Limits to Local Democracy: The Politics of Urban Governance Transformations in Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, South African cities have experienced several waves of service delivery protests, the most recent of which took place after the April 2009 national elections. The protests have targeted local governments and held them responsible for the lack of service provision; this has brought about a crisis of political legitimacy at the level of local government. The issue of legitimacy should be understood in the context of the urban governance transformations that have taken place since 1994. These have had major implications for the ability of the urban authorities to deliver services and realize their ambition of developing participatory governance. This paper explores the politics of urban governance by examining the initial phase of a major housing project, the N2 Gateway project, in Cape Town and in the township Delft. Theoretically, the paper argues for a political approach to urban governance (Pieterse 2008) and the paper stresses the continued importance of the central state in urban governance in African cities (Oldfield 2000; Swilling 1997). A starting point for the analysis is the complex and contradictory decentralization process that has been taking place since 1994 and that has been informing local government reforms in South Africa. These processes, combined with shifts towards neo-liberal modes of governance and a market-led housing development strategy, never-ending restructuring of local government institutions and political instability, have constrained service delivery in Cape Town and limited the spaces for citizen participation.

ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CBO	Community-based organisation
CRD	Concerned Residents of Delft
DA	Democratic Alliance
DoH	Department of Housing
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
MayCo	Mayoral Committee
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNP	New National Party
NP	National Party
RSA	Republic of South Africa
WPLG	White Paper on Local Government

PREFACE

The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is an international and national actor and collaborating partner in the field of local democracy, local governance, and decentralization. We focus on local development in low and middle income countries through our various activities, such as international training programmes, municipal partnership programmes and knowledge management.
One of our main ambitions is to develop a balance between the practical knowledge gained through experience and the theoretical knowledge gained through research.
ICLD's Centre of Knowledge documents key lessons learned from ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research, engages in scholarly networks, organizes conferences and workshops and edits a publication series.

Birgitta Svensk
Secretary General
Visby, October 2010

The International Center for Local Democracy (ICLD) has a mandate to promote local democracy. Consolidating democracy at the local level involves making local leaders accountable to citizens and responsive to their needs and aspirations. Both democracy and development may be strengthened by citizens at the local level becoming included in decision-making processes. For this reason, various forms of decentralization have for many years been important in local democratic reforms in developing countries. However, efforts to deepen local level democracy and to make use of the potential this gives citizens have often consisted of complex and sometimes contradictory processes. In some cases, the results have been far from the ideals that underlie the decentralization agenda. A major problem has been the managerial approach that is common in these endeavours. By this is meant that the focus tends to be on good governance (getting the local institutions right) without consideration of the political impact that reforms of this kind may have. There is therefore a need for more research on the complex politics of local democratic reforms in various contexts and on the way in which the distribution of power affects inclusion and exclusion at different levels. By identifying some of the processes involved in the governance reforms taking place in Cape Town within the housing development sector, Millstein's paper makes an important contribution to this field. Her paper deals with two main points; firstly, it reveals the centralizing and hierarchical tendencies with housing politics under the ANC government and shows how this left limited space for participation by members of civil society and communities that were affected by housing interventions. Secondly, the paper highlights some of the difficulties that arise when new spaces for participation are created from above without consideration of the deep, urban, sociospatial inequalities that influence both city and community politics. Millstein's paper also provides valuable input to the ICLD Working Paper series, which focuses upon the contemporary problems and challenges associated with establishing local democracy, good governance and decentralization in order to promote development.

Anki Dellnas
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Visby, Sweden, October 2010

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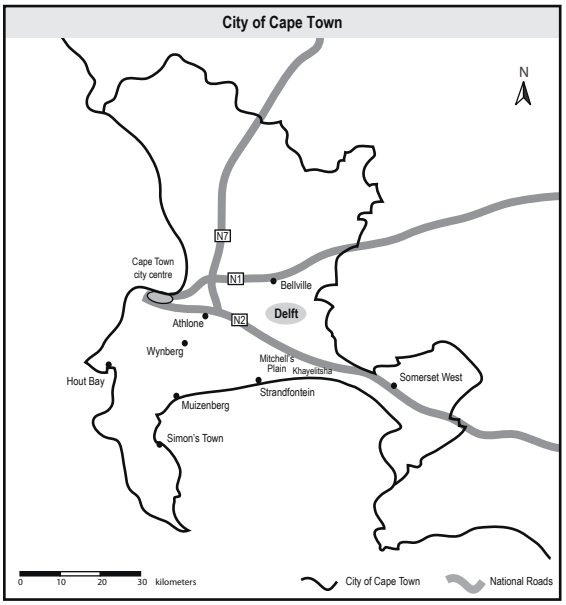
Introduction[1]

