the issue of power disparities and existing relations of power. As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.6, contexts of participation and collaboration are perceived as "shared power" situations, where knowledge, resources and influence are dispersed, and hierarchical leader-follower relations and formal positional power may be absent. However, power disparities also remain a key challenge in participatory contexts, and public leadership is thus expected to enable and sustain participation, in particular by addressing unequal relations of power. And yet, public leaders – and leader agency – remain informed by other factors, particularly existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities.

The next chapter expands the discussion of the four leader practices by examining the issues of power and structure. The chapter analyses officials' practices as efforts to balance power, but also potentially as expressions of structural power. Through this lens, the chapter examines the extent to which the public leader practices are shaped by broader structural constraints and opportunities, as elucidated in Chapter 3. In doing so, the chapter also expands the analysis and understanding of public leader practices beyond the work of individual officials, to acknowledge the dynamic and constitutive influence of social processes on leaders, and thus begin to adapt an entity perspective of public leadership towards a more constructionist and relational one, on the basis of the data.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION: TRACING POWER AND STRUCTURE THROUGH THE FOUR LEADER PRACTICES

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the key findings from the case study. Chapter 5 explored how officials understand participation, as well as the main structures and processes in place for participation in the City. These gave a lens into the City's participatory governance system, as well as the 'official narratives' attached to participation and engagement. It is within and through these structures and narratives that various participatory objectives are identified and pursued, and City-community relations are formed. In terms of the theoretical framework delineated in Chapters 2 and 3, the City's institutional and governance arrangements could, furthermore, be understood as potential key elements that influence and shape public leader practices, roles and challenges. Chapter 6 examined officials' experiences in departmental project and service delivery through the lens of the four practices. This included the formal and informal practices employed to mobilise and convene communities, structure participatory processes, weave and navigate relations between stakeholders, and ultimately frame City and project agendas. Officials' reported experiences also gave insight into various factors that influence their decisions and practices. Such factors – including formal and informal structures, processes and relations – enable and constrain leader agency, and ultimately shape leadership influence.

This chapter analyses the four public leader practices through the lens of power, and as expressions of the exercise and operation of power. This serves to shift the articulation of public leadership in terms of public leader practices towards a more expansive understanding of practices and the influence of structures and relations in the emergence thereof. The power lens is informed by key insights gleaned from Chapters 2 and 3. According to the public leadership literature in Chapter 2, power disparities within participation and collaboration need to be addressed, and public leaders may be able to do so through specific efforts and practices. The literature is also cautious regarding the exercise of "power over" (whether by leaders or participating stakeholders), as this can reinforce power differences. Public leaders are thus expected to facilitate power-sharing in the form of "power for" or "power to". This literature also recognises the important role of structures in shaping local practices. Through a social constructionist lens, structures (micro, meso and macro) are understood to enable and/or constrain agency, and therefore also contribute to the construction of public leadership

and the performance of practices. From the critical participatory development literature discussed in Chapter 3, macro-level structural relations and conditions are especially understood to influence micro-level structures, practices and opportunities. It is also structural power, as the power to determine “the surrounding structure of the relationship” (Strange, 1998:25) that matters, and that determines the positions and relations through which engagement occurs.

This chapter brings together these different theoretical strands through the analysis and discussion of the findings in terms of the exercise of power. The chapter is structured into two main sections.⁸⁰ The first section analyses each of the four leader practices in terms of the various influencing factors noted in the previous chapters. A number of key findings are drawn from this analysis, which are then discussed thematically in relation to power in the second part.

The analysis across the two sections shows that, firstly, officials’ practices are largely embedded in their formal positions and positional authority.⁸¹ It is also through their positional authority that officials exercise structural power in determining the micro-level parameters of participation. This contrasts with claims in the public leadership literature that positional authority is less relevant in collaborative contexts. The second finding from this case is that the City’s formal structures to support participation (at the micro or project level), function by reinforcing officials’ positional authority, legitimating or de-legitimating community actors, and ultimately defining the space of action. Participation is thus described as ‘authorised action’ that works within existing structural conditions.

Thirdly, this structural influence on practices and participation is not only limited to the micro level, however, but can also be traced to the City’s participatory governance system and outsourcing arrangements. Both of these dictate certain requirements for participation, create particular challenges for officials and communities, whilst also diffusing power across structures and stakeholders. This constrains the ability of City officials to facilitate between

⁸⁰ As with the previous chapter, the focus in this chapter is largely on project-level engagements and the roles of officials as project leaders. Much of the analysis is therefore drawn from these specific interviews and examples. Where relevant, more generalisable findings will be indicated.

⁸¹ Although the term positional power is often used (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1), the term positional authority is used here in order to distinguish more easily between positional power and structural power.

different stakeholders, as well as the ability of communities to hold the City (or other stakeholders) to account. Finally, the analysis situates officials and their positional authority within the City's institutional agenda around service delivery, efficiency and compliance, and its operation through the performance management system. This institutional agenda influences officials' roles and perspectives within participatory processes, evident in their own agenda framing practices.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on how communities and citizens work through and beyond the City's invited spaces in an effort to effectively demand government responsiveness and accountability, and impact policy decisions and implementation. These include a range of examples drawn from the interviews but also from the broader literature on social activism and social movement struggles in South Africa. These practices thus illuminate where collective mobilisation through relational power works to carve into the structural arrangements and layers of structural power exercised through the formal invited spaces of participation.

7.2 Unpacking the four public leader practices

In leading participation in City projects and service delivery, City officials engage in four key practices, as identified in the literature. This section unpacks how the four practices emerge and are enacted through a combination of micro-level interactions and relations in specific processes, which are informed by broader structural arrangements and structural power. In particular, officials' roles in these practices are embedded in their formal positions as City officials and as project leaders, and are therefore enacted through their positional authority. This is evident across the four practices.

7.2.1 Mobilising and convening communities

Officials' narratives on how they mobilise communities for participation illuminates the extent to which this leadership practice is shared and performed by different actors, especially ward councillors and community leaders, whilst also being informed by various legislative requirements and existing City structures. Each of these can be understood in terms of the structures, relations and interactions through which their roles are defined and their practices emerge. At the forefront, however, are the formal processes and structures prescribed for mobilisation and that instil officials with positional authority and structural power.

7.2.1.1 Mobilising through the interplay of policy, positional authority and City structures

That existing policies and legislation inform officials' practices were noted by a number of interviewees (Fg1:2; Fg2:25; Fg3:2; Fg5:3; Fg6:2; Fg7:12; Fg9:3; Fg10:17; Fg11:11; Int2:15; Int7:10; Int12:3; Int14:3; Int15:2; Int17:9). More specifically, as an aspect of the wider institutional and government structure, the parameters set through national policy and legislation have produced standards of practice for participation at the local/City level that include where, when and how to 'mobilise'. Officials therefore use a number of formally prescribed channels, such as newspaper and radio messaging. Depending on the context, however, they may also use alternatives such as posters and loud hailing. How they do so can be understood in terms of their positional authority, which is embedded in their formal professional roles in their departments and in specific projects, to decide whether and what channels to use. This positional authority is embedded in the institutional hierarchy and thus structurally defined. It also provides officials with structural power in participation, i.e. the power to determine the conditions of participation.⁸²

Officials frequently work through ward councillors and sub-council managers. Their roles and practices can similarly be characterised in terms of their positional authority provided by their formal positions, but also in terms of their informal relations with officials and in their wards. This is suggested by the fact that some officials select when to approach a ward councillor or sub-council manager or not (on the basis of their relationship), as well as allusions to councillors acting out of personal or political interests. Still, their positional authority arguably informs and shapes the potential for such relations and behaviours. Furthermore, as elected representatives, ward councillors' positional authority in communities can also transfer to other structures such as ward committees and their members. Often the entry point for officials into communities, ward councillors may further rely on their knowledge of, and relations within, the communities they represent to identify stakeholders and/or any appropriate methods for mobilisation. There is, in other words, also an important relational aspect that underpins the legitimacy and power of ward councillors.

⁸² In other words, this positional authority is like positional power (Bass, 1990:228) insofar as it is located in a formal organisational position; but it is also different in that it does not entail the use of positional power to influence others/followers directly, but rather entails the power to determine the conditions of interaction. In other words, both the subject/source of power and the object of power are structural, whereas the notion of positional power of a leader over followers posits followers or the relation as the object of power.

The work of community leaders can also be described in terms of the exercise of positional authority to mobilise communities for participation, derived from their membership in formal community structures such as street committees or civic organisations. Moreover, the importance of community leaders' positional authority is reinforced through the City's formal structures. Indeed, community leaders' involvement in mobilising communities depends, not only on their relationship with the ward councillor or project leader, but also on the registration of their organisation on the City's stakeholder database. The extent to which both officials and councillors rely on the stakeholder database suggests that the database itself partakes in the practice or process of mobilisation.

As will be discussed in more detail in Section 7.2.2 below, the database may be said to operate as a mechanism of recognition and legitimation that shapes the relationship between the City and community leaders. Through the database, the City defines the types of organisations that are allowed to register, and thereby legitimises those who are registered. In this way it constitutes a kind of 'invited space' (Cornwall, 2002, 2004, 2008) that also 'acts' with structural power by enabling (and delimiting) access to the City. Moreover, the database provides community organisations access to opportunities to gain positional authority in the City's other participatory invited spaces. This formalisation of the City's relations with community organisations means such relations are, to a large extent, structurally defined. It can also inform other relations. For instance, in a study conducted by Matiashe and Sadien (2017:39), they found that civic organisations may even question each other's legitimacy on the basis of whether they are registered on the database or not.

7.2.1.2 Mobilising through informal leaders and relational power

In practice, officials do not always or only work through the database. They may, for instance, use other, often ad hoc means to identify local leaders, including leaders who may not be registered on the database at all. This has also been recognised in the literature, which notes that, without clear directives, officials may engage "with anyone who purports to speak on behalf of the potential beneficiaries" (Thompson et al., 2018:284). Officials in this study found the identification of the 'right' leaders to be a major challenge. Still, in one focus group in this study, officials noted the importance of informal leaders who may not hold formal positions in an organisation, but have great relational power in their community, more so even than the ward councillor (Fg11:3). Relational power in this context refers to the leader's

ability to influence community members based on the nature and quality of their relations in the community. That officials also engage informal leaders suggests community leaders' relations with (and legitimacy in) their communities may in fact strengthen their position in relation to the City, and give them entry to City-led processes or structures. In this way, informal community leaders can gain a degree of positional authority in City processes as they get involved in, for instance, project steering committees. This may, in turn, increase their relational power in their communities if they are able to “deliver” (see Bénéit-Gbaffou and Katsaura, 2014 for discussion of this dynamic through the lens of legitimacy).⁸³

For community leaders then, what matters is not simply whether they have positional authority via an organisation. It is also about their relations with their communities. Bénéit-Gbaffou and Katsaura (2014) identify community perceptions of local leaders' belonging as well as the ability to deliver as integral to their legitimacy as leaders. This applies to both community leaders and councillors, neither of whom may have relational power across an entire ward nor among all community members and groupings. Indeed, officials themselves appear at times to choose whom to involve (including councillors and sub-council managers), on the basis of their relationship, as well as their perceptions of the individual's relational power in the community (see Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3). Given the important roles of councillors and community leaders for mobilisation, there is often also the risk of gatekeeping, or manipulation of access to City processes in the form of clientelistic practices (Fg11:9; Fg2:12; Int17:2). Such practices would also be embedded in structural and relational power networks, which would use the process of mobilisation to control access to City resources. The role of relational power will become evident again in the discussion of how officials navigate relations between different stakeholders in Section 7.2.3 below.

⁸³ Although this study does not investigate local community dynamics and community leadership, the work by Bénéit-Gbaffou and Katsaura (2014) and Drivdal (2016) is informative in this regard. Bénéit-Gbaffou and Katsaura (2014:1812) theorise community leadership through the lens of legitimacy, and argue that community leaders struggle for and acquire recognition and legitimacy with both municipal officials/politicians and communities. Among communities, leaders gain legitimacy through their belonging as well as their ability to deliver; among municipal officials, they gain legitimacy insofar as they provide access to their communities, are able to mobilise residents, and are perceived as loyal and constructive partners for the institution (ibid.). Drivdal's (2016) analysis of how community leaders become leaders in the first place also identifies a range of practices – situated in the complexities of local contexts, social needs, relations and individual capabilities – through which community leaders become leaders. One of the practices Drivdal (2016:283-4) identifies is that of mediating between communities and government structures, including through mobilisation work.

7.2.2 Structuring participation

Officials' structuring practices are not distinct from, but overlap with their efforts to mobilise communities and local leaders. Similar to mobilising practices, these practices emerge through the efforts and relations between multiple actors (as discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.2)⁸⁴, whilst being shaped by existing structural arrangements. As will be discussed below, officials are guided by relevant policies, guidelines and standards in terms of what methods to employ in individual project processes. But they also play an important structuring role in adapting such formal requirements and standard practices to local contexts. And further, contextual factors, particularly local community dynamics and community leaders' efforts, seem to influence officials' decisions and actions, and thus have some role in structuring micro-level interactions. Although the City provides community leaders with positional authority within project processes, their participation remains structurally defined and 'authorised' within existing structural arrangements.

7.2.2.1 Structuring through the interplay of positional authority and local context

Chapter 6 detailed the numerous methods or types of structures officials may use to engage citizens, communities and community leaders. These include, primarily, public meetings, open days, and project steering committees (PSCs). Depending on the nature and timelines of the project, there may be policy requirements around types of stakeholders to involve, timeframes to follow (usually for inviting public comments), and other government spheres to consult (Fg10:3; Fg5:3; Int14:4). In other words, although officials have the positional authority to set or frame the parameters of participation in their projects, they again remain guided by national and City policies. Some areas of participation are also more 'prescribed' than others, such as the integrated development planning and budgeting processes. This overarching policy environment thus exercises structural power over that of officials, both providing and constraining their power to shape participation.

At the same time, officials retain a degree of flexibility in deciding how to proceed at the project level. That individual project leaders generally decide and follow their own 'steps', even within the same department, confirms their important structuring role (Fg2:27). Some

⁸⁴ This again involves inputs from officials, ward councillors and sub-council managers, as well as consideration of project scope and objectives.

interviewees, for instance, remarked about how they generally ‘learn by doing’ or, as one official put it, learning “by osmosis” and getting “*klapped*⁸⁵ because we didn’t do it properly” (Int4:15).

Community contexts also influence the form public meetings take (Fg10:13). For instance, in one area it was said to be ideal to hold an open day and to use maps or three-dimensional mock-ups for residents to see and discuss individually with officials; in most of the Xhosa townships, however, “everyone pulls chairs and sits, then you have a meeting. You start the meeting with praying and you end the meeting with praying” (Fg10:13). In this manner, one could argue, community contexts and cultures influence structuring decisions. Stated otherwise, in structuring participation, officials are informed and led by local ways of doing things (and, by implication, their knowledge thereof).

Community leaders’ practices also appear to indirectly shape the direction of individual meetings. One example that stood out was from an informal settlement upgrading initiative, where some of the community leaders arrived quite late to the first project steering committee (PSC) meeting. Other community leaders (who presumably had been on time), indirectly challenged the latecomers by initiating a discussion on ‘what is an acceptable time to be late’. In an interview, the official who led the project described how she had to discard the actual agenda for the meeting as this discussion took up the entire three hours whilst the community leaders debated. She also, however, reflected how this type of flexibility is crucial for building understanding among the members of the PSC (Int19:3). In fact, whilst such a discussion may appear to simply prolong the engagement process and produce no practical outcomes, it illustrates how participants negotiate and establish positions and power relations, and potentially build trust and understanding (see Evans et al., 2013:154 for a similar observation in the United Kingdom (UK) public service context). It could thus be said to constitute a form of agenda framing, if not also part of the on-going process of constructing collaborative leadership.

Although community contexts can influence structuring practices, officials still retain the positional authority to decide how to proceed. Such decisions are notable at the level of

⁸⁵ Afrikaans term for ‘hit’ or ‘slapped’.

deliberation and management of meetings, with examples of officials using specific ‘structuring tactics’ to move discussions forward or to build relations. One interviewee, for instance, explained how s/he delegates the responsibility to manage meetings and address “disruptions” to community leaders (Fg2:4). Another explained how s/he uses the Terms of Reference of the project steering committee (PSC), as well as any relevant City policies, to intervene when disagreements between community leaders become overly tense (Int19:3). Making adjustments to the size and representation of the PSC, as discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.3, also constitutes an important act of structuring. In these ways, officials adapt formal requirements to local contexts, and rely on their positional authority and structural power as project leaders to do so.

As this was not an ethnographic study, it is difficult to make specific claims regarding how deliberations and negotiations actually take place. In fact, officials’ explanations generally did not indicate much about where and how decisions are made. In many instances, such as when citizens raise issues or make requests through ward and sub-councils or directly to departments, decisions on how to respond or address the issue appear to be made within City structures rather than with citizens and communities. It is noteworthy, however, that formal participatory structures such as project steering committees are constituted, as per national and City guidelines, as mechanisms for consultation only. In other words, they are, by design, able to give inputs but not make actual decisions (Fg2:14). This was especially evident in the park development example discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2. The tendency to create separate structures for community participation and for other stakeholders and decision-making also reinforces this point. In this way, the City’s participatory structures and processes (including ward committees, sub-council meetings, project steering committees, and even general public meetings) operate as invited spaces where participants gain access and (perhaps) positional authority, but not the structural power to influence the space of action or the conditions of that engagement.

7.2.2.2 Structuring through invited spaces and authorised action

Across the above examples, the City’s participatory structures can be seen to operate as sources of legitimation and power. For instance, the project steering committee, like the stakeholder database, serves to recognise community organisations and individual participants as legitimate representatives of their communities. It is also through representation on the project steering committee that community leaders are able to gain a degree of power through

the potential to influence a specific project. However, this potential influence remains constrained within the ambit of what the set parameters allow (including what the project is about – for example, energy, water consumption, housing upgrades, bus routes, etc. – as well as the scope for inputs based on project objectives). In other words, the City’s participatory structures not only inform who can participate, but also what is deemed legitimate or acceptable ways of participating and relevant content or issues to engage.

That participation is shaped in this way runs counter to officials’ claims of neutrality regarding the legitimacy of community representatives and the selection of representatives to formal structures such as project steering committees. Despite such claims, it is the establishment and use of the committee itself that defines the boundaries of where and how participation ought to occur (and by implication, where and how not). And these, in turn, remain embedded in government authority that operates broadly through policy agendas and prescripts, and more specifically through these local participatory structures. These also find expression in how ‘good’ and ‘active’ forms of citizenship are dictated. This is precisely the concern raised by Cornwall (2008) through her distinction between invited and invented spaces.

It may be argued, at this point, that the practicalities of engagement between government and citizens/communities requires such demarcation and structuring. Even that any form of interaction would, either formally or informally, require and produce a level of organisation and structuring. Without denying this, the purpose here is to tease out how this informs the roles and challenges of leadership in participation. This must further be understood in terms of the ideal of participation that posits citizens and communities as able to exercise agency and power over the organising and structuring process, and not simply be subject to it. In other words, that they are part of leadership as an influence process. It also links with the public leadership literature that emphasises the way this involves addressing power imbalances and establishing productive power-sharing arrangements. So far, the case surfaces the external influences on officials’ practices in addressing the balance of power at the micro-level of participation, and thus of providing a space for community influence. However, this further suggests that, insofar as leadership works through and within existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities, this limits the extent to which it can act *upon and transform* those very structural conditions. What these structural conditions encompass is discussed further in Sections 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 below.

Following from the above, the existing structures of power that operate through City invited spaces at the micro level in effect both authorise and delimit (or enable and constrain) the actions of participants. Hatcher (2005) makes a similar observation regarding distributed leadership in schools in the UK (see also Helstad & Møller, 2013). According to Hatcher (2005:256), despite arguments for the distribution of leadership influence within schools (specifically among school principals and teachers), in practice, principals manage the influence of teachers – and thus their ‘leadership’. Moreover, principals do so on the basis of the authority of the state and its imposed policies and aims. Hatcher’s concern is that this ‘authorisation of action’ does not constitute proper leadership but rather reflects the “subordination” of leadership “to government-driven managerialism” (ibid.:261).

This kind of observation is also evident in other public leadership studies. For instance, examining collaborative public leadership in emergency management in the U.S., Waugh and Streib (2006:138) explain officials’ lack of authority ‘on the ground’ is not due to the lack of any particular leadership qualities, but to the “elephant in the room”: the federal government and its legal and normative structures that continue to command and control.⁸⁶ Currie et al. (2011:244),’s analysis of multi-sectoral collaborations in the U.K. similarly found that, rather than leadership being distributed, it remains concentrated in certain organisations and individuals. They further describe leadership as “delegated” rather than distributed, in accordance with boundaries set by those “in whom leadership is traditionally concentrated” (i.e. policy-makers), including their organisational objectives and targets (ibid.).

This dynamic or scenario manifests in a similar way in the context of public participation and the influence of communities in City decisions and processes in South African local government. As discussed above, the ‘authorisation of action’ in and through formal participatory processes in effect delimits the nature and boundaries of action within these spaces. This dynamic resonates with Crosby and Bryson’s (2010b:219) observation, in accordance with Giddens’ structuration theory, that collaborative structures are likely to produce actions that, in turn, reinforce and validate those very structures. In this case study, it may be argued that both officials’ and communities’ practices in participation are authorised

⁸⁶ Interestingly, Waugh and Streib (2006:131) recommend leadership strategies based on “the transformational power of a compelling vision, rather than from hierarchy, rank, or standard operating procedure”.

in a similar way. The very use of the City's structures, from the stakeholder database to project steering committees, validate the structure and the issues raised within them. In one example, leaders in a PSC refused, at first, to interact with one another in the City's project, but eventually did start to "work together" because they realised they would otherwise lose the project and the resources and opportunities it offered (Fg2:9). That the officials' recalling this situation described it as a positive impact of the PSC is further indicative of how this function of invited spaces filters into officials' narratives. And further, as the park development case (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2) showed, even where community inputs are ultimately disregarded, their participation in the process can be presented as a validation thereof. Power within the spaces of participation therefore appears, to a large extent, to be authorised or licensed by and on behalf of the state, rather than distributed, shared, or collectively constructed and emergent.

7.2.3 Weaving and navigating relations

The previous two sections established the importance of officials' positional authority in mobilising communities and structuring participation processes, and how this positional authority is informed by broader institutional and structural arrangements. In addition, participatory processes and structures play an important role in providing community leaders with positional authority and legitimacy, as well as opportunities for action, although the scope of their action in these processes and structures is structurally authorised and thus limited.

This section discusses practices of weaving and navigating relations. This practice can entail relations between the City and communities, within and between communities, between City departments, as well as between relevant communities and other stakeholders (such as external facilitators, consultants and contractors). Officials' narratives and experiences of weaving relations bring to the fore two key insights. The first is that this practice involves navigating power dynamics beyond the leader-follower dyad. It therefore requires that officials build relations with communities as a collective, whilst recognising differences, tensions and conflicts. Secondly, the difficulties of weaving relations can be explained by the diffusion of positional authority and structural power within the City institution, as well as across multiple external stakeholders. Two examples where this occurs are the City's participatory governance system and the reliance on outsourcing for service delivery.

7.2.3.1 Weaving relations through building trust with ‘the community’

Weaving and navigating relations is an important element within participation. In the public leadership literature, this especially involves building relationships and working to create “unity” among participants, whilst recognising and maintaining diversity (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010:414). This may also require efforts by leaders to “cultivate personal relationships” (ibid.), possibly even having one-on-one encounters to build trust (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:303). It is also identified as a potential way to mobilise and sustain the involvement of key stakeholders (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S65-6). However, in the context of City-community participation from this case, some officials explicitly discussed the importance of not forming one-on-one relations with individual community leaders (Int17:4; Int19:3). Doing so may create the impression that some leaders or areas receive special attention or preferential treatment.⁸⁷ In the context of engagement with multiple communities (and where resources are scarce), it is important that trust is built with “the collective”. Officials who reported this practice thus exhibited an awareness of how building such one-to-one relations can affect the power dynamic within the overall process.

This is not, however, to disregard the important differences within and between people living in politico-geographic boundaries that may not reflect any clear collectivity ‘on the ground’. It is important to recognise how the term “the community” has been criticised for engendering a view of a singular and coherent “community” that is expected to hold the same values, have the same interests and needs, and easily act together (Cleaver, 2001:44; Thompson et al., 2018:277). It is not the purpose of this study to resolve this debate (although such assumptions are made in government policy⁸⁸), but rather to point out how officials must navigate between differences and tensions without giving preference to any one actor or interest. At a micro-practice level, this means not having one-on-one conversations with a community leader during a project steering committee tea break, for example (Int19:3). And in terms of public leadership studies, this means a focus on dyadic relations would exclude the complexities of managing multiple relations at once, and thus provide a distorted analytical lens since it would not elucidate larger structural and relational power dynamics.

⁸⁷ This may be exacerbated by politico-geographic boundaries of wards, with officials noting especial challenges when implementing projects that involve two or more wards (Int3:4).

⁸⁸ Thompson et al. (2018), also trace such assumptions in South African government policies, particularly those that speak to participatory governance.

The importance of depersonalising the relationship with community leaders cannot necessarily be generalised to all officials, however. This may depend in large part on the position and role of the individual official and how closely s/he works in communities. One lower-level official who worked primarily ‘on the ground’ in communities seemed to be more than willing to spend time with individual residents (Int6:22). Although the interviewee did not explain this explicitly, this may be due to the fact that such interactions are not necessarily part of a structured space such as a project steering committee. It is rather part of the on-going process of mobilising people (which in relation to service delivery and within a system of participatory governance, ought, in principle, to be on-going). In this way, formal participatory structures, as well as officials’ formal positions within the City hierarchy, continue to shape their practices and the particular ways through which micro-level relations are formed.

7.2.3.2 Weaving relations across the participatory governance system

The findings from this case further surface how the City’s participatory governance system influences the work of weaving and navigating relations. City-wide structures, as well as the division of sectors and service delivery between departments and projects, can directly or indirectly shape local relations and engagements. More specifically, any participatory initiative is likely to be informed by the fragmentation of City processes, the different approaches to participation used by officials or departments to engage communities (some better than others), as well as community frustrations with specific services or with the City as a whole.

Many interviewees remarked about the participation practices of other departments, and how these affect their relations with, and work in, communities (Fg14:8; Fg13:10; Fg10:11; Fg1:17). Departments may even work in the same areas without combining or aligning their policy or participatory efforts with one another. Working in silos in this manner is not a new observation, and not unique to either participation or this City. Only a few officials noted examples where they were able to build on the work and project steering committee structures of another department for their purposes (Fg2:10).

Although they may work in silos in this manner, how one department ‘enters’ and engages a community still has repercussions for other departments. A few departments were singled out by interviewees as failing to fully engage communities before designing plans or bringing in

contractors (Fg13:11; Int3:16; Int7:11). This can result in community frustrations with one department transferring into frustrations with other departments, and with the City in general.⁸⁹ Officials may thus be confronted with issues and community frustrations that they are themselves unable to address. In this light, that officials presented such varied perceptions of the purpose and value of participation (as per Chapter 5) becomes especially important. Some also remarked on the importance of their departmental ethos regarding public participation, and how this may or may not provide them with the flexibility and support to do things in a particular way, or to go beyond mere compliance (Fg10:10). This suggests, therefore, the organisational context at the departmental level also potentially influences officials' practices.

A second way in which the system of participatory governance presents particular challenges for officials as leaders is that many are themselves involved in multiple projects that involve community engagement. They must therefore work with many different communities across a wide range of geographic areas. The implications of this are particularly relevant to building relationships and sustaining commitment.

At the project level, the length and depth of participation depends on the type and scope of the project. In human settlements projects, for instance, project steering committees may be in place and involved in undertaking new housing or upgrading projects for several years. In other instances, especially where project roll-out is much quicker, engagements may be limited to a few public meetings. In lengthier engagements, project leaders may, through the process, become the so-called "face" of the City for that community and community leaders (Int20:6; Fg11:13). But it is not always possible for the project leader to sustain his/her involvement in one community or as part of one project over an extended period of time. One official explained how he had to hand a project over to another official as the project entered another phase (Int20:6). When the new project leader did not respond to a specific issue raised by the community leaders in the project steering committee, however, the community leaders called the original project leader and berated him for 'leaving them'. In this way, officials

⁸⁹ In one case, an official described how in certain communities residents burn the City's utility vehicles out of frustration with other departments or issues with the City in general: "you really don't understand [...] you think you're providing a service, and sometimes you're not even involved in the issue"; with another official confirming, "they target anything that's municipal related" (Fg11:14).

may not have, or be able to retain, the positional authority to address community issues and frustrations, but are held accountable on the basis of the relations they've built in the community.

The reality of multiple initiatives can therefore constrain rather than sustain commitment. Although the importance of public leadership for sustaining the commitment of others (whether of other organisations, communities, partners or stakeholders) is recognised in the literature (e.g. Mandell & Keast, 2009:170), less attention has been given to sustaining the commitment of the project leader or City official in charge of a project (for an exception, see Huxham & Vangen, 2005). The co-existence of multiple structures and processes of engagement within the City, and changes to officials' formal positions and roles in projects, can thus undermine the strength of the relationships built between project leaders and communities or community leaders, and any relational power the leaders may have built up with the official.

At the same time, however, some officials do embrace the role of being the contact for an area or community. This is the case, for instance, in the utilities directorate, where they are involved in infrastructure projects and on-going service delivery and maintenance processes. The community leaders of a particular area may therefore rely on the area manager as a main point of contact, calling them whenever they have specific concerns, when the call centre is believed to be unresponsive, or there is an emergency (e.g. fire risk) (Fg11:13). Although officials' personalities may play a role in shaping relations with communities and community leaders in this way (and it is beyond the scope of this study to conclude on this possibility), it is also clearly informed by officials' positions in the department, as well as by the nature of the department and service. In fact, in City-community workshops as part of another study, an official who had built up such a relationship with leaders of a particular area explained that he had been re-assigned to oversee another region, thus he no longer had the positional authority to respond, and the community's relation with the official was (again) no longer helpful to them.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ One may argue, however, that this risks entrenching personal relationships between officials in charge of an area and specific local leaders. There are, therefore, obvious trade-offs in terms of risks and benefits for the City to maintain staff deployment over the long-term. What is significant in relation to this study is that the practice of weaving relationships is

Finally, the disjuncture between the City's purported agenda in a specific process and the issues that citizens raise (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1), illustrates how the participatory governance system fragments City-community engagements across different structures and spaces, as well as across the different processes of strategic planning, infrastructure development, service delivery and communications. Although it may not be feasible to conduct all engagements through a single platform and process, the result is that weaknesses in one area impacts on others. Thus, even basic service delivery matters can impact the success of strategic engagements. In particular, poor quality infrastructure, inadequate maintenance and an unreliable call centre, impacts on citizen trust in the City, and in turn impacts on what citizens bring into other participatory spaces, as well as how citizens engage the City in those spaces. Although citizen actions in this regard were described as a challenge for officials (Chapter 5, Section 5.3), the case suggests such actions are shaped and further influenced by the City's own fragmented structures.

7.2.3.3 Weaving relations as navigating power disparities

More explicit practices of weaving relations were apparent in instances where additional stakeholders, such as consultants or contractors, become involved. In this regard, officials' practices are informed, not only by local community structures or the City's system of participatory governance, but also by the broader institutional context of what Brunette et al. (2014), call South Africa's "contract state". This includes various national policy requirements for local employment and sub-contracting in City projects, as well as the more general shift towards government outsourcing of project and service delivery work.

It may be argued that processes involving sub-contracting and work allocations do not constitute the type of participation this study focuses on. It remains relevant, however, insofar as this has become an integral part of project delivery in the City, and a crucial factor shaping the City's engagements with communities. Officials who lead projects that involve work or contract allocations must therefore navigate relations that are to a large extent defined by these structural arrangements and roles. In the literature on public leadership, moreover, Van Slyke and Alexander (2006:364) recognise such work via contract as "a significant departure

thus subject to officials' appointments and geographic deployment, as well as institutional structural decisions and restructuring.

from leading large, centralised, hierarchically arranged institutions in which the leader guides followers who are employees of their organisation”. The nature of relationships, and the role of leadership therein, is thus much more ambiguous and complex (Raffel et al., 2009:10-11).

Furthermore, according to the public leadership literature, the practice of weaving relations is frequently about framing identities and building a sense of connection across boundaries. In this case, however, City officials may be said to ‘navigate’ rather than weave relations between different stakeholders (including communities), where power-balancing becomes central. Practically, officials who take on the role of formal project leader must mediate and facilitate between the different interests and inputs into the process. This was evident in the example of the park development project discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2. In such a case, communities in theory rely on the City’s (or officials’) structural and relational power to protect their interests’ vis-à-vis the more powerful contractors or consultants.

According to Miraftab (2004b:89), such power-balancing work is a crucial responsibility of government in multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral engagements. It is based on the premise that the power imbalance invariably favours private sector actors who have resources, skills and expertise, as well as likely relational power with the City. In the collaborative governance and public leadership literatures, Ansell and Gash (2007:555) similarly note that it is the role of leadership to empower, if not represent, “weaker stakeholders”. In other words, it is the task of the City (or official) to ensure community voices are heard in the process, and to protect their interests. In the language used in public leadership theory, this can be understood as an exercise of “power to”, by recognising and enabling the power of those who are, in a sense, disempowered vis-à-vis others in the process (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:177). Whether and how officials in this research are able to do so can be gleaned from their reported experiences with managing labour contracts.

Addressing community interests in the process of arranging sub-contracting and labour allocations brings many difficulties, however, and requires officials to make various efforts to ‘be responsive’ to community needs and demands. Like their mobilising and structuring practices, officials work within particular requirements whilst trying to adapt these to local contexts. This is evident in the way some officials negotiate with contractors and department heads to increase the number of job opportunities in a project, or to arrange labourers or sub-contracts according to local boundaries or social divisions (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3). How officials perform these kinds of micro-level tactics can again be explained on the basis of their

positional authority as project leaders and City officials, but also on their relational power with contractors and with their senior managers, as was evident in some examples (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3).

Community liaison officers (CLOs) can also play an influential role in the process of navigating local community dynamics (e.g. competing factions and interests) in order to identify labourers or sub-contractors. CLOs arguably also act through their positional authority as CLOs, as well as through their relational power in communities. In fact, they may, as some officials argued, use their relational power in their communities and the positional authority gained as CLOs to manipulate City processes to ensure work opportunities go towards their preferred candidates. Nevertheless, the various micro-level tactics used by officials, CLOs and contractors can serve to appease community members' needs and interests, and thus better 'empower' communities in such projects. But this is often limited to the confines of the project scope, and to short-term opportunities for minimal wages.

Finally, in this context, weaving and navigating relations appears to be less about identity work than the structural control of relations. Officials exercise such structural power by, for instance, controlling meetings between contractors and communities, and preventing unmediated interactions. Some officials explained this as a way of "protecting the contractors" against the influence of self-interested community members (Fg14:6; Int17:4). Whilst this performs the important function of staving off potential patronage and clientelism, it can also be read as an effort to maintain the structural and relational power of officials in relation to both communities and contractors. And yet, that officials and contractors may also try to appease local interests in how work is allocated suggests there are limits to officials' structural control of relations, and even of the formal processes of the City vis-à-vis the power of local actors within their communities. How communities and community actors work outside the City's formal spaces in this manner is discussed further in Section 7.3.4 below.

7.2.3.4 Weaving relations through diffused power and the contract state

Another type of scenario emerges in projects that involve communities alongside other organisational stakeholders, especially consultants bringing particular expertise. Again, where the City's role may, in ideal terms, be to produce a 'shared power' outcome (Crosby & Bryson, 2010a), what occurs instead is the diffusion of power to other stakeholders. This, in turn, serves to delegate responsibility and accountability within the process as well.

This is evident, firstly, in the examples discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2, which brought to the fore the use of parallel structures that position community engagement (in project steering committees) next to, and separate from, the primary decision-making spaces within a project (in a project management team and in engagements with consultants). In these examples, contributions to project decisions are made at different points in different spaces, and the influence from the community remains subject to decisions made elsewhere regarding what inputs (i.e. types of knowledge and expertise) count, and what resources and budget will be made available.