Since 1994, South Africa has implemented a range of institutional reforms in order to construct participatory, democratic and developmental local governments. However, it has been difficult to realize these ambitions and since the late 1990s local service delivery protests have regularly swept South African cities. The protests target local governments, which are blamed for non-delivery, and they are now experiencing a crisis of political legitimacy. This legitimacy crisis can be seen as a result of a complex process of urban governance transformations that has been taking place since 1994. This paper explores these transformations in Cape Town and Delft, a poor township in the city, mainly with reference to the housing sector, in which local government has played an unclear, but increasingly central role. In the first section, I discuss some of the difficulties involved in restructuring political and administrative institutions and how these have influenced the initial phase of a major housing development project called the N2 Gateway. The second part of the paper discusses democratic reforms that were designed to increase participation by and representation of citizens at the local level. This section also examines the way in which the N2 Gateway project interplayed with the dynamics of local politics in Delft.

The paper is based on research that was conducted in several phases of fieldwork in Cape Town and Delft from 2004-2006 as part of a doctoral study (Millstein 2008). The empirical material is drawn from semi-structured interviews that were carried out with key informants from local and provincial government, with development consultants, NGO workers, political actors and community activists. It also included observations of local government meetings, community meetings and workshops and it made use of official documents and existing research literature. All of the key informants were working with housing issues, but interviews also covered local governance issues more generally. It is important to note that the political picture changed in 2006, when the Democratic Alliance (DA) won the local elections (they also won the province in 2009). Regular shifts of political power have characterised the city since 1994, and this most recent change does not challenge the arguments presented here about the complex and contested governance transformations, the dynamics between top-down reforms and local participation and the challenges that these pose for deepening democracy at the local level.

Cape Town and Delft



1 A shorter article based on this manuscript but with more emphasis on the politics of the N2 Gateway will also be published in Transformation (2011).

Cape Town is often described as one of the most unequal cities in South Africa. The compact city centre and prestigious residential areas between and around Table Mountain, Signal Hill and Lion's Head stand in stark contrast to the poverty-stricken townships spread across the Cape Flats. According to the 2001 census, Cape Town has a population of 3.2 million. Almost half (48 percent) of the households have an income of less than R3500 per month, 22 percent earn less than R2500 and 17 percent earn less than R1000 per month (StatsSA 2001).[2] Cape Town differs from other South African metropolitan areas by the fact that the coloured population makes up 54 percent of the total population (StatsSA 2001) - an outcome of South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid. It has been challenging to try and bring about democratic governance and socio-economic redistribution, and housing remains one of the most politicized issues in the city. Given the city's demographics and history of segregation and labour preferential policies under apartheid, politics in Cape Town and the Western Cape are still characterized by apartheid-constructed racial identities.

Delft is a township that lies about 35 km from Cape Town city centre and just east of Cape Town International Airport. Delft was constructed between 1994 and 2002[3] as one of the first projects in which the new government explicitly used housing development as a tool for racial integration. It gave mixed results. While the residents are proud to be living in a dynamic and desegregated community, years of apartheid rule have left a legacy of racial division and conflicts that remain unresolved and continue to inform experience and to structure associational life within the township. Also, integration in Delft meant the integration of two historically underprivileged groups (the coloured and the black populations) and it did not change residential patterns in Cape Town, where poor people are housed far away from the centre in areas with limited opportunities.[4] Instead, these processes tended to cement class distinctions that still largely follow racial patterns. In the case of Delft, very poor black and coloured people were housed together on a sandy piece of land at the outskirts of the city and this has since become a symbol of the failures of the first years of post-apartheid housing policies and of the lack of spatial, social and economic integration in the post-apartheid city.

Urban governance transformations

Governance is a commonly used and contested concept. It can be described in terms of structures such as hierarchies or markets/networks, but also in terms of management practices: steering, control and decision making (Pierre & Peters 2000). From a state-centred perspective, governance has been explored in relation to changing structures, processes and practices from the global to the local scale and how new and complex modes of local regulation at the urban level develop in response to neo-liberal globalization (Goodwin & Painter 1996; MacLeod & Goodwin 1999; Jessop 2002b; Brenner 2004). Based on empirical research in Western cities, a central question has been to what extent new modes of urban governance challenge or transform the role and power of the central state (Held et al. 1999; Pierre & Peters 2000; Jessop 2002a; Jessop 2002b; Swyngedouw 2005). Other questions have concerned the challenges they pose to democratic accountability and control as well as legitimacy (Pierre 2000; Elander 2002; Kjær 2004; Stone 2004), or the way in which the spaces for citizen participation are transformed or what is required in order for governance to fulfil the ideals of deliberative democracy (Mansbridge 2003; Fung & Wright 2003a; Pieterse 2003a, 2008).