The diffusion of power is also evident in an example of a multi-stakeholder forum that involved multiple organisations, including community representatives (Int2:17). As part of a long-term development project, the process involved on-going discussions to determine priorities and options (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2.1). However, the official reflecting on the project acknowledged that in these meetings, the main stakeholders would frequently discuss proposals and ideas through technical jargon, where concepts like spatial density were important in the negotiation process, but with the community representatives clearly unable to engage with the difficult terminology and concepts. And yet, the official failed to recognise the City's role in 'empowering' the community participants to understand these concepts, or to insist that discussions are conducted in a way that everyone can understand. This may be understood as a delegation of responsibility to other stakeholders, made possible by the involvement of multiple stakeholders, whereby the City becomes a 'partner' in, rather than a leader of, the process. This, in turn, undermines the ability of communities to influence decisions or to hold the City or decision-makers accountable in the process.

In other words, the participatory space provides participants with the opportunity to give inputs into decisions, but this also involves the diffusion of power between or across participants. And according to this example, such diffusion of power does not necessarily happen 'equally' or in favour of those on the margins. Rather, the diffusion of power is controlled via participatory structures (also evident in the park development example, Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). This simultaneously allows for the diffusion or delegation of responsibility across stakeholders as well.

Of course, this kind of multi-stakeholder inter-organisational engagement is not generalisable to all of the City's participatory processes. It is especially distinct from the structures created

for City engagements with specific communities (even where there may be consultants and contractors involved in aspects thereof). This example is notable, however, insofar as it illustrates how it is through the structure of participation (the committee or forum) that the City delegates authority and responsibility to others. This can have a profound impact on the ability of citizens and communities to raise issues, influence the agenda and direction of discussions, or hold decision-makers accountable.

This scenario is exemplary of the manner in which participatory and collaborative processes paradoxically rely on public leaders to mobilise their positional authority (and the structural power available to them) in order to ensure more balanced power within the process, and yet, the structure of the collaboration diffuses City authority, and enables the City to delegate power to others and neglect its responsibility to address power imbalances and to account for decisions made.⁹¹ The issue of accountability in collaboration has also been recognised in the literature on public leadership. According to O’Leary and Vij (2012:513), it is crucial for a collaboration to establish precisely how the structure will be held accountable given that such structures act on behalf of “the public” to implement public policy. What can be gleaned from this study is that, even when communities are included in such a structure, the structure and processes within it may not enable (and may even undermine) accountability to communities. In fact, it may again reflect the influence of broader organisational objectives and existing power differences on officials’ practices and agency.

Finally, rather than addressing power imbalances and the limited power of communities, these participatory spaces arguably constitute “coping mechanisms” (Miraftab, 2004a:4) through which the poor and marginalised are brought into the formal process as a way of legitimating the process (through their ‘buy-in’) whilst delimiting the appropriate ways and extent of engagement (i.e. ‘authorising action’). The result is that communities experience limited (if any) opportunity to influence project or policy outcomes, and entrenched power differences are reinforced.⁹² Provided only limited accommodations at the project level (whether on

⁹¹ This scenario has some resonance with Huxham and Vangen’s (2005:204) observations regarding formal inter-organisational collaboration where there may be multiple, overlapping partnerships (i.e. some organisations are part of multiple partnerships), and thus member agendas and accountabilities become ambiguous.

⁹² For instance, those with particular knowledge and expertise may be able to use their technical jargon in discussions, all of which is derived through their prior privilege, and through which they are then able to retain and exercise that privilege in such a way that their views and interests are more easily promoted.

meeting agendas, or aspects of project design), people thus resort to other issues (such as individual employment opportunities) and other avenues (such as project disruptions and threats of violence) as potential sources of agency and power.

In this regard it is noteworthy that officials' efforts to address contract and labour concerns are often in response to the actions of community leaders, or of specific factions within communities who disrupt projects. In some areas it may even be in response to the work of competing gangs who control the allocation of resources in their areas (Fg11:19; Fg10:17). In other words, navigating relations between communities, contractors and the City also emerge out of local community dynamics, including more 'disruptive' actions of local actors. Whilst officials act on the basis of their positional authority (as project leaders and City officials), communities and community leaders who lack such structural power therefore resort to alternative means and tactics. That officials have accepted these practices as part and parcel of the project implementation process suggests that communities have in fact shaped the City's participatory spaces, albeit in ways that may not be 'officially' included into the process, and may not even be in the interest of the broader community.

In sum, the shift towards governance, which is being realised in South Africa through increased outsourcing of service delivery, also filters into City-community relations and interactions at the micro or project level. In particular, it produces an arrangement where City-community relations are mediated via the roles of other stakeholders, especially consultants and contractors. Arguably, the City's relation with communities ought to be one of downward accountability where the City is accountable and responsive to local needs (Pieterse & Van Donk, 2008:64). However, through the involvement of contractors and on the basis of the City's service delivery objectives, officials must mediate between different goals and agendas.

This is precisely the kind of leadership role attributed to public leaders in much of the public leadership literature (Van Wart, 2013:522; Nowell & Harrison, 2010:30; Bussu & Galanti, 2018:357). Ansell and Gash (2007:555) explicitly speak of facilitative leadership that can bring stakeholders together, steer them through difficult negotiations, empower weaker stakeholders, and ensure a balance of power. The importance of such facilitation skills was even acknowledged in this research by officials themselves (Fg10:12; Int4:20; Fg12:12; Fg2:28; Int7:12; Fg3:16). This analysis has shown, however, that the ability of officials to facilitate multiple stakeholder relations is not simply a matter of personal agency and skills; it remains situated in institutional governance systems and objectives, which has been further

described in terms of the structural diffusion of authority (in an unequal fashion), which retains existing power differences and undermines accountability and responsibility.

7.2.4 Framing agendas

The final leadership practice this study examined was framing agendas. As per the literature, this entails how issues, problems, values and objectives are interpreted, how problems or projects are contextualised, and whether a sense of shared interest is created (Page, 2010:249; Ospina & Foldy, 2010:298). In formal participation in South African local government, agenda framing is purported to take place, structurally, in processes to select and prioritise projects, as well as in decision-making within specific projects. The reflections from interviewees suggest agenda framing occurs through the other three practices and through specific discursive work by officials. Their experiences also surfaced how their agenda framing efforts are informed by an institutional context and agenda that direct meaning-making and decisions in specific participatory processes.

The next two sections discuss how, insofar as officials act through their positions, their roles are defined in accordance with the City's service delivery agenda and performance management system. At the same time, one of the key ways in which officials try to mediate the influence of government policy and institutional systems is through their claims to neutrality and references to the 'public good'. Such efforts to frame agendas with and for communities are potentially problematic, however, given the emphasis on community buy-in and behaviour change. Ultimately, the City's formal participatory processes provide little room for communities to actually influence the City's development and project agendas.

7.2.4.1 Framing agendas for service delivery and performance management

As with mobilising and structuring practices, City officials are guided firstly by various City and national and provincial policies and plans. These dictate broader agenda framing processes in IDP and budget consultations, and also establish City priorities that inform project selection and implementation processes. These two aspects of agenda framing were unpacked in Chapters 5 and 6.

Within this broader policy framework, officials use a number of micro-practices or tactics to frame project agendas. For instance: involving political leaders to lend support to an initiative; using physical models (of park layouts or to show water leaks) as a way of presenting a problem; enlisting external organisations or facilitators to mediate between the City and

communities in order to present a ‘neutral’ view of a problem (Fg14:4; Int17:5; Fg5:16; Int2:9). As with the other leadership practices, these practices can be read as the exercise of officials’ positional authority as City officials and project leaders, which further rely on the structural power of the City’s invited spaces. The lens of agenda framing further elucidates how officials’ formal roles and practices are primarily defined in terms of the City’s service delivery mandate, as well as within its performance management framework.

Specifically, officials have a structurally defined role to efficiently and effectively implement projects and deliver services. It is largely on the basis of this role and responsibility that officials understand the purpose and value of participation primarily as a means to achieve service and project delivery (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.4). This role – and the positional authority attached to it – is also embedded in the City’s formal accountability and performance management systems and targets. Through this system, service and project delivery are monitored, measured and evaluated quantitatively, based on, for instance, how many electrification or water points have been installed, how many building applications have been approved, or, for participation, how many people have attended a meeting, or whether an advert was placed for designated time period, for instance (Fg7:20; Fg10:3; Int14:10). Attention to the quality and impacts of participation, which cannot simply be gleaned through such indicators, appears to be largely excluded (Fg13:7; Fg4:7-8; Fg6:4; Int12:7; Int3:20; Fg1:8).⁹³

This is not unique to this City. Performance management for municipalities, and particularly senior managers in municipalities, has been largely structured around quantitative service delivery targets, with the emphasis on efficient delivery (Harrison, 2006:202; Heller, 2001:146; Pieterse et al., 2008:18). But these norms and standards sit in tension with the time, flexibility, and risk-taking that meaningful participatory processes require, and thus tend to undermine the substantive quality and depth thereof (Pieterse & Van Donk, 2008:64; Fg2:33). Winkler (2011:266) found a similar scenario in the City of Johannesburg where, in the effort to meet the technical requirements of the planning and performance management system, “officials resort to quick-fix, linear, and once-off initiatives”. In such a context, participation

⁹³ There were some individual exceptions based on the specific roles of officials as defined within their departments, particularly in departments where a specific ‘engagement and communications’ position had been created (Int4:16).

serves to reduce diverse and complex local needs and ways of organising, into “manageable and quantifiable outcomes” (ibid.). What is lost is the opportunity for communities “to explore and resolve competing demands and trade-offs within themselves” (Pieterse et al., 2008:15).

City officials who participated in this research acknowledged this broader context. Mention was made, for example, of how performance, including in participation, is understood on the basis of efficient and effective project delivery (Int15:9; Fg2:18; Fg3:12), whether budgets are spent (Int7:9; Fg7:20), whether efficiencies are improved (Fg4:15; Fg10:24), or whether clean audits are achieved (Int1:9). Although some recognised the importance of having policies and procedures to guide local practices and ensure consistency and transparency (Fg3:9), there was also a sense that this context, and the emphasis on efficient implementation in accordance with policies, can be “strangling” (Int1:9; Fg10:32). The pressure to deliver and achieve clean audits (which requires procedural compliance) is enforced at the expense of the time and flexibility needed to ensure participation works well (Fg2:33).

These systems can be further traced to the shift towards New Public Management (NPM) in South African government and local government, with the concomitant emphasis on efficiency, cost reduction and budget spend, as noted above. In the public leadership literature, Van Slyke and Alexander (2006:367-8) argue that performance measures are more ambiguous in the public sector than in the private sector, with multiple goals and outcomes being pursued, and political considerations also influencing institutional mandates. They also go further, claiming that public sector objectives often include non-economic outcomes, in contrast to the profit-making objectives of business (ibid.). Although this appears to be the case in the South African context as well, the drive towards efficiency, budget spend and clean audit outcomes (all under the auspices of NPM), have also informed how such broader goals are understood and pursued in the first place. As noted in Chapter 3, this has resulted in the emphasis on “technocratic managerialism” and the view that development challenges can be reduced to questions about “how to fix and finance” physical infrastructure and services (Pieterse et al., 2008:18).

In relation to participation, this institutionalised performance management system reinforces upwards accountability, where officials are accountable to their seniors and ultimately to political leaders and national government policies, norms and measures, often administered via national grants for local projects and programmes (Int3:20; Fg5:3). This undermines and

constrains downwards accountability to citizens and communities (Pieterse & Van Donk, 2008:64).⁹⁴ This includes the fact that cities and municipalities must account for their performance on the basis of criteria determined by provincial and national government through policy and grant conditions, including quantitative service delivery indicators and cost efficiency, alongside public participation processes.⁹⁵ Although this was noted in Chapters 1 and 3, the analysis from this study illustrate how this informs the leadership roles and practices of officials, particularly how they are prompted to frame agendas in relation to communities.

For example, this manifests in officials' agenda framing practices and how officials distinguish between bringing ready-made plans to communities, or having "open plans" or no plans (Int17:8; Fg5:3; Fg2:3). Both ready-made plans and no plans were considered risky and inappropriate as the latter could raise unrealistic expectations, whilst the former could result in community resistance. But even "open plans" are not in fact "open", but involve a degree of framing from the City towards a particular outcome that may involve the kinds of 'manipulative' practices identified by Vangen and Huxham (2003:S70). One official described the strategy as a way of letting community participants believe that they have come up with ideas, even though this is, in essence, guided by the City (Int17:8). Another spoke of "coach[ing] the project steering committee in terms of what they can expect in terms of the plans" (Fg3:16). Thus, officials may facilitate a process towards shared understanding of issues and solutions (Crosby & Bryson, 2010:219), but this remains within the delimited space of what is already deemed possible or in the interest of existing development priorities.

The extent to which officials' roles and agenda framing practices are delineated through the service delivery mandate and performance management system shows how their structural

⁹⁴ Although this may be perceived as a typical constraint where national agendas and performance criteria tend to come from 'the top', it need not be the case, and stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric of participatory governance. In this regard it is noteworthy that various community-based monitoring initiatives have emerged in both civic and public sector contexts in South Africa. These include, inter alia, 'community scorecards' piloted by the Human Sciences Research Council (Sanchez-Betancourt & Vivier, forthcoming 2019), as well as various projects piloted through the national Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (see RSA, 2015). Such initiatives constitute attempts to redefine 'performance measures' through substantive engagement with communities to identify priorities, and/or to develop 'indicators' to include in performance assessments in specific sectors.

⁹⁵ Even community agendas are framed via national policy decisions, which manifest in local project decision-making. This was expressed as a frustration for some City officials who, for example, find communities unwilling to agree to informal settlement upgrades or service installations out of fear of being taken off the housing waiting list. This is indicative of the impact national government commitments to 'one house one stand', made in the early days of the post-apartheid government, have had on framing community agendas.

power is defined and constrained. How they scope the parameters of participation is directed by the authority and structural power that sits within the institutional system and broader inter-governmental system (and less so in the positional authority of individual City officials as project leaders). In this case, the “parameters of participation” do not refer only to the way committees and planning processes are structured (as discussed in Chapter 6), but also to where final decision-making power is located, and the weight given to the City’s priorities (political and economic) vis-à-vis community inputs and consultants’ expertise.⁹⁶ Officials, and even municipalities as a whole, have limited ability to change policy and budgetary allocations at this level. The structural power that informs participatory spaces is thus situated, and flows through, multiple levels of formal government structures and authority, and by implication, the various relations and processes that characterise these structures and their interactions. Furthermore, the rhetoric of participatory ideals, and the local government mandate to realise these ideals at the local level, may therefore obscure the lack of real decision-making power in relation to policies handed down by national and provincial governments.

7.2.4.2 Framing agendas through officials’ narratives of neutrality and change

Although officials’ own agendas (and structural power) are informed by wider government policies and institutional systems, they also seem to mediate these agendas through their talk (and in contexts where they act on the basis of their positional authority as public servants and professionals). They do so primarily through their claims to political neutrality, and their references to “making a change” (Fg14:18).

Through claims to neutrality, officials justify their actions and decisions as primarily technical and procedural. But this may also be understood as an intentional act of agenda framing to contextualise their work and construct their roles vis-à-vis citizens, and vis-à-vis policy, in a particular way. This reverberates with Corvellec and Risberg’s (2007:313) discussion of practices of contextualising and “selecting backgrounds”. The fact that officials also sometimes engage local councillors in order to get political support for a project and thereby secure community buy-in, similarly suggests that these are in fact strategic choices informed

⁹⁶ That housing typologies decided for a specific upgrade can suddenly be changed at the behest of the Executive Mayor is a case in point.

by a particular agenda (i.e. successful project delivery). These also resonate with the kinds of tactics identified by Vangen and Huxham (2003:S70) that project leaders may use to manoeuvre people towards a specific goal. They do not, however, elaborate on the potential organisational strategies and priorities that may operate as external sources of influence that direct project leaders' efforts in this way.

Notably, such framing further interprets City projects and services, especially in informal settlement contexts, as a particular kind of problem: a technical problem pertaining to some definitive physical aspect of people's living conditions, and a type of problem that can be addressed in a compartmentalised way (e.g. as an electricity problem, or a roads problem, or a housing problem). Some officials also recognised this fragmented approach to informal settlement projects, and the need for – but lack of – holistic and long-term planning, the outcomes of which fall upon officials to navigate).

Such claims to neutrality are also indicative of how different interpretations and presentations of a problem engender support for a particular type of action or response. As explained by Grint (2005:1473), problems deemed “simple” can be dealt with through managerial approaches, whilst “complex” problems call for leadership and collaboration, and “critical” problems experienced as crises justify authoritative action. Notably, in this case, officials frame their work as technical matters in need of technical and managerialist actions, but do so within the context of participatory processes that inherently introduce leadership actions (understood here in terms of developing understandings of the problem and options through shared meaning-making). In the same way that participatory structures operate by ‘authorising action’, officials’ talk therefore work to bring into question the very purpose and need for participation.

In fact, and somewhat paradoxically, officials’ claims regarding the public good may be understood as attempts to influence and persuade communities (and themselves) to accept such technocratic managerialist solutions that ostensibly undermine political and democratic development. Moreover, they do so by, either implicitly or explicitly, articulating a public service ethos and vision of social change. Hatcher (2005:260) again makes a similar observation regarding the way schoolteachers may mediate government policy through their own value systems, giving the impression of a form of transformational leadership. This practice then, on the surface at least, seems to resonate with theorisations of public leadership

that emphasise transformational leadership (see, for instance, Campbell, 2018:277; Sun & Anderson, 2012:309; Ardoin et al., 2015:360).

Yet, in the case of this study, officials' talk may express their personal values, or reflect organisational values and culture, but in either case actually delimit the scope of transformative change. This is not to suggest that officials are driven by intentional efforts to manipulate and constrain participation in this way. The crucial question here is also not whether such practices do indeed reflect or constitute transformational leadership (or some other leadership typology). Rather, it is whether such ideas and values – and the projects they are used to justify – present real opportunities for transformation and social change. In other words, are there actual opportunities for citizen and community engagements to reinterpret policy agendas or to impact policy implementation? Or do these processes merely channel government policy and pre-decided project plans by making it more palatable, with influence working in one direction and reinforcing a top-down power relation?

Through a social constructionist and practice lens, what comes to the fore is how values and beliefs that inform practices (including agenda framing and meaning-making practices), are influenced by a range of contextual factors, such as policies, sector and professional standards, organisational systems and procedural requirements, as well as political culture and priorities. According to Sullivan et al. (2012:58), within the literature on public leadership in collaboration, this reveals the dynamic and recursive relationships “between structure, agency and ideas”. Kempster and Gregory (2017:510) similarly observe how the agency of a middle manager in a corporate example is shaped through a flow of activity involving “a potpourri mix” including aspects of the organisation's strategic and structural context, as well as relational tensions, moral identities and personal ambitions.

The implication in this case is that, despite their talk, both officials and communities remain constrained in practice, as illustrated throughout this chapter. Efforts to push beyond existing City constraints and mandates remain limited to micro-level achievements: bringing a department head's attention to an emergency need for a house after a fire; getting more jobs allocated for local employment on a project; ensuring better representation for the informal settlement residents on a project steering committee, etc. In other words, they may endeavour to achieve meaningful participation with citizens and communities, but the scope and potential impact of their efforts remain limited to the micro- and project-level where the transformative intent of participatory and democratic ideals are structurally constrained.

Again, it appears that leadership in these spaces works *through and within* existing structural constraints and opportunities, which limit the extent to which it can act *upon and transform* those very structural conditions.

Ultimately, officials' talk is directed at communities themselves, with the intention to transform *their* attitudes and behaviours. They do so by presenting government policies and authority through 'more acceptable' language and ideas. They also do so through the layers of government structures that circumscribe the terms of both participation and development, and in which their positional authority and structural power is embedded. Any efforts to "share" or "balance" power remains circumscribed in this way. This is unpacked further in the next section, which considers the discussion thus far through the analytical lens of power. Where and how communities therefore claim power and gain influence is explored in the concluding section.

7.3 Power in and as public leadership and participation

The previous section examined how officials act through structurally-determined positional authority, how participatory structures and spaces delimit the parameters for participation in the form of 'authorised action', and the various ways in which officials' and communities' practices and interactions are influenced by institutional and governance arrangements. These included the participatory governance system, outsourcing of service delivery, quantitative service delivery performance targets, efficiency and accountability goals, upwards accountability structures, etc. Through these various structural conditions, power and responsibility within participation become increasingly and unequally diffuse, undermining accountability as well as the power and agency of community participants.

Insofar as public leadership works through and within existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities, the extent to which it can act upon and transform those structural conditions remain limited. This has implications for the power-balancing work attributed to public leaders in the public leadership scholarship, as well as for the power, agency and transformative work attributed, in theory, to citizens and communities in the participation scholarship. This section discusses the key findings delineated in the first part of the chapter in terms of the question and operation of power.

7.3.1 The exercise of power through micro-level practices

According to the public leadership literature discussed in Chapter 2, power disparities within participation and collaboration need to be addressed, and public leaders may work to do so through specific efforts and practices. The literature is cautious regarding the exercise of ‘power over’ (whether by leaders or participating stakeholders), as this reinforces power differences. Public leadership is thus expected to facilitate power-sharing in the form of ‘power for’ or ‘power to’ (or ‘power with’, as some term it).

The examples and experiences of City officials from this case study suggest that, at the micro-level, the facilitation of power-sharing may be pursued through any of the four leadership practices. This resonates with observations by Huxham and Vangen (2005:179) that there are a variety of “points of power” within any collaboration through which power is enacted. These especially relate to aspects of mobilising, structuring and managing agendas, with the added emphasis on “mundane day-to-day activities” through which these practices happen (ibid.:181). Thus, decisions around who and how to mobilise, how to structure collaborations, and how to frame agendas and build relations between participants, all constitute important points through which power may be exercised and imbalances addressed (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:179). This also reverberates with Purdy’s (2012:410) identification of three broad “arenas” for the use of power, namely process design, content of processes, and participants. The findings from this study also resonate with literature regarding the various types of tactics that could be used in participatory processes in order to balance or disperse power (Page, 2010:249-50).

This study cannot conclude on the actual impacts of the four practices, particularly because the study explored officials’ views and experiences overall rather than in one specific project or process. However, as the next sections will discuss, it does show how micro-level practices of power, as described above, are situated in broader relations and structures of power that delimit the potential direction and impact of power-balancing work at the micro-level.

7.3.2 The exercise of power through positional authority

Notably, the public leadership literature claims that, in a collaborative or participatory context, public leaders work without positional authority or any formal positional power (Morse, 2010:233; Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183; Van Wart, 2013). In fact, some emphasise the importance of lateral or transversal, rather than hierarchical, relations between stakeholders

(Connelly, 2007:1247; Page, 2010:115). And yet, this study shows that, across the four practices, it is precisely through their positional authority that City officials mobilise communities, structure participatory processes, navigate between stakeholders and frame project agendas.

It may be argued that the importance of positional authority reflects the difference between participation between government and its citizenry, and inter-organisational collaboration between different government agencies or across the public and private sectors. In the latter, individual stakeholders or representatives essentially work with partners or co-collaborators in the absence of a hierarchically structured relation embedded in an organisation. In the former, the relation is arguably less likely to take on the form of partnership given the role of government as principal agent for citizens. One may therefore argue that, in fact, citizens ought then to hold authority over government. This is of course formalised through the system of representative democracy. How it manifests and operates in the direct relations between communities and local officials is less clear. This is a key challenge noted in the South African participation literature, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2. It is precisely the ‘multiple lines of accountability’ observed in theoretical discussions of public leadership (see, for instance, Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:367) that therefore come to the fore. Nevertheless, despite ideals of democratic citizen power, the reality is usually one of government power over citizens. The observation that officials act with positional authority should therefore not be surprising.

The question then becomes whether officials use their positional authority to exercise ‘power over’ communities (or other participating stakeholders), or whether they are able to exercise ‘power to’ or ‘power for’. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.4, “power to” entails working towards “mutual gain” and can be done by one party acting in the interests of all participants, or through the collaboration as a whole (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:176). “Power for” entails the transfer of power to others in the interest of “altruistic gain” (ibid.). Again, although it is not possible to conclude on the success or impact of specific participatory processes or specific leadership practices, the data suggest officials use their positional authority to both impose government policy agendas and to adapt certain policy requirements (in terms of how to mobilise and structure) to local contexts. Whilst officials’ narratives suggest they do perceive their participatory efforts as enabling, or at least intending to enable community voice and influence, the extent to which this occurs remains limited to the micro

level. Moreover, officials' narratives regarding the purpose of participation in relation to broader service delivery and development visions appear to channel government policy agendas and service delivery targets into local processes.

This kind of agenda framing may be characterised as an exercise of 'power to' – officials acting on behalf of communities and eliciting community support and buy-in on the basis of a shared vision. However, given the ideals of participation in terms of community agency and power, such an exercise of 'power to' may also be characterised as an exercise of 'power over'. Although not necessarily reflecting individual interest in personal gain, through the lens of 'structural power', such practices can be understood to both delimit community engagement in the agenda framing process, and to channel government agendas in the process.

7.3.3 The exercise of power through structural power and authorised action

The public leader practices examined in this study are largely conducted by the City and City officials. Understood as practices of 'structuring', these dictate the shape and parameters of participation. As such, these are exercises of 'structural power' that determine the conditions within which and through which relations are formed and interactions occur. It is an exercise of 'power over', but over structures (in this case, the structures of participation) rather than over followers or relations, although these are indirectly influenced by these structures.

This contrasts with the literature on public leadership in collaboration that emphasises relational connection and influence. Mandell and Keast (2009:170), for instance, claim the key leadership role and form of influence in collaboration is relational. For them, it is "not the use of power or clout but rather the ability to encourage and assist people" that builds relationships and enables the learning of new collaborative behaviours (ibid.). Although such relational elements may be noteworthy at the micro-level and in dialogical interactions within a specific process, this study suggests these also occur within the specific structures of the participatory space, which is largely decided through officials' exercise of structural power.

Insofar as officials are themselves subject to institutional performance requirements and other bureaucratic procedures, this structural power cannot be shared but rather remains centralised within the City. For officials, City structures related to mobilisation, (such as the stakeholder database), and specific participatory invited spaces (such as project steering committees), reinforce their positional authority. For communities and community leaders, such structures

provide opportunities to gain access to the City. In fact, such spaces act as sources of legitimation that recognise community participants as representatives of their communities. In this way, such structures provide community leaders with some positional authority in the City's participatory spaces, as well as the potential power to influence project processes. However, the form, parameters and content of their participation are already structurally defined and delimited. Unable to influence the structures or form of participation, community participants become subject to parameters determined 'elsewhere'. Participatory spaces thus become sites of 'authorised action'.

These findings resonate with insights from the public leadership literature on collaboration, as well as literature on distributed leadership. For instance, scholars in the public leadership literature acknowledge how the types of channels, formats and venues used for participation can be more appropriate for some stakeholders than for others, enabling and constraining certain capabilities (Page, 2010:249; see also Ansell & Gash, 2007). Collaborative structures also determine how views are shared and decisions made (Page, 2010:249). The findings from this study regarding City structures like the stakeholder database confirmed this, with structures like public meetings or project steering committees producing "structured role relations" (Gronn, 2002:445) between officials and community leaders.

Given this important influencing function of the structures of participation, the power *to* structure such spaces becomes central. This again aligns with the "points of power" identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005:179). Insofar as participatory spaces produce such 'authorised action' by delimiting what counts as acceptable action, this is arguably a form of delegated or "licensed influence", as argued by Hatcher (2005:256) in relation to the potential of distributed leadership in school contexts. Communities' participation in City-led structures and processes thus remain subject to, and circumscribed by the established parameters for action, as determined through the exercise of structural power that remains centralised.

Although this exercise of structural power by officials may suggest a form of power and agency that should allow for balancing power and enabling community voice (i.e. to shape how action is 'authorised'), the study further reveals how officials are themselves acting within structured conditions and constraints, which are also imbued with structural power.

7.3.4 The exercise of power through institutional and governance structures

Whilst officials act through positional authority and structural power, both of these are structurally defined and determined. In other words, both the subject and object of this power is structural. Officials thus act (when enacting any of the leadership practices) within and through existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities. In other words, officials are themselves – even as project leaders – subject to broader structural conditions that circumscribe the scope of engagement that they can permit and respond to at the micro or project level. This is despite the rhetoric and ideals of participatory governance being formally decentralised to this level.

Various structural conditions – including institutional systems, governance arrangements, performance targets, national policies, etc. – operate through officials via their positional authority, to influence the structures and parameters of participation. In other words, even officials' ability to design and implement participatory processes remain informed (and constrained) by broader (national) government policy agendas and requirements, particularly the way their structured roles are defined to prioritise service delivery, align with quantitative performance measures, and retain upwards accountability. This is especially evident in how they describe the purpose of participation (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2), but also in their agenda framing practices to mediate policy (see Section 7.2.4.2). Officials at this level, expected to be public leaders with the responsibility to engage communities in their work, are therefore in fact unable to ensure the inclusion of community voice and agency in local processes.

Furthermore, through different structures and structuring practices, power is diffused both between City actors and between City and other organisational stakeholders (i.e. consultants and contractors). Such 'diffusion' of power may suggest power is distributed or shared, but this still remains subject to vested/entrenched interests and sources, distributions and relations of power. In other words, the diffusion of power appears to remain imbalanced, and in favour existing power relations, with communities remaining largely disempowered in such processes. With the diffusion of power, the City is able – and does – attribute responsibility elsewhere, resulting in ambiguity and disavowal of roles and responsibilities, and undermining the power of communities to hold anyone to account. Two specific aspects of the institutional context – the systems of participatory governance and outsourcing – illuminate these dynamics and the influence on participation through the internal and external diffusion of power and responsibility.

In terms of the system of participatory governance, officials must navigate a system that is simultaneously fragmented and interdependent. Efforts in one department, project or service are likely to be influenced by the efforts of other departments. This influence may constrain participatory initiatives where service delivery work occurs in siloes but community issues are more holistic or intertwined, and where some processes may have produced constrained relations between the City and communities. As their practices of weaving and navigating relations indicate, officials' positional authority is diffused in this manner, and subject to both the structural and relational power of others in relation to communities. Such a fragmentation and interdependence of structures and processes reverberates with Sullivan et al.'s (2012:46), observation regarding the need for public leaders to balance tensions between the independence and interdependence of organisations. Although their focus is on inter-organisational arrangements, this study extends this insight by showing how this kind of tension is also evident even within the City itself.

The implications of this for public leadership can also be understood through the lens of Mandell and Keast's distinction between cooperative, coordinative and collaborative networks (2009:164-5). Given this study's focus on a range of participatory processes within the City, the fact that the City is involved in various ways in all three types of networks comes to the fore. Some of these may be at a city-wide level, some may be inter-departmental and cross-sectoral, whilst others may be quite focused in a particular department, service and/or geographic area. Understood as part of a single system, the interdependencies and fragmentations become more visible. For instance, coordinative and collaborative initiatives, (which are concerned with the delivery of services and to develop new strategies to solve problems, respectively), may to a large extent rely on the effectiveness of the City's "cooperative initiatives", which are concerned with sharing information and expertise. (There are also many processes and initiatives that occur outside of these formal City-led networks that also inform City-community relations and interactions. These are discussed in the next section).

Alongside this internal diffusion of power, there is also an external diffusion of power across different stakeholders (including consultants and contractors) as they get involved in service delivery and participatory processes. Whilst in such contexts communities may rely on the government to utilise its structural power to strengthen their roles and voice vis-à-vis more powerful actors, the case shows that this is frequently not the case. Whereas the public

leadership literature also emphasises the importance of weaving relations and producing connectedness between stakeholders, possibly through “equitable governance mechanisms” (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:303; O’Leary & Bingham, 2007; Page, 2008), this is also unlikely to occur and difficult to achieve. Rather, officials appear to utilise their structural power to diffuse power, for instance through running parallel participatory structures and processes for decision-making, and controlling interactions between communities and contractors. In this way, the City retains its positional authority, although the inclusion of other stakeholders also allow for the diffusion of responsibility and accountability. This results in a form of ‘power-sharing’ where communities potentially become more disempowered within the formal structure. Rather than address entrenched, unequal power relations, the City’s participatory initiatives may, in fact, reinforce them.

Ultimately, officials’ practices remain subject to lines of inter-governmental accountability, budgetary allocations, and quantitative delivery and efficiency performance targets. Their leadership practices thus enable community participation through and within existing structural conditions and power relations, but also constrain the potential for such participation to act upon and transform those conditions and relations. The influence of such macro-structures permeate how officials navigate between different stakeholders, how they design participation in the interest of successful service delivery, and how they frame agendas discursively through particular value claims and development visions. It also resonates with claims by Crosby and Bryson (2010b:219), in the public leadership in collaboration literature, that structures produce actions that reinforce and validate those structures. Existing power relations between the City (represented through officials and their positional authority) and communities is thereby endorsed and reinforced in participatory structures and processes.

Where citizens and communities do gain influence through the City’s invited spaces, this remains at the micro-level, often with regard to individual concerns or issues that do not have an impact on policy decisions or implementation. Alternatively, it is often through practices that challenge the entire edifice of government-led participatory governance and invited participatory spaces. Such initiatives, interestingly, seem to utilise relational power and collective mobilisation to enact structural power and open up ‘invented spaces’.

7.3.5 Relational power and collective agency

Finally, despite the constraints to community participation and communities’ structural power in the City’s service delivery and development projects, communities find ways to work

through and beyond the City's invited spaces to influence decisions. This shows how communities and community leaders are not without any power or agency to frame the City agenda.

A common concern raised by many officials was the extent to which 'other issues' are raised in meetings, regardless of the purpose or focus of the meeting (Int16:16; Int3:28; Fg4:9). This reflects an effort by citizens to bring what matters to them into the City's invited spaces despite the City's agenda. Community leaders may also do so through the positional authority they gain through participating in the process (e.g. as a member of a PSC), the relational power they are potentially forming with the participating officials, as well as the structural and relational power they hold in their communities and the risk to the City of community rejection and/or disruption of projects and services. In terms of the latter, this is confirmed through the strong emphasis among officials on ensuring community buy-in in order to complete projects and avoid disruptions and vandalism.

In project processes, some officials try to be responsive and address the issues raised by community leaders that may not be part of the actual project focus. This, it was explained, is a way of building trust (and thus by implication also relational power) with the community leaders. Although this may be construed as a form of power-sharing, it is ultimately still up to the individual official as project leader to decide whether to follow up on certain issues or not. Even where this happens, examples given suggest the issues remain limited to very specific individual concerns, and generally do not translate into any clear policy impacts. Other actions employed by community leaders and members include more disruptive or manipulative tactics, such as disrupting project implementation in order to demand access to jobs. Most of the discussions from officials pointed to these kinds of actions (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3). Although these may not be considered forms of collective political action but rather about self-interest and economic empowerment, they have impacted on the City's own processes and therefore exhibit an effort by community members to claim a degree of structural power in order to benefit from City projects and engagements.

These examples further suggest that, although public participation processes imbue community leaders with some positional authority, especially at the project level, this does not ensure their inputs are heard and reflected in policy implementation. Rather, as stated previously, these processes and the officials who lead them remain embedded in and subject to structural power that sits elsewhere. In this regard, civic and community actors generally

also utilise the relational power of collective agency to initiate their own ‘invented spaces’ in an attempt to influence the state.

Although not extensively recognised by officials in this research,⁹⁷ the literature on participation is replete with examples of communities, community organisations, social movements and civic collaborations utilising a range of alternative practices, methods, tactics and initiatives to influence the local governance and development arena (Robins et al., 2008:1082; Oldfield & Stokke, 2007:152). According to Miraftab and Wills (2005:207), “when formal channels fail, the poor use extremely innovative strategies [...] to assert their rights to the city, negotiate their wants, and actively practice their citizenship.” Examples include forms of co-production that work without the state in an effort to find solutions to specific challenges, such as meeting energy needs in informal settlements (see Swilling, 2014:3193). It may also involve direct actions to engage across spheres and institutions of government, by, for instance, approaching national ministers and even the Public Protector and the Human Rights Commission (Thompson et al., 2018:286-7). And finally, such collective mobilisation also often occurs in the form of protest. Notably, community protests also do not distinguish between local, provincial and national government functions, but rather address their issues to government as a whole.

Through the lens of agenda framing, these actions can be interpreted as efforts to bring attention to specific issues, priorities and promises that are not adequately addressed in formal participatory structures, as well as to the failures of such structures themselves. Through such efforts, communities utilise the relational power of collective agency as a way of claiming structural power – i.e. the power to define the conditions of City-community engagement. It also reflects an attempt to ‘scale up’ their efforts to address the sources of power as it permeates the three spheres of government (as well as the public-private sector divide).

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the main findings from Chapters 5 and 6, as well as key concepts and issues raised in the public leadership literature in Chapter 2 and the participatory development literature in Chapter 3. Through the lens of each of the four practices, the role,

⁹⁷ One interviewee reflected on the valuable contributions such actors could make to the City, noting that some are unfortunately perceived as a “thorn in the side of the City” (Fg14:18).

exercise and operation of power becomes evident, whilst the notion of public leader practices is widened. A number of conclusions or observations emerged. Firstly, across the four leadership practices, officials act with and through positional authority and structural power, both of which are provided and determined by government's institutional structures. Secondly, participation in formal City-led structures and processes are structurally defined, thus taking the form of 'authorised action'. Thirdly, broader institutional structures and governance arrangements – notably systems of participatory governance and outsourcing – influence public leader practices by diffusing power and responsibility both internally and externally. And finally, institutional structures and governance arrangements, which establish City priorities in the form of quantitative service delivery targets, efficiency, cost reduction, and budget spend, further inform officials' agendas and practices in relation to participation.

Together, these various aspects shaping and constituting the four practices also influence public participation and engagement. Evidently, communities and community leaders are subject to the positional authority and structural power of officials who initiate, design and lead participation. This means their involvement in the City's invited spaces are subject to and circumscribed by set parameters that produce participation as 'authorised action'. Both the leader practices and participatory practices in such formalised spaces thus work with and through existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities, but not necessarily upon them. Although officials' narratives suggest efforts and values of social change, these remain embedded in existing policies and structures, and thus act as reinforcements of existing structures, rather than as channels for potential transformation. At the same time, the diffusion of power and responsibility across stakeholders undermines the ability of communities to hold government (or other interests and powers) to account. These limits to participation do not, however, relegate communities as powerless. Rather, community and civic actors use alternative tactics, strategies and methods to work both through and beyond such invited spaces, relying on relational power and collective agency to counter the structural power that operates through entrenched institutional structures, systems and governance arrangements.

These conclusions point to the challenges and constraints for public leaders in facilitating the sharing of power within local participatory processes, especially in terms of balancing power in favour of poor and marginalised communities. The discussion also illuminates the influential role of structures in the exercise of agency, in correspondence with social constructionist analyses of leadership, practices and power. The next and final chapter

elaborates on these conclusions in relation to the public leadership literature, and the contributions this study makes to public leadership theory.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse public leadership and public leader practices in participation through a social constructionist lens and in the context of South African local government. More specifically, the study examined how City officials lead participation in a South African metro, and did so through the lens of four key practices practices. In turn, the study explored public leadership theory through the empirical analysis of officials' practices and challenges in engaging citizens and communities in informal settlement contexts. This final chapter summarises the argument and findings of the study, and discusses the key conclusions and how this contributes to public leadership theory.

8.2 Summary of argument and findings

In the current South African local government context, formal participatory structures and processes have proven ineffective in enabling communities to have a say in government and service delivery processes (NPC, 2011:437; Storey, 2014:404; Thompson & Nleya, 2010; Tapscott & Thompson, 2013). This is despite the institutionalisation of participation in accordance with policy and legislative requirements, and even where it is embedded in a system of local participatory governance. The limitations of government participation were first examined in this thesis in terms of the ideals of citizen agency and government accountability and responsiveness. The normative expectation is that participatory initiatives provide a platform for communities to, either directly or indirectly, express their needs, interests and priorities (Thompson, 2014:39; Sharma, 2008:3; Gaventa, 2002:1), and where government actors hear, value, and act upon those needs in policy implementation processes (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005:13), and in ways that bring about actual political and socio-economic outcomes.

In South Africa, these ideals and expected outcomes can be traced through a number of key policies and laws. These prescribe areas of local governance for which participatory structures and processes must be established, which includes infrastructure development and service delivery processes. However, there is considerable evidence in the extant literature that these mechanisms are also generally ineffective (Bolnick, 2012:50; Massey, 2015:316; Winkler, 2011:262). This suggests, I argued, that the institutionalisation of formal structures and

processes are not on their own sufficient to ensure meaningful engagement where communities actually have a say in decision-making.

This issue raises questions regarding the leadership roles, practices and challenges of officials who are mandated to involve citizens and communities in their service delivery work, and thus to initiate, design and lead such processes. As ‘leadership’ is generally associated with the concepts of influence and change (Day & Antonakis, 2012:5; Northouse, 2004:3), examining leadership in participation would enable an exploration of how officials influence participation. The participation literature, however, gives scant attention to issues of leadership. Similarly, the literature on leadership in South African local government considers participation either indirectly, or as an add-on to the service delivery mandate. Yet it is precisely at the intersection of this dual mandate of development and democracy – of delivering and engaging – that the complexities and challenges for leadership manifest. Given this gap in the leadership literature pertaining to the South African context, I turned to international studies of public leadership where a small but active subset of literature explores ‘collaboration’. This literature formed the entry point for the theoretical framing to the problem in this study, although a number of gaps were also noted therein.

8.2.1 The theoretical framing of the problem

Studies of public leadership in contexts of collaboration recognises the significant leadership role of public officials across the organisational hierarchy, and especially in processes of collaboration with other sectors, organisations and citizens. This role is said to involve working across boundaries, bridging differences, addressing power inequalities and facilitating power-sharing arrangements, in order to create a shared sense of purpose and to address complex public problems (Chapman et al., 2015:2; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211; Page, 2010:248; Ospina & Foldy, 2010:292). To make sense of what actually happens in such a context, and through a review of the literature conducted in Chapter 2, this study adopted a social constructionist perspective on leadership, combined with a practice lens.

Much like the general leadership literature, the public leadership literature presents a wide range of theories, typologies and approaches that reflect different ontological and epistemological paradigms. There are, in other words, multiple ways to make sense of what happens in collaborative (or participatory) processes, of how leadership contributes to or influences participation, as well as the roles and challenges for leaders and leadership therein. The social constructionist and practice lens is therefore one approach amongst many, yet it is

a particularly new one, with empirical research in both leadership and public leadership fields still quite limited (Crevani, 2011:305; Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183). The contribution of this study is therefore located within studies of public leadership that focus on contexts of collaboration, as well as to studies of leadership that employ this lens.

Through this approach, I conceptualised leadership as contextually situated, socially defined, and enacted in and through practice (Carroll et al., 2008:336). This was deemed appropriate for examining the work of local officials in participation, as the concept of “practices” offers a lens to examine what individual leaders do, whilst remaining open to practices as broader social processes that inform and constitute individual activities. Thus, rather than locating leadership in a specific formal leader at the top, or focusing on individual leader traits, skills or behaviours (which impart considerable agency to the individual), this approach considers how leadership emerges in practice, whilst remaining open to the potential roles of various context-specific factors (such as structures and relations) in producing leadership influence.

This approach also resonates with the participation literature that underscores how contextual and structural factors constrain local engagement opportunities (see for instance, Cleaver, 2001:37; Cooke & Kothari, 2001:14). The critical participatory development literature examined in Chapter 3 similarly problematises the scholarship on participation that purport to describe and explain successes and failures on the basis of individual actors alone (see for instance, Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11; Hildyard et al., 2001:69). The study therefore set out to examine public leader practices in the context of participation, and to answer the primary research question: *How do public leader practices in a South African local government context influence participation?*

A number of scholars in the field of public leadership identify, examine and theorise specific practices as important to collaboration. Such practices may be read as expectations of what public leaders ought to do, what public leaders actually do, or descriptions of what goes on more broadly in collaboration and what moves a collaboration in a particular direction. Combining, in particular, the work of Page (2010), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Crosby and Bryson (2010a, 2010b), Ospina and Foldy (2010) and Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010), I identified four key leader practices that may be relevant to the South African local government context. These were: mobilising and convening stakeholders and communities; structuring participatory processes; weaving and navigating relations; and framing agendas.

These practices formed the basis for the empirical examination of the empirical data. They do not present an exhaustive articulation of leadership in collaboration, and were in fact deduced from the literature as a relevant and important entry point for examining what goes on in participation, where the sources of influences are, and how influence is exercised. Insofar as public officials take on a formal role as leaders of a collaborative process, and as representatives of government therein, it is reasonable to expect they would have more influence in these practices than other actors or stakeholders. And with a focus on local officials' formal responsibility to lead participation, this would enable an exploration of how their practices influence and shape participation, as well as what influences and shapes their practices, illuminating the social construction of leadership.

In further developing the theoretical framework, the social constructionist approach therefore opened the analysis up to a broader examination of how leadership practices are shaped and operate, or 'what makes things happen' in collaboration (Raffel et al., 2009:10). Such a framing thus enabled an inquiry into how agency is enabled and constrained by various contextual factors, where multiple sources and processes of influence become apparent (Tourish, 2014:87). Huxham and Vangen (2005:203) in particular propose a framework of public leadership in collaboration where practices are constructed through the dynamic interplay of structures, processes and participants. They further recognise how different layers of structures – the micro-level structures of a specific collaboration, the meso-level structures of participating organisations, as well as the macro-structures of the collaborative governance context – influence processes and participant actions in dynamic ways. However, in the review of the literature, I argued the influence of structure is under-theorised in the literature on public leadership, and in studies of leadership practices in collaboration more specifically.

In light of this gap in the public leadership literature, I turned to the critical literature on participatory development, which places questions of structure and power at the centre of the theory and practice of participation. Scholars in this field define participation as a power struggle and a process through which existing power relations ought to be transformed but may also be reinforced and reproduced (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2004). Participatory processes are therefore political rather than technical, with local relations and inequalities situated within broader structural arrangements and power dynamics (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:11; Cleaver, 2001:39; Hildyard et al., 2001:69). In other words, there are deep structural constraints to what individuals can do and achieve at the local level. This manifests, for

instance, in the way the agendas of funders and policymakers shape micro-level project processes, despite employing the language of participation and empowerment. Accepting this critical perspective from the participatory development literature, it can therefore be concluded that existing structural conditions are likely to influence the construction and exercise of any of the leader practices in local engagements.

In relation to South Africa, this broader context was described in terms of macro-level conditions and policies oriented towards growth, New Public Management and market-based principles of performance, as well as increased reliance on outsourcing and cost-recovery in the delivery of public goods and services (Bond & Dugard, 2008:15; Chipkin, 2011:35; Naidoo, 2015:438; Veriava, 2015:428). To the extent that local governments have been shaped by this context, policies and governance rationalities have been described as notably “technocratic, functionalist, market-driven and neo-liberal, driven by the need for alignment with national policy documents, budgets, mandates and targets” (Massey, 2015:307). Where participation has been formally institutionalised, such processes have thus also taken the form of “technocratic managerialism” and “patronising consultation” on how to “fix and finance” local services, rather than as deliberations on how to structurally (re)shape society (Oldfield, 2008:494; Pieterse et al., 2008:18).

Foregrounding the influence of structure in this way also underscores issues of power. In the public leadership literature, power is recognised as an important element shaping collaborative endeavors. On the one hand, power is understood as “shared” insofar as knowledge, resources and authority are dispersed across sectors, organisations and stakeholders (Armistead et al., 2007:212; Connelly, 2007:1231; Morse, 2007:2; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:211; Sullivan et al., 2012:43). On the other hand, power is understood to be shared unequally, with power differences likely to undermine the success of collaboration (Connelly, 2007:1247). A key role attributed to public leadership is thus to actively address such disparities and facilitate the sharing of power (Page, 2010:248). This was articulated through the distinction between ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power for’ (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:174-5; see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1). More precisely, the leadership practices identified and examined in this thesis comprise key ways through which leaders may be able to facilitate such power-sharing.

Implied in this theorisation of the role of public leader practices regarding power is the view that participatory structures and processes do not automatically resolve differences and ensure

equal representation or engagement. This has also been recognised in the participation and participatory development context: that getting the methods ‘right’ is an insufficient guarantee of citizen voice, of the improvement of socio-structural conditions, or the transformation of power relations (Williams, 2004:569). Although it may be the mandate of local officials to take on the role of public leader in participation, the critical participatory development literature warns against romanticising the ability of individuals to fulfil this role (Nelson & Wright, 1995:6). Again, the limited attention to structure in the theorisation of public leadership risks neglecting the influence of broader structural conditions on what is possible at the local level. This has important implications for the influence (and particularly the power-balancing work) that local leaders may be able to accomplish. It also has important implications for how public leader practices emerge and are shaped, as well as how they are understood, researched and explained.

The theoretical framing of the problem was subsequently extended through the introduction of two key concepts, also from literature in the fields of international and participatory development: structural power and invited spaces. Susan Strange’s (1998:25) notion of ‘structural power’ brings attention to power as the power to determine “the surrounding structure of the relationship” itself. Strange examines structural power as it pertains to the roles of markets and states, as the macro-level conditions and relations of power that arguably influence, if not establish, how nations, organisations and various other actors and processes relate to one another. With regard to participation, the concept of structural power is incorporated in this thesis as characterising the influence of the broader South African context and political economy on the direction of development and governance at the local level, even shaping the character, scope and objectives of local participatory initiatives.

Applying the concept at the local level, those who are able to design the structures and parameters of participation thus have structural power in a way those who are only participants do not. Where participation is formally structured, this produces and provides an “invited space” (Cornwall, 2002, 2004, 2008) whereby the structures of participation delimit ‘legitimate’ ways of engaging and thus constrain the agency of those invited into such spaces. From this perspective, micro-level practices are shaped and constrained in accordance with broader macro-structures and the structural power exercised by those who are empowered through existing structural conditions.

Through this theoretical framing, which was developed in Chapters 2 and 3, the role of structural conditions and power relations was applied to the theorisation of public leader practices. Accepting that leader practices are socially constructed in context, and recognising that macro-structural conditions influence individual agency and local spaces of action, the research question was supplemented through two further questions: How are public leader practices socially constructed in the context of participation? And how do broader structural conditions and structural power inform public leader practices in the context of participation?

Finally, the theorisation of public leadership in contexts of collaboration seems to gloss over the inequalities of the so-called ‘shared power’ world. In this regard, it is noteworthy that, although the literature on public leadership in collaboration recognises the important involvement of citizens (see for instance, O’Leary & Bingham, 2007; Feldman et al., 2006; Page, 2010; Bono et al., 2010), there are few empirical studies that focus primarily on the engagements of poor and marginalised citizens with government. The focus is mostly on formal, inter-organisational and cross-sectoral partnerships, networks and outsourcing arrangements, and in developed country contexts (Bono et al., 2010:325; Raffel et al., 2009:5). Taking explicit account of the ability of poor and marginalised communities to engage and contribute to formal participatory processes is crucial in the South African context. This brings to the fore the vast power disparities and structural conditions that characterise the broader context within which participation takes place, and that potentially shape interactions and power relations at the local level. It is arguably also political, social and economic inequalities that ought to be addressed and transformed through participation.

Finally, studies of public leadership lack sufficient examination of engagement initiatives that are undertaken as part of a broader system of participatory governance, which would comprise multiple and varied participatory structures, processes and participants. Yet these are two key aspects characterising the public participation context in South African local government: that municipalities are required to engage a variety of organised and disorganised communities, especially in areas that were excluded and oppressed during apartheid (and continue to be characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality); and that this participation mandate is applied and institutionalised across different local governance processes, thereby constituting a system of participatory governance. These empirical gaps presented an opportunity to explore issues of structure and power in the four public leader

practices in this context, with a focus on local officials' engagements with informal settlement communities in a metropolitan municipality.

8.2.2 The four leader practices in context

Through an analysis of officials' individual and shared accounts of their experiences and challenges with participation, Chapters 5 and 6 develop a descriptive account of the four public leader practices. South African metro officials' practices in leading participation in their project and service delivery work clearly resonate with the four practices identified in the public leadership literature. Their experiences gave insight into how each practice emerges and is constructed and shaped by both formal mechanisms and informal dynamics. The findings suggest a degree of individual agency that is also clearly shaped by the City's institutional and governance context.

In the City examined in this study, mobilising and convening practices are necessary for any local public meetings, as part of informing residents of opportunities to engage, and in more specific project-based structures such as project steering committees. Officials generally follow the formally prescribed procedures on how and where to advertise such engagements, and use the City's formal mechanisms (i.e. the stakeholder database) to identify who to approach. They often involve the relevant ward councillor and/or sub-councillors, and especially engage local community organisations and leaders to contribute to mobilisation efforts. Although a clear pattern is evident, these processes also depend on context and various informal adjustments and adaptations made by individual officials and project leaders. As recognised in the literature (Vangen & Huxham, 2003:S66; Chrislip & Larson, 1994:59), practices of mobilisation in this context influence accessibility, inclusion, and representation within various participatory spaces. Notably, officials' perceive the City's formalised structures and national policy prescripts as insufficient, ineffective, and even questionable with regard to ensuring inclusion of affected communities. This results in public apathy, but also in citizens using alternative means to approach the City and raise their issues. Officials might also use additional methods in an ad hoc manner to advertise their engagements, depending on their interest and initiative, as well as their knowledge of the local context and recommendations from local leaders, councillors, or colleagues.

Within project processes, crucial mobilisation work occurs around project steering committees. As the primary structure for communities to have a (albeit indirect) voice in project decisions and processes, including the allocation of any employment opportunities,

who gets a seat on the committee can be contentious. Experiences from officials reveal, yet again, the interplay of a formalised approach led by the project leader in accordance with City requirements and Terms of Reference, and their adaptation of such requirements to the local context in accordance with community dynamics. Whilst the City's involvement in this process is largely described as neutral, there are also examples of officials influencing representation on the steering committee in the interest of the 'weaker' participants (i.e. residents of the informal settlement vis-à-vis the ratepayers association). Other mobilising practices include, inter alia, pragmatic efforts to build trust with communities, as well as discursive tactics to get project support, often through claiming political neutrality.

Structuring practices similarly emerge through formalised methods and informal tactics, often also coinciding with officials' mobilisation work. The decision to hold a public meeting, create a project steering committee, or run an open house is up to the individual project leader, but also determined to an extent by formalised strategies and requirements. Importantly, the structures for community participation generally lack decision-making power, and sit outside of, and parallel to the structures and processes where project decisions are actually made. Thus, at the project level, officials engage communities alongside other stakeholders brought in as consultants in the design or implementation stage. Rather than ensuring shared decision-making and equitable governance mechanisms (as per the literature, see Ospina & Foldy, 2010:299; Page, 2010:249), case examples indicate how different structures are put in place for different stakeholder inputs. Budget decisions, also made elsewhere, mean it is highly likely community priorities will not find their way into policy implementation decisions.

How participatory processes are structured also influence how officials weave relations between different stakeholders. In this regard, important stakeholders include communities (via local organisations and their representatives, and, at times, informal leaders), external facilitators, and consultants. The City's increasing reliance on outsourcing (in line with national government policy direction) has shaped local relational dynamics and the way participatory processes emerge and unfold. This is particularly evident in how officials weave relations. As argued in Chapter 6, officials navigate between stakeholder inputs and interests, rather than weave their interests and identities together. This is evident in how officials structure the introduction of contractors to communities, and try to control meetings and interactions between them in order to prevent the establishment of close relations. Whilst this

is described as efforts to mitigate against potential manipulation over employment allocations by community members, it shows how the use of outsourcing, alongside the high levels of poverty and unemployment in informal settlements in particular, shape officials practices and how they influence participation in projects.

Finally, officials' agenda framing practices permeate the other three practices. Agenda framing is arguably at the core of government-community engagements. Insofar as participation is purported to provide a mechanism for citizen voice, citizens ought to partake in the framing of the City's agenda. Opportunities to do so have been institutionalised in the City in three key areas of governance: city-wide integrated development planning (IDP) and budgeting; ward and sub-council representative structures and processes; departmental projects and service delivery. These were explored in Chapter 5 as emblematic of the City's main 'invited spaces'. However, officials' reflections indicate the scope of citizen and community engagement remains limited. In particular, the IDP and budget processes suggest a misalignment between City and community agendas, with highly strategic planning perceived as too distant and difficult for citizens to engage, and citizens lacking sufficient space to influence decision-making at this level. Ward and sub-council structures and processes are also noted to be fraught with issues of accessibility and representation, which impacts on who is able to influence priorities and resource allocations through these structures. The scope for officials to contribute to agenda framing in these processes is also limited, although they are able to propose and design projects within the ambit of the City's development priorities.

Within projects, officials' exhibit a variety of practices through which they frame their roles and City services to communities, ultimately with the aim of completing projects through community buy-in and, in some cases, behavioural change. This includes decisions on whether or not to involve local councillors, which depends on whether officials' perceive their political support as forthcoming and useful for community buy-in. Paradoxically, it also includes claims of political neutrality by officials, in an effort to convince citizens that their work is about making a change in people's livelihoods, rather than any political purpose. Challenges arise when external organisations also get involved, particularly when facilitating between the City and communities, and bringing their own agendas and making 'unrealistic promises' that run counter to that of the City or what the City deems feasible. These various forms of agenda framing – from officials but also other actors – are indicative of how roles,

responsibilities and capabilities are constructed. Although the data do not provide access to how discussions and deliberations in meetings actually unfold, they do show how officials work to orient communities' understanding of an issue "in a particular direction" (Corvellec & Risberg, 2007:315).

In summary, officials in this study exhibit and enact clear mobilisation and structuring practices, and work to navigate relationships between different stakeholders, as well as to frame agendas within participatory processes. Their approaches and experiences with participation were further explored through their reported views of the purpose and value of participation. These were analysed as a lens into the City's participatory governance system and the 'official narratives' attached to it, together reflecting the institutional environment in which and through which officials engage communities. As per the discussion in Chapter 5, officials attach five different objectives or values to participation, often simultaneously. These are: policy compliance; democratic empowerment; customer service; service and project delivery; and labour brokering. These reflect (and reproduce) different types of relations between the City and its citizenry, and also indicate different roles and responsibilities that officials ascribe to the City and communities respectively. By far the most common perception is that participation is a means for ensuring successful service and project delivery, and that the predominant approach of the City institution is that of compliance.

The range of objectives and values attached to participation further reflect the observation made by public leadership scholars that the public sector context encompasses multiple institutional logics or governance systems, often with competing or conflicting aims and value orientations (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006:367; Van Wart & Suino, 2012:24). These, in turn, can be expected to structure and produce relations in different ways. Again, prevalent institutional structures that emerged in this study included the different participatory approaches across departments and processes, alongside the emphasis on compliance and efficient project delivery. The use of outsourcing also shapes the relation between the metro and its citizenry, and makes employment and community-contractor relations more prominent within participatory processes. Although difficult to generalise given the variability of officials' roles and perspectives, there is a clear sense among interviewees that they (and the City) ought to be responsive to community needs and interests, but that this does not always ensure projects and services get delivered efficiently and effectively. There is also a general experience of the organisational context – its systems, procedures, policies and top-down

pressures, especially to be efficient and achieve clean audits – as a constraint to their participation work.

The descriptive analysis of officials' practices raised questions regarding the influence of the City context on how they shape and lead participation. If the City's overall agenda is oriented towards procedural compliance and efficiency, how does this permeate into officials' work? How does the City's institutional and governance arrangements influence public leader practices at the project level? And what does this imply for the important power-sharing work officials are expected to achieve as public leaders? At a theoretical level, these questions open the analysis of leader practices to a broader constructionist perspective to consider public *leadership* practices.

8.2.3 The four leader practices through the lens of power and structure

In Chapter 7, I examined officials' practices through the lens of power and structure. How their practices are shaped by existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities were articulated through four main observations regarding the exercise and operation of power and the influence of City structures on the four public leader practices.

First, I argued the identified leader practices could be understood as driven or enacted by officials on the basis of their positional authority. This positional authority is based on their formal positions in the City, as well as formal roles in participatory processes, often as project leaders. It is also a source and form of power that is provided and defined by broader institutional and governance arrangements. The observation that officials lead participation through positional authority is an important contribution to the public leadership literature. It stands in contrast with the view in the scholarship that when public leaders work in collaboration, they are likely to do so without any formal or positional authority (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011:i84; Morse, 2010:233). This is based on the understanding of collaboration as inter-organisational, and involving different organisational representatives in horizontal rather than vertical relations (Connelly, 2007:1247; Page, 2010:115). Any positional authority one has within an organisation would therefore also have less clout within such collaboration. However, contrary to these expectations, much of what City officials do in relation to poor and marginalised communities, and particularly in formalised participation in invited spaces, can be attributed to their positional authority.

It is also through this positional authority that officials exercise structural power in determining the micro-level parameters of participation. In other words, deciding who to mobilise, what venues and forms of engagement to use, and what and how issues are to be dealt with – all constitute the exercise of power over the structural conditions within which communities are invited to participate. This suggests the influence over structures is an important way in which public leader practices influence participation. Whilst some scholars underscore relational and inspirational elements as key sources of influence (see for example, Mandell & Keast, 2009:170), the analysis in this study brings attention to the structuring role of the leadership practices. How participation is structured influences interactions and relational processes within the space of participation. Notably, this structural power can also be linked to officials' positional authority, which implies that other stakeholders, and community participants in particular, lack such structural power. This is likely to undermine the scope for any balance of power in participatory spaces.

This does not suggest there is no scope for individual agency or relational forms of influence. In fact, officials' various experiences with participation also illuminate the role and influence of community dynamics and the relational power of local community leaders on officials' practices. However, the scope of this influence remains limited. It also depends on the responsiveness of officials and project leaders, and their willingness and capacity to utilise their positional authority and structural power to acknowledge and respond to local concerns and initiatives.

The second observation regarding officials' practices, and linked to the first, was that the City's formal invited spaces of participation also exercise a kind of structural power. Specifically, the structures and mechanisms used by the City (e.g. stakeholder database and project steering committees) serve to establish and maintain certain parameters for engagement, and thus to legitimise and delegitimise certain issues and forms of interaction. This influence of structure is not limited to the micro-level, however. Officials' practices, and the way they structure local participatory spaces, are also embedded in the broader institutional and governance systems of the City. In other words, how and who they mobilise, the types of venues and formats they develop, the stakeholders they bring in, and the agendas they promote, are to a large extent informed by local and national policy prescripts, standardised methods, terms of reference, project timeframes, SCM procedures, forms of service delivery, etc.

That the parameters of participation are set and controlled in this manner produces a form of engagement that can be described as ‘authorised action’. Both officials and community participants interact in a space officially authorised by the City (and by the state more generally in accordance with key policies). These findings resonate with insights from the public leadership literature on collaboration, as well as literature on distributed leadership that recognise how different types of engagement influence who has access, who is empowered to speak, and how decisions are made (Page, 2010:249; Ansell & Gash, 2007).

Whilst this general observation resonates with broader public leadership studies, this thesis also brought to light some of the specificities of the South African local government institutional and governance context, and how this informs the roles and challenges of officials in engaging informal settlement communities. Thus, the third observation identified the City’s system of participatory governance and the outsourcing of service delivery as two key structures influencing local practices, and shaping local relations and engagement agendas. These also influence participation by diffusing power and responsibility, both internally across departments and externally across different stakeholders and organisations. This diffusion of power across different stakeholders (including private sector contractors) has the effect of also diffusing or delegating responsibility, and thereby undermining the capacity of communities to hold government accountable via participatory processes.

Finally, I argued that officials’ practices could, to a large extent, be understood as channels for the implementation of government agendas and policies. Whilst this seems obvious given their roles as officials vis-à-vis their political counterparts, it does illuminate the difficult position they are in given the multiple mandates they must fulfil. In particular, it is up to officials to work out any tensions between the need to deliver and the complexities of engaging communities in the process. The way officials in this case reflected on the purposes and challenges of engagement suggest their efforts in this regard are both informed (defined) and constrained by their broader context, such that they operate as conduits for the articulation and imposition of City and government agendas. Thus, the institutional structures and governance arrangements that establish City priorities – in the form of quantitative service delivery targets, efficiency, cost reduction, and budget spend – inform officials’ agendas and practices in relation to participation. Even officials’ narratives regarding the neutrality of their work and the vision of social change it offers to communities can be understood as embedded in (and reinforcing) existing government agendas, policies, structures and approaches.

Based on this theoretical analysis, I concluded that public leader practices work through and within existing structural conditions, constraints and opportunities, which limits the extent to which such practices can act upon and transform those very structural conditions. This is not a new finding, but confirms the concerns raised by critical scholars in the field of participatory development (as discussed in Chapter 3). It also reiterates the important theorisation of participation in terms of its transformative potential whereby the exercise of citizen agency results in government responsiveness in the form of actual socio-economic and political outcomes, and ultimately in the transformation of oppressive structural conditions that marginalise the poor. The effect of this overall ‘scenario’ is, however, to delimit and constrain the agency of citizens, communities and community leaders, who are subject to the positional and structural power of officials, and to the established parameters for participating in the City’s invited spaces. These observations further point to the challenges and constraints to public leadership in facilitating the sharing of power, especially in terms of balancing power in favour of poor and marginalised communities.

With regard to public leadership, this suggests calls for ‘better’ leadership, understood in terms of formal leaders within existing local government structures, would not necessarily be able to address this particular constraint. It should also raise concerns around articulations of leadership focused wholly on efficiency and service delivery, or even the strengthening of existing formalised structures of governance, which arguably risk concealing the power dynamics that operate through such agendas and structures. Even the theorisation of public leadership through a social constructionist and practice lens, as employed in this thesis, could potentially fail to fully acknowledge the impact of structural conditions on the emergence and shape of leader practices, as well as the potential for manipulation to be enacted through such practices. Huxham and Vangen (2005:202) notably recognise this in what they describe as “collaborative thuggery”, i.e. practices of mobilisation, agenda framing, etc. that manoeuvre or manipulate the process in a particular direction, in order to get things done. Yet the framing of collaboration around making things happen and achieving shared goals and project success (as was also evident in officials’ views in this study), contributes to the simplification of the kinds of power struggles and power dynamics permeating such engagements, and of the implications this has for the ability of people living in poverty and historically excluded from influencing the direction of policy and development decisions.

Although the focus of this thesis has been on how City officials lead participatory processes through the four leader practices, their experiences and reflections also pointed to some of the ways that informal settlement communities respond to the constraining effects of the City's invited spaces. Thus, the limitations to community participants' formal influence on project or City agendas often results in people acting through alternative means, such as disrupting projects, in order to influence the allocation of resources and opportunities. In fact, it seems to be precisely such limitations that inform efforts by communities, and civic actors more broadly, to initiate their own 'invented spaces' through which they try to engage the state. In these ways, community and civic actors rely on their relational power and collective agency to counter the structural power operating through the City's participatory spaces, institutional structures and governance arrangements.

In conclusion, the findings from this study provided insights into the way public leader practices are more generally embedded in and shaped by broader institutional structures, systems and governance arrangements, which delimit participatory spaces and processes. These, in turn, become sites through which power relations are channelled and reinforced, but also sites through which and against which communities mobilise.

8.3 Conclusions and contributions to the theorisation of public leadership

This study makes a number of empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions to the theory and study of public leadership. First, the study contributes empirically to the literature on public leadership in contexts of collaboration by introducing the example of South African local government, and more specifically, the participation between a South African metropolitan municipality and poor and marginalised citizens and communities. This has provided insight into a developing country and informal settlement context. The City that was the focus of this research is home to a highly diverse citizenry. This includes densely populated yet under-serviced informal settlements, where high levels of poverty and inequality continue to reflect the racialised control of space and infrastructure that characterised apartheid. The South African context more broadly is also one where the majority of the population were previously marginalised, both economically and politically. In this way, the experiences and perspectives from the South African context extends the largely U.S. and European-based studies of public leadership in collaboration (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1180; Raffel et al., 2009:5) and deepens understanding of the practical

complexities and nuances of public participation and engagement for local governance and public leadership in such a context.

Moreover, the study focused on the ways officials in local government engage communities across their service delivery and project work. This can be understood in the context of the legal mandate for local government to institutionalise structures and processes of participation under the ambit of participatory governance. Whereas the extant public leadership and collaborative governance literatures predominantly focus on inter-organisational forms of collaboration (Bono et al., 2010:325) this study expressly examined how local officials engage communities. Although other stakeholders (e.g. facilitators, planners, designers, engineers, developers, etc.) may be involved, the study centred on the City's relations and interactions with poor and marginalised communities and community leaders.

The research design and context of the study further allowed analyses of public leader practices in specific project processes, as well as within the broader system of participatory governance. Insofar as municipalities are mandated to involve citizens across their planning and service delivery work, the City as a whole drives a variety of participatory initiatives simultaneously across communities and sectors. Findings from the study therefore expand on existing studies of specific collaborative initiatives by providing insight into how participation as an overall governance approach institutionalised within a City administration may influence leader practices at the individual project level.

In terms of research methods, the study has also been unique as a study of leadership that examines participation-related practices rather than how people understand, describe or attribute leadership. This kind of approach has been recognised in studies of leadership that go beyond leader-centric theories and focus on processes and practices (see for example, Drivdal, 2016:280; Knights & Willmott, 1992:765). This study confirms that research of this nature can provide valuable insights into the social construction of leadership in complex settings. In addition, the study also contributes to knowledge related to the re-purposing or re-using of data as part of the research design. In this regard, the study confirms this as a viable approach, provided that data is collected in a rigorous manner, and data collection methods are well-documented.

Finally, at a conceptual level, and in relation to each of the above areas of contribution, the research brought together literatures on public leadership, on collective and social

constructionist approaches to leadership, as well as on participatory governance and critical participatory development. By bringing these different literatures together, the study developed a theoretical framework to analyse how officials' practices are socially constructed in the context of South African local government, where existing structural factors enable and constrain individual agency and invited spaces of participation. Through this framework, the study contributes to understandings of public leadership through the lens of power and an examination of how power informs officials' practices in this context. This elucidates how public leader practices influence participation in those spaces. The rest of this section discusses in further detail how the study contributes to the theorisation of public leadership. This includes specific contributions to the theorisation of public leadership in terms of the four practices, in terms of power and structure, and as socially constructed.

8.3.1 The four public leader practices

Employing a social constructionist approach, the aim of this study was to describe and explain how officials as public leaders engage communities, and thus elucidate how such practices emerge and operate through situated actions, relations and structures. The analysis of the four practices was therefore not intended to conclude on the most appropriate and effective practices to prescribe for contexts of collaboration and/or participation. Although a different articulation of practices might have been possible, the contribution of this study has been to identify a set of practices in the literature, and to explore how these practices influence participation, and how they are, in turn, influenced.

The empirical study further confirmed the relevance of this set of practices as a useful framework for examining public leadership, especially in the context of participation and collaboration. In fact, these four practices – mobilising and convening stakeholders, structuring processes, weaving relations, and framing agendas – may be applicable to a wide range of forms and contexts of engagement. This is suggested by the fact that officials in this study were involved in a variety of local government processes and forms of engagement, and yet their varied practices found expression within this framework. One possible conclusion to draw from this is that this set of practices pinpoint crucial components or 'moments' of participation that influence the shape and direction of engagements. These moments pertain to individual processes at the level of project delivery as shown in Chapter 6, but also in on-going and city-wide processes and structures, as implied in the descriptive analysis of the

City's integrated development planning and ward and sub-council structures and processes, described in Chapter 5.

Also evident from this analysis is the potential for such practices to permeate and shape one another. Thus, mobilising and structuring practices may also frame project agendas, or the way a specific project is framed might point to a certain method of engagement appropriate to that agenda. This is not to suggest the identification of the four practices do not also provide useful distinctions. Specific findings on each of the four practices are discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4, and in Section 8.2.2 above, and will not be repeated here.

Although the focus of this study was firstly on officials as leaders and how they perform, enact or undertake each practice, the practice lens also allowed more socially and relationally oriented analyses and understandings to emerge. The focus on officials was thus a useful entry point to explore how the four practices are constructed in context through the actions of officials, but also through the influence of other dynamic processes and relations. This expanded the analysis of individual leader practices (as an entitative approach) to a perspective of *leadership* practices (as a more comprehensive constructionist approach), where practices encompass dynamic social processes, structures and relations that influence, if not constitute, individual activities.

This was explored in Chapter 7, which noted how any number of factors can shape how each practice manifests in a particular situation or moment. In this study, these factors included, inter alia: the intentions of the individual official; his or her relations with other officials, councillors and community leaders; the inputs and interests of these actors; and the dynamics of the affected community (e.g. whether there are formal community organisations and the nature or quality of their relations within the community, perceptions of the legitimacy of formal and informal community leaders, but also whether there are gangs or other kinds of factions, internal competition for access to resource and employment opportunities made available through City projects).

From the City's side, such potential influencing factors included: the nature of the project and service and whether the department or project leader perceives it as requiring community engagement; whether a project is located within or across different communities and wards; the nature of the relation between the City and other government (provincial and national) actors; the use or not of external facilitators and their priorities, as well as their perspectives of

the City's role and responsibilities; the inclusion of consultants in service delivery processes; the City's performance management system and the goals and indicators against which officials are measured; the ways other departments and officials engage communities; levels of trust in the City; and so on.

The analysis of the four public leader practices also inform this study's contributions to the theorisation of power and structure in public leadership, as well as to the theorisation of public leadership as socially constructed. These final three sections of this thesis consider the implications of the research for the concept of public leadership more generally, and in contexts of participation and collaboration in particular.

8.3.2 Theorising public leadership as the exercise of power

The findings and conclusions from this study contribute to the understanding of public leadership practises as exercises of power. In the context of South African local government participation, the source of officials' power (and by implication, influence) is predominantly located in their formal positions, taking the form of positional authority. Moreover, this influence is predominantly exercised over the structures of participation, in the form of structural power.

8.3.2.1 Leading through positional authority

The analysis of officials' practices in participation suggests positional authority remains an important component informing, if not determining, officials' practices and the exercise of power (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3). This contrasts with much of the public leadership literature, which describes public leadership as involving lateral or horizontal relations, and specifically without positional authority and the hierarchical relations this implies (see for instance, Connelly, 2007:1247; Page, 2010:115; Morse, 2010:233; Vogel & Masal, 2015:1183). Positional authority (or positional power, as described by Bass, 1990) is also not an expected form of power in social constructionist analyses, given its leader-centrism. However, a social constructionist approach (and collective leadership theories more broadly) arguably does not foreclose the possibility that individual leaders or formal leader positions are important sources of influence. It does, however, reject any reduction of leadership to individual leaders or their formal positions of power.

This conclusion does not, therefore, suggest there are not other factors that inform and construct officials' practices as exercises of power. In fact, the findings and analysis point to a

range of structural and relational aspects of officials' influence, especially relations between officials and councillors, community leaders and other officials. And although the study did not interrogate personal qualities, skills or behavioural styles as such, this also does not suggest individual factors are not at all relevant. The study could also not link any of the practices to specific outcomes. However, some insights can be gleaned from how City officials described either factors for 'success' in participation, or those officials who they saw as 'good' at participation. References included, for instance, having a departmental ethos that values participation (which may or may not be attributed to the department head), and individual humility. It is noteworthy that the latter was further described in terms of practices: making the effort to speak in the local language, apologising for apartheid, and participating in community initiatives, for example. The fact that some officials adapt their practices to local contexts in ways to ensure equal representation or to build trust, whilst others appear to neglect or disregard the value of engagement altogether, further suggests there may be factors at the individual level that influences the construction and exercise of the public leadership practices.

What this study does argue against, however, is the notion that public leadership emerges "from the inside-out", that is, through the proper "mindset, will or habits of heart" (Morse, 2007:13), and that strong "personal leadership" comprising ethos and intention is a sufficient condition for realising the objectives and ideals of social change or the public good. In this regard, the findings and analysis also point to a range of structural and relational influences *on* officials, which suggest they do not act only out of individual intent or ethos, but also that they do not act with full positional authority over others. For example, officials respond and adapt policy requirements and project processes in response to local community dynamics, relational networks, and social and individual practices by community actors. Nevertheless, the study points to the significance of positional authority as one of the primary factors that makes it possible for officials to act in their own particular ways in the first place. In other words, where officials as project leaders are concerned, their agency remains to a large extent embedded in their positional authority. Even though this power may be limited, it indicates structured roles and relations between officials and citizens and communities (and community leaders) exist prior to the informal, personal or social relations and practices that may emerge in participatory processes.

The observation that officials act with and through positional authority is thus an important contribution of this study to the public leadership literature. The importance of officials' positional authority also pointed to two further insights: the importance of institutional and governance arrangements in providing (enabling and constraining) officials' positional authority; and the way officials influence participation through the exercise of structural power, which also cascades upwards and downwards through these structures.

8.3.2.2 Leading through structural power

In addition to the exercise of power through positional authority, this study further contributed to public leadership theory by analysing officials' practices through the lens of structural power. Despite the emergence of post-heroic and collective theorisations, studies of leadership and public leadership still predominantly emphasise the influence of leaders over followers, in whatever shape or form. The concepts of positional power and personal power, for instance, distinguish different ways through which a leader may exercise influence over followers. The concept of structural power, on the other hand, points to the important exercise of influence over structures themselves; that is, the power to shape the conditions in which and through which relations form. It is also the power, in the context of this study, to determine the parameters of engagement.

This conclusion contributes to social constructionist theorisations of public leadership that acknowledge the role of structures and the practice of structuring in constituting leadership (for example, Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b). It therefore resonates with the small but growing subset of literature on public leadership in collaboration. For instance, Huxham and Vangen (2005) point to the structuring power of various leadership practices, as well as of the collaborative structure itself. Although they do not use the term 'structural power', they similarly observe that those who are able to structure the collaboration are thereby able to determine who can influence the agenda, direct the process and decide how to use and allocate resources (ibid.:204). Those with structural power can also shape the agency and structural power of others. It is therefore not merely the power of structures that matters, but also the power *to* structure. It thus matters who designs the space of action, or who or what is able to influence the structures within which actors engage.

Highlighting the importance of the power to structure also contributes to social constructionist studies of leadership more generally. It contrasts, for instance, with how the object of leadership has been conceptualised across different paradigms. Reviewing several leadership

theories, Ospina (2017:278) characterises each according to the source and object of leadership. In transformational leadership, the individual is identified as the source of leadership, who influences followers as the object of influence. In leader-member exchange (LMX), the source is the leader-member dyad, with the quality of the relationship constituting its object. In shared and distributed approaches, the leadership role, as the source of leadership, works upon the group and group members. Finally, collective theories posit that the source of leadership can be a variety of context-specific factors, with the object of such leadership being the environment and the creation of a “leaderful environment” (ibid.). Working within a social constructionist approach that is located within collective leadership, this study affirms that there are multiple sources of leadership, although as argued above, officials’ positional authority has particular significance in this context. It has also shown that the work on the environment occurs, in this instance, through work on the structures of the environment wherein engagement takes place. This will have implications for the ability of actors or stakeholders to participate in collaboration and, arguably, in the collective achievement of leadership as well.

This study thus contributes to the theorisation of public leadership as an exercise of power by bringing attention to the continued significance of positional authority, and the exercise of structural power, particularly in relation to citizens and communities. This is despite the broader context where power and resources are shared across organisations, and where institutional hierarchies have been deemed less important for inter-organisational collaboration. This does not reject the relevance of discursive practices in the exercise of power, nor of personal, social or relational aspects, but rather foregrounds the non-discursive and material (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:183) and how this can shape the personal, social, relational and discursive. This has been further examined and explained in this study in the way officials’ positional authority is imbued with structural power that cascades upwards into institutional and governance structures, and operates downwards into local participatory spaces.

8.3.3 Theorising public leadership by foregrounding structure

This study further contributes to the theorisation of public leadership by foregrounding the role of structure in the construction of public leader practices as the exercise of power. This is not to undermine the constructionist view of leadership as the dynamic interplay of structures, processes and participants (as described by Huxham & Vangen, 2005), but to counter the

general over-emphasis on agency that many scholars have argued characterises studies of both leadership and public leadership (Vogel & Masal, 2015:1180). Although public leadership scholars do allude to the important role of macro-structures of collaborative governance, this study extends this work by articulating the dynamic between context (structure) and actors (agency), and by linking analyses of the broader structural context to how leader practices in participation emerge and operate at the micro-level.

8.3.3.1 Leading through institutional and governance structures

The public leadership literature on collaboration recognises the significance of structure in two ways. First, structure is understood in terms of the broader ‘collaborative governance’ context, as characterised by globalisation, neo-liberalisation, and various public sector reforms, all of which results in the increased use of partnerships and networks to deliver public services and address public problems (Sullivan et al., 2012:43). Structure is also important at the micro-level, where it has been studied and theorised in terms of the specific arrangement of a collaboration, including forms of membership, methods and rules of interaction, etc., through which multiple actors work together to address an issue (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

In the South African context, broader structural conditions can be characterised by a system of participatory governance institutionalised at the local sphere, alongside that of New Public Management and the outsourcing of public service provision.⁹⁸ At the micro-level, structures include the various institutionalised forms and aspects of participation across the City and within project processes. What this study has done is to explore officials’ practices at this micro-level, and to trace how these practices unfold within the broader institutional and governance structures that comprise their context. Thus, various structural conditions – including institutional systems, governance arrangements, performance targets, national policies, etc. – operate through officials via their positional authority and structural power, to influence participatory agendas, structures, participants and relations. The tendency to rely on external service providers, for example, shapes interactions within projects, the kinds of issues that are raised, the decision-making steps that are included, and how relations are

⁹⁸ More broadly, it also entails macro-economic policies focused on export-oriented economic growth, financial deregulation, privatisation (to an extent), commodification, and full cost recovery (McDonald & Smith, 2004:1461). See Chapter 3, Section 3.4.5.

negotiated and characterised. Officials' ability to design and implement participation is thus informed (and constrained) by the way their structured roles are defined to prioritise service delivery and comply with the letter of the law, to meet quantitative performance measures and be accountable on this basis, and to rely on external contractors. This was reflected in how officials described the purpose of participation (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2), as well as in their own efforts to frame their work in terms of neutral efforts to 'make a change' (see Chapter 7, Section 7.2.4.2). In this manner, institutional priorities and governance arrangements influence officials' values and relations, as well as their discursive and structuring practices.

These conclusions corroborate studies in the field of participatory development that point to how micro-level structures and interactions are situated within broader macro-level political and economic structures and relations, as reflected in donor and government agendas (Hildyard et al., 2001:59; Williams, 2004:98). The influence and actions of City officials, as well as of community participants at this micro-level, are constrained if not prescribed from above by national policy agendas. Despite the limited attention to structure in the public leadership and leadership literatures, these conclusions also align with observations regarding the four leader practices (see for example, Currie et al., 2011:245; Crosby & Bryson, 2010b:219). Huxham and Vangen (2005:204) have, for instance, recognised how the structuring of a collaboration may be "imposed from the outside – by policymakers or funders", which delimits who may be involved and who may lead, and leaves individuals within the collaboration "little or no freedom to affect who has access to their agenda".

Given this foregrounding of structure, the importance of officials' positional authority can therefore be further understood as a reflection of the institutional and governance structures within which it is located. It does not, therefore, necessarily reinforce a leader-centric view that locates influence strictly in the formal position of the leader. These broader systems operate through individual positions and through the work of those who fill them. This means officials' ability to influence and direct participation still derives largely from the authority they receive through existing institutional and governance structures, rather than in who they are, or their particular behaviours or styles of leading. Conversely, it also points to the limits of their authority, and the ability to transform livelihoods whilst giving communities a say in the process. For one, officials' structural power is embedded in an institutional system where structural power cascades upwards and is ultimately located elsewhere. In practice, therefore, officials lack the flexibility (generally) to navigate the complexities between their different

mandates in the process of policy implementation, and thus to fulfil their expected leadership roles. This suggests leader-centric theorisations of public leadership are likely to put too high expectations on officials as individual leaders (as has been recognised in the critical and public leadership literature, see for instance, Evans et al., 2013:27).

Again, such a conclusion does not forego the possibility of other influencing factors, or undermine the theorisation of leadership as socially and collectively constructed through multiple factors in a context-specific way. Rather, the context of participation in South African local government is exemplary of a situation where structure has a particularly significant role in shaping power relations and dynamics, and thus how relations are formed, practices undertaken, and values articulated.

Paradoxically, acknowledging the relevance of broader structural conditions also suggest officials act within a ‘shared power’ world where they do not have full authority or power to act alone in providing services or addressing public problems. They are, for instance, positioned within an institutional hierarchy that includes political-administrative lines of accountability, within the three-sphere system of government that includes policy and financing directives, as well as within a broader governance environment where private and civic actors bring their own agendas and resources into the City’s collaborative or participatory processes. In this sense, the study affirms the public leadership literature that describes the context of collaboration in terms of the distribution of resources, authority and knowledge (see for instance, Sullivan et al., 2012:43). This is also precisely the environment that scholars describe when they claim leaders in contexts of collaboration must act without positional authority.

Whilst the literature on public leadership in this way recognises the challenges of engaging multiple stakeholders through multiple lines of accountability, this study has done so with a specific focus on the relationship between local government and citizens and communities. Although this still includes formalised structures and processes of participation, the relationship between a government and its citizenry is arguably different from that between organisations, particularly organisations across the public and private sectors. Poor and marginalised communities are especially disempowered in such processes, as well as within broader socio-structural conditions.

This study has furthermore shown how these tensions surface in participation at the micro-level, and also how such tensions appear to be embedded in the ways participatory spaces are structured. As made clear through the distinction of ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces, where communities are invited into government-led engagements, the power to structure that space remains predominantly in control of government actors. Even where local officials or a local government institution confronts a broader context where other sectors and organisational actors also have authority, resources and knowledge, government officials retain a position of authority in and through its invited spaces of participation. That officials at the forefront of such engagements influence such spaces on the basis of government policies and development priorities results in form of engagement characterised in this thesis as ‘authorised action’ (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3).

8.3.3.2 Leading through the authorisation of action: Towards social change or the status quo?

Given the way leadership influence on participation emerges through the exercise of structural power, community engagement in the City’s processes has therefore been described as a form of ‘authorised action’. As discussed in Chapter 7, these findings reverberate with those made by Hatcher (2005) and Holstad and Møller (2014) who separately examined distributed leadership in schools in the U.K. Hatcher (2005) in particular describe the principal, as the formal school leader, as a conduit for government policy through which teachers’ actions are delimited. ‘Authorised action’ also reiterates how Cornwall (2004:80) describes ‘invited spaces’, where the state uses formal structures and processes to define the boundaries of action, and ultimately authorise and ‘govern’ over ‘appropriate’ ways of speaking and acting (see also Kothari, 2001:142; Lemanski, 2017:18). The space thus determines, “how issues are debated, how different perspectives are viewed, whose participation is legitimate, and who gets to participate at all” (Cornwall, 2002:18).

Discussions in the public leadership literature have also acknowledged, to some extent, the way collaborative structures influence how leadership emerges and is shaped. Crosby and Bryson (2010b:219), for instance, speak of the “structurally-based rules and resources” that are “collectively produced” in and for the formal collaboration. Armistead et al. (2007:224), similarly discuss how the “rules, procedures and protocols” of a formal partnership constitute “unseen complex socio-technical systems” that “encode” leadership. But this applies, they argue, mostly to “mature partnerships” where participants have had time to “engineer” the rules and protocols, etc. (ibid.). These points clearly resonate with the concept of structural

power and the structuring work that construct the space of engagement, as well as the form of engagement and leadership therein.

However, such theorisations of structure do not go quite far enough to fully consider how the structuring of a partnership or collaboration might occur in line with external pressures and entrenched authorities and power disparities in the first place. In other words, these processes of structuring also occur within a broader context already underpinned by “socio-structural conditions” (Young, 2011:55) emerging out of the exercise of structural power that reinforce those conditions. Relations of power between different stakeholders are thus not simply determined by the capacities and power of individual participants, but by the broader structural positioning that condition their relations in the first place. Stated otherwise, it is less about the power a participant holds within a specific participatory space, than the power they have in accordance with the “already existing relations of social power” (Mohanty, 2018:92). These produce and position social groups and individuals in relation to one another, and influences their opportunities and constraints. Thus, evaluations of power-sharing (and theorisations of public leadership) in specific processes and structures that do not consider the broader context through which resources, knowledge, and even legitimacy is defined and distributed, risk excluding from view how micro-macro dynamics inform structural power and limit power-sharing.

Where participation is structured and thus ‘authorised’ in this way, it is possible, if not highly likely, that leadership practices and local “power-sharing” arrangements merely reflect and reinforce existing power relations. As Miraftab (2004a:4) argues, invited spaces are intended to stabilise existing relations and maintain the status quo, thereby preventing any ‘radical’ change driven by those ‘at the margins’. This is problematic given the theorisation of participation as a power struggle and potential mechanism to transform power relations in favour of the marginalised and dispossessed. It is also problematic given the theorisation of public leadership as an influence process intended to promote the public good and achieve social change (Van Wart, 2011:187; Brookes, 2014:200), as well as the extent to which public leadership in collaboration is purported to address power disparities (Page, 2010:248).

What does this mean for the theorisation of public leadership? On the one hand, one could argue this suggests there is simply no ‘leadership’ in this context. This is summarised by Raelin’s (2011:206) warning that:

leadership-as-practice can become an accomplice to the dominant managerial order if the practice in question is governed by other authorities rather than by the parties to the practice who participate through their own self-conscious self-determination.

This kind of conclusion has also been made by Adams and Balfour (2009:295), who describe how organisational cultures and structures operate as technical-rational frameworks that guide individual ethical values and behaviours. They further argue that acting in accordance with an organisational culture may allow one to be a “good leader”, whilst actually becoming a “conduit for the dictates of legitimate authority, which is no less legitimate when it happens to be pursuing an unethical or even evil policy” (2009:297). Even individual ethical values, including a so-called “public service ethics”, could be subject to a technical-rational culture whereby subordination to structural authority is inculcated as the heart of what is ‘good’ and ‘right’ (ibid.). Other leadership scholars have made similar claims as well (see for example Gemmill & Oakley, 1992; Knights & Willmot, 1992). In this study, this dynamic was clearly evident in the way officials understood the purpose of participation, and described it predominantly in terms of project delivery and the City’s compliance culture.⁹⁹ From this perspective, public leadership might simply be “an abstracted myth that serves to legitimise and reinforce broader social norms and values” (Bresnen, 1995:510).

Although this might very well be the case, this study has also brought attention to areas where influence is exercised outside of formal participatory spaces. From a social constructionist and practice perspective, which expands the scope of analysis beyond the individual as unit of analysis, other forms of engagement and influence, outside such formalised spaces, come into view. On this basis, it may be argued that theorisations of public leadership and public leader practices in participation will benefit from applying a more ‘expansive’ or ‘multi-level’ view that is not confined to the boundaries of a formal collaborative structure.

8.3.4 Theorising public leadership as socially constructed

This study has utilised a predominately entity-based approach to theorising public leadership. The focus on public leaders and their practices was the starting point, and to a large extent suggests a view of leadership where individuals exist independently from and prior to their

⁹⁹ Ospina and Foldy (2010:294) similarly describe processes of meaning-making as “embedded in historically grounded structures of power”.

relations and interactions in broader social processes and contexts. Through the analysis of the empirical data across chapters 5, 6 and 7, however, the importance of influencing factors beyond, if not prior to, the individual became apparent. Although methodologically the study did not examine processes or practices ‘in action’, the conceptual analysis attempts to provide a more integrated view of public leadership that bridges entity and relational perspectives. One way to extend this integration is on the basis of the notion of leadership as an influence process oriented towards social change.

On this basis, this study finally makes the case for an expansive view of the scope of public leadership practices. Disruption, protest, and all sorts of forms of collective mobilisation that constitute ‘invented spaces’ reveal broader influences on the production or emergence of influence towards change. In other words, an analysis of public leadership practices in participation may require the inclusion of practices that are precisely not ‘authorised’, or even recognised as legitimate, in the formal participatory process. This brings attention to how influence or agency in producing “collective achievements”, or at least directing the process in a particular direction, also occurs outside ‘formal’ processes and through other kinds of action. This suggests a view of public leadership and leadership practices as non-linear and on-going, as well as both collaborative and non-collaborative.

8.3.4.1 Leading as non-linear and on-going

The inclusion of a broader range of efforts in producing leadership practices bring to light how such practices are neither fully linear nor conclusive. In the public leadership literature, Vogel and Masal (2015:1180, 1183) recognise that, whilst particular forms of leadership emerge through the interaction of context, processes and outcomes, this is not a unilateral or sequential process, but rather one in which the various elements co-evolve in the process. In the broader leadership literature, Crevani et al. (2010:81), point out the importance of understanding the process of leadership as one that does not necessarily ‘conclude’ when it comes to ‘completion’. Thus they argue against “projectifying” leadership as “an orchestrated social development that has means, ends and deliveries” (ibid.). Rather, it must be understood as involving “continuously evolving modes of interaction” (ibid.).

Thus, understanding “what makes things happen” in collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2005:202), may require attention to processes, interactions and relations that do not seem immediately relevant, or which occur outside the formal boundaries of the collaboration. This might even encompass, for instance, how governance institutions and political values evolve

over time, and how these shape local structures, participatory initiatives, and government-community relations. In this regard, studies that seek to explore the intersection of leadership and participation in a local/City context, or to interrogate further the way broader structural arrangements delimit micro-level practices, could benefit from the inclusion of a historical analysis.¹⁰⁰

Such on-going dynamics were evident in the four public leadership practices examined in this study. The mobilisation of community participants does not simply ‘end’ when the formal process begins and everyone shows up. Rather, it requires on-going efforts to motivate and sustain commitment. But mobilisation related to government-community engagement also occurs simultaneously in other spaces, which could potentially influence relations, discussions and interactions within a specific project. For instance, how communities or local organisations mobilise amongst themselves filters into issues brought into project meetings. Further, the way issues and the nature of relations with communities transfer across departments and projects is indicative of how the building of relations occurs in an on-going and non-linear way. The failure of the City to address certain issues through one platform filters into other platforms, evident in the extent to which officials remarked about how citizens bring up issues that are not relevant to the focus of a particular meeting (as predetermined by the City). This is also indicative of how agenda framing involves the continuous interpretation and re-construction of issues across spaces. The four practices can therefore also be understood as part of on-going and non-linear processes, where clear, shared goals and project completion do not constitute the end of their relevance or influence.

8.3.4.2 Leading as non-collaborative

An expanded view of leadership practices also serves to include practices that are not necessarily collaborative. That officials in this study have come to accept project disruptions as part and parcel of the process is indicative of how these community actions inform and shape the City’s participatory processes. Again, such findings resonate with scholars in leadership studies who take a more critical stance. Crevani et al. (2010:81), criticise notions of leadership and leadership outcomes that presuppose goal agreement, as this gives primacy to

¹⁰⁰ Again, such an analysis was prevented in this thesis due to the conditions of the ethical clearance given by the City, which required that the City not be named. Discussing the political and institutional history of the City would have made the City easily identifiable.

where interests and practices converge. This, they argue, neglects “instances of failing, absent and diverging leadership practices”, or the “diverging processes and instances of unresolved conflicts, ambiguities and debates” that are a likely aspect of any organising process (ibid.). Tourish (2014:80) similarly argues that disagreement and dissent should be recognised as integral in the theory and practice of leadership. In the participation literature, scholars have also highlighted the importance of exploring how citizen agency and participation are constructed in practice, rather than in accordance with any predefined abstract ideals (Robins et al., 2008:1070; Thompson & Nleya, 2010:225). On this basis, even the theorisation of participation would include formal collaboration as well as informal and confrontational practices (Miraftab & Wills, 2005:207; Everatt et al., 2010:224; Bond & Mottiar, 2013:290). A similar argument and analysis can thus be made of public leadership practices in and for participation.

Again, in the context of public leadership in participation or collaboration, such divergent practices can be identified and investigated through the framing of the four leader practices. For instance, as this study showed, the way specific participatory processes are structured occurs through the City’s authority (and hence is itself non-collaborative), but also through the tactics of disruption often employed by individual community actors or social groups. That the disruption of project implementation (by stopping construction, for example) has become a key way through which community actors influence how decisions are made in the process, means these also constitute structuring practices. How agendas are framed and relations built are similarly likely to emerge through dialogue and alignment, but also disagreement and tension.

Notable work in studying leadership practice has been conducted by Wood (2005, 2010), Kempster and Gregory (2017), Ospina and Foldy (2010), and Crevani (2011). Although this study did not examine actual interactions and dialogical practices (as one would do in ethnographic research), the official narrative presented through interviews and focus groups did lend itself to analysis of their discursive practices. The foregrounding of issues of structure and power also contributes insofar as the potential of disruptive or subversive practices can come to the fore, keeping in sight the institutional, governance and broader macro structures that inform these. Further studies could examine more closely how people employ and make sense of existing agendas, meanings, values, and objectives, as well as institutional cultures, systems, strategies, procedures, regulations, protocols, etc. How

decisions, relations and practices are rationalised by officials and other stakeholders (as proposed by Liu, 2017:351), for instance, would bring to light how such practices reproduce and/or transform institutionalised habits and power relations.

8.3.4.3 Leading as collective and contextual: An expansive unit of analysis

Based on this articulation of public leadership, it is clear that its constituent ‘parts’ or practices are not an *a priori* given. They emerge and operate in contextually informed ways. Such practices are also collectively constructed, as implied by a social constructionist approach. And as argued above, such ‘collective leadership’ does not occur necessarily in a uni-linear or collaborative way that produces consensus. Rather, it involves a multiplicity of efforts that comprise forms and points of collaboration, but also conflict, contestation, divergences, and ambiguities. It is through such multiple efforts that influence is enacted. In the participation context, this is evident in how shared decision-making is not a neat, joint process, but rather stretched out over different policy processes and structural points of power.

In this manner, the study finally contributes to this discussion by bringing attention to the various ‘levels’ of social and institutional structures through which influence emerges and informs participation. Thus it resonates with literature in leadership and public leadership that call for more multi-level analyses. According to Chapman et al. (2015:3-4), the public sector context can be characterised by the “diffusion of authority” down the organisational hierarchy to “street-level bureaucrats”, but also across government jurisdictions and beyond the public sector to include private and civic organisations, arrangements and processes. They conclude that “public leadership needs to be examined at all levels”, as well as across sectors and policy areas (ibid.; see also Getha-Taylor et al., 2011). In other words, the unit of analysis matters and should be expanded to be open to multiple levels. This also resonates with Uhl-Bien’s (2006) call for more integrative approaches in studying and theorising leadership that bridge the entitative and relational perspectives.

Employing public leader practices as the entrypoint, alongside greater attention to relations of power and the influence of structure, could further serve to link the different sub-components of the public leadership literature – i.e. administrative, civic and political leadership – as is intended in theorisations of ‘integrative public leadership’. In relation to public leadership in participation, an expansive or multi-level unit of analysis would incorporate a range of formal City-led and community/civic-led engagements, strategies and tactics, and give insight into how these together inform one another and direct decisions and projects over time.

This also aligns with interpretivist and constructionist research in public administration literature, which Haverland (2012:403) argues should explicitly not predetermine a specific unit of analysis, as this would provide too narrow a view of the complex and dynamic setting of public administration. Interestingly, Van Wart (2011:29-30) calls for integrative theorisations of public leadership that traverse different levels of analysis, but does not mention practices, relations, processes or systems as potential entry points into such multi-level research. Yet it seems such collective and relational approaches are in fact more suited to such analyses and theorisation precisely because they can both identify and transcend formal structural and process boundaries.

8.4 Conclusion

This thesis has analysed South African local government officials' experiences and challenges in participation in order to answer the question, how do public leader practices in this context influence participation? Because local officials are mandated to involve communities in governance and service delivery processes, how they lead and shape participation provided the lens to analyse practices of public leaders. The four practices identified in the study – mobilising communities, structuring engagement processes, weaving and navigating relations, and framing agendas – influence participation through the exercise of power, and particularly, structural power. Influence is therefore exercised over and through the structures of participation, which shape relations and delimit what are acceptable spaces and forms of action.

In addition, public leader practices influence participation on the basis of broader institutional and governance structures. These delimit the scope for officials' actions, and also direct how and to what extent communities are to be engaged. Officials' practices, and the City's invited spaces of participation, thus also act as conduits for existing government policies and programmes. This constrains the ability of community actors and participatory processes to engage on structural issues that define entrenched power relations and underpin conditions of poverty and inequality. Whilst the public leadership literature suggests leaders have an important role in collaboration to address power imbalances in order to solve complex public problems, I argue that public leadership theory can better reflect the power dynamics in such a context by including a broad range of processes, practices and structures in a more expansive and 'multi-level' analysis of how social change happens. This contributes to the

understanding of public leadership as potentially less coordinated and collaborative, and rather much more varied, eclectic and on-going, if not disruptive and confrontational.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: List of interviews and focus groups

The interviews and focus groups, as listed below, were numbered alphabetically according to department name and do not reflect any particular order of importance. Interviews and focus groups were numbered as part of the original research. Since interviews that did not receive permission to be included in this study have been excluded, interview numbers may not be consecutive.

Exact positions of individual participants, as well as detailed location information of each interview/focus group, have been excluded in order to preserve the anonymity of both participants and the City.

Interviews

Interview 1 (Int1). 2016. Communications and Media. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 18 May 2016.

Interview 2 (Int2). 2016. Development Facilitation Unit. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 27 May 2016.

Interview 3 (Int3). 2016. Economic, Environmental and Spatial Planning. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 6 April 2016.

Interview 4 (Int4). 2016. Environmental Management. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 11 May 2016.

Interview 6 (Int6). 2016. Human Settlements. Regional Coordinator. Civic Centre. 8 April 2016.

Interview 8 (Int8). 2016. Human Settlements. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 11 May 2016.

Interview 10 (Int10). 2016. Mayoral Urban Renewal Programme. Official. Civic Centre. 27 May 2017.

Interview 11 (Int11). 2016. Mayoral Urban Renewal Programme. Official. Civic Centre. 19 May 2016.

Interview 12 (Int12). 2016. Public Participation Unit. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 4 April 2016.

Interview 13 (Int13). 2016. Public Participation Unit. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 4 April 2016.

Interview 14 (Int14). 2016. Sub-council Manager. Manager. Sub-council office. 23 May 2016.

Interview 15 (Int15). 2016. Sub-council Manager. Manager. Sub-council office. 20 May 2016.

Interview 16 (Int16). 2016. Sub-council Manager. Manager. Civic Centre. 19 May 2016.

Interview 17 (Int17). 2016. Transport. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 14 April 2016.

Interview 18 (Int18). 2017. Transport. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 10 October 2017.

Interview 19 (Int19). 2017. Human Settlements. Senior Official. Regional office. 11 October 2017.

Interview 20 (Int20). 2017. Spatial Planning and Urban Design. Senior Official. Civic Centre. 11 October 2017.

Focus groups

Focus group 1 (Fg1). 2016. Economic, Environmental and Spatial Planning. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 13 April 2016.

Focus group 2 (Fg2). 2016. Human Settlements. Senior Officials and Regional Managers. Civic Centre. 12 April 2016.

Focus group 3 (Fg3). 2016. Human Settlements. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 11 April 2016.

Focus group 4 (Fg4). 2016. Integrated Development Planning unit. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 16 April 2016.

Focus group 5 (Fg5). 2016. Parks and Cemeteries (Community Services). Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 14 April 2016.

Focus group 6 (Fg6). 2016. Public Participation Unit. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 13 April 2016.

Focus group 7 (Fg7). 2016. Social Development. Professional Officers. District Office. 19 May 2016.

Focus group 8 (Fg8). 2016. Sport, Recreation and Amenities (Community Services). Senior Officials. Sports and recreation department regional office. 25 May 2016.

Focus group 9 (Fg9). 2016. Sub-council Cluster Managers. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 19 April 2016.

Focus group 10 (Fg10). 2016. Transport. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 8 April 2016.

Focus group 11 (Fg11). 2016. Utilities. Senior Officials. Electricity department regional office. 6 April 2016.

Focus group 12 (Fg12). 2016. Utilities. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 12 May 2016.

Focus group 13 (Fg13). 2016. Utilities. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 15 April 2016.

Focus group 14 (Fg14). 2016. Utilities. Senior Officials. Civic Centre. 15 April 2016.

APPENDIX B: Interview and focus group questionnaire

Theme 1: How do you understand public participation and community engagement?	
1. What is your position / role in your department?	Further prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In what geographic areas do you work? - Do you work with other departments or directorates?
2. How do you understand public participation and engagement?	Further prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What in your view is the role and purpose of engagement? - At what stages of your programmes and projects should it occur? For what purposes? - How does the City/your department respond to initiatives coming from citizens, communities or civil-society (i.e. are not driven by the City)?
Theme 2: What institutional arrangements, methodologies and practices do you use in public participation and engagement?	
3. How are participation and engagement currently being operationalised in your department?	Further prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What formal or informal tools/methods do you use? - In what instances do you decide community consultation is necessary? - At project and programme level, is there a main method that is used? - How is the method of participation decided for a specific project/programme? Who decides? - What are the most important forums of participation for the City? - How frequently does your department engage communities?
4. Who, if anyone, mediates consultations between the City and communities and citizens?	Further prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do other departments/actors get involved? If so, in what ways?
5. What resources (human, financial, technological) are invested in participation?	
6. What policies and/or strategies inform your department's methods and implementation of participation and engagement?	
7. To what extent do City-wide participation/engagement processes inform the work of your department?	Further prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For example, ward committee, sub-council, IDP/Budget processes
8. Does your department utilise the Public Participation Unit in any way? Why or why	

not?	
9. Does your department involve external organisations (civil society, NGOs, business, etc.) as part of its service delivery and/or participation processes? Why or why not?	Further prompts: – How are such relationships established?
Theme 3: How do you evaluate the success/impact of public participation efforts?	
10. Does your department (and/or the City) measure the effectiveness of participatory processes?	Further prompts: – If so, how? – Are there currently indicators for monitoring and evaluating participation? How effective are these? – Does your department have any internal discussions or report-backs to gauge the effectiveness and share experiences of participation?
11. How do participation and engagement fit within the performance management system of the department/City?	Further prompts: – Is it included in performance outcomes? – If not, can it be? – How should it be measured (ideally)?
Theme 4: What are the challenges but also good practices that you encounter regarding public participation?	
12. What are the main challenges with regard to participation and engagement processes and mechanisms?	Further prompts: – How could these be addressed?
13. Is there any funding earmarked for participation (either in the City as a whole, within the department, or within specific project plans)?	
14. Are there particular success stories of participation within the City/your department?	Further prompts: – What made these successful? – How are these successes being translated into knowledge-building for the department or City? – Good practice examples of partnerships with organisations outside of the City?
15. Are you aware of how other departments implement their participation and engagement processes?	Further prompts: – Their methods and strategies? – Their challenges?

APPENDIX C: Letter of introduction and informed consent



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent

Study title: The implications of public engagement for conceptualising leadership in local government service delivery

Research conducted by:

Ms. E. Vivier (04284771)

Cell: 076 142 5325

Dear City Official,

In 2016 you participated in a research study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), as part of the Cities Support Programme (CSP) with the support from the City of [name removed]. The objective of the study was to support the City of [name removed] to assess and improve citizen and community engagement practices.

We hereby request your permission to use the interview data (recordings and transcripts) for the purposes of a Doctoral study on public leadership and engagement. The study is being conducted by Elmé Vivier, a Doctoral student from the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership at the University of Pretoria, and a co-researcher in the 2016 HSRC research.

The purpose of the study is to examine City officials' experiences with public participation and engagement, and how this may inform public leadership theory. It therefore interrogates the ways in which public leaders experience and undertake public participation and engagement processes.

Please note the following:

- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate without any negative consequences.
- We may request permission to conduct a follow-up interview with you, if deemed necessary. This would not take more than 20 minutes of your time.
- This is an anonymous study as your name will not appear on the questionnaire or any of the outputs from the study. Your responses will be treated as strictly confidential as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you gave.
- The City of [*name removed*], Directorate of the Mayor, has granted permission for the study, as long as individual staff grant permission for their interviews to be used, and the City of [*name removed*]'s name and brand will not be mentioned in the study.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact me or my study leader, Prof. Derick De Jongh, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Elmé Vivier

Cell: 076 142 5325

Email: elmevivier@up.ac.za

Prof Derick de Jongh

Tel: (0)12 420 3386

Email: derick.dejongh@up.ac.za

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Participant's signature

Date