In the African context, the concept of governance has been framed by discourses of democratic decentralization and development more generally, although urban governance has also gained more attention both in research and in the international community. A problem with much of the development literature has been a tendency to focus

2 100 rand (ZAR) is approx 14.50 dollar (USD).

3 Some houses were also built before 1990, when Delft was still designated as an area for the coloured population.

4 Officials argue that Delft is well located compared with places such as Michells Plain and Khayelitsha. It is close to the airport and to planned economic zones in the westward corridor along Landsdown. But the anticipated economic developments in Phillippi East and Landsdown corridor have yet to materialize and they have been compromised by high levels of crime and a lack of investment.

on technical and managerial practices and the way in which governance institutions have been constructed through democratic transitions instead of exploring the political implications of democratic institutions and practices in these changing local spaces (Tostensen et al. 2001b; Harriss et al. 2004b). This managerial approach has been challenged in more recent work on urban politics and governance in the global South (Swilling 1997; Tostensen et al. 2001a; Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones 2002; McCarney & Stren 2003; Devas 2004; Pieterse 2008). Pieterse (2008) argues that we must acknowledge these deeply relational and political characteristics of urban governance processes. Changing modes of governance construct less clear horizontal and vertical lines of political accountability and new ways of thinking about political representation and participation challenge our understanding of democratic representation as being the aggregation of interests through political parties and electoral politics (Fung & Wright 2003b; Harriss et al. 2004a; Barnett & Low 2004). Hence, urban governance includes the "overlapping domains of political and administrative processes of decision-making and is also about how government organizations react to the needs and demands of urban actors, both organised and unorganized" (Rakodi 2004a:68). This notion of urban governance directs attention to the many ways in which state-civil society relations are restructured and to the modes of participation in local governance that emerge in a context of (limited) institutional reforms. Also, many of these contributions emphasize the continued role of the central state in shaping urban governance and politics. Swilling (1997), for instance, describes urban governance in African cities as hierarchical networks, and this highlights the importance of the central state in urban governance and within networks that cross the state-market-civil society divides.

In South Africa, formal constitutional rights opened a space for the politicization of socio-economic rights as a basis for new social movement activism (Jones & Stokke 2005). These movements manoeuvre within the spaces opened to them by democratization but they also use insurgent tactics to make claims and gain concessions (Millstein et al. 2003; Oldfield & Stokke 2004). A research agenda on governance must be concerned with such governance from below; i.e. "how ordinary citizens and organized civil society embrace, eschew or are excluded from participatory planning and inclusive governance" (Beall et al. 2002:6). The opportunities and constraints for the urban poor to play a role in governance and influence decisions are informed by the way in which urban (and provincial and national) state institutions frame the notion of participation and institutionalize participatory processes. Also, it is important to consider how various interests in civil society perceive and make use of available spaces, and in whose interests. In South Africa, the participation of civil society organizations in governance, and the particular role played by social movements, has been fiercely debated. Some frame civil society organizations and movements within a discourse of struggle for socio-economic justice and opposition to the state, while others focus on participation and restructuring of governance in order for civil society and social movements to engage with the state (Habib & Kotzé 2003). This polarized debate has conflated the multiple identities, strategies and practices that constitute social movement politics in post-apartheid South Africa (Oldfield & Stokke 2007). Hence, social movements as well as other organized interests in civil society have multiple strategies and tactics and engage with state and non-state actors through a variety of formal and informal relations. They may potentially play an important role in democratic governance, but it is unclear what capacity they have to make use of the spaces opened by governance transformations. With inspiration from Cornwall (2002), Miraftab & Willis (2005) make an analytical distinction between 'invited' and 'invented spaces' of citizenship in order to explore these relations and processes. 'Invited spaces' refers to state-initiated arenas for participation and engagement between local government and citizens in which the state holds the power to decide who is to be included in decision-making processes – this suggests a narrow understanding of participatory governance. They argue that social movements among the urban poor respond to these top-down and limited participatory mechanisms by inventing alternative arenas for participation and making use of insurgent strategies to realize their aims. The importance of these invented spaces in the politics of urban governance is explored more fully in my PhD thesis (Millstein 2008). Below, however, the discussion is focused upon how urban governance transformations in Cape Town created invited spaces for participation, and the limits to these invited spaces in terms of deepening local democracy.

Democratic decentralization in post-apartheid South Africa

According to Rakodi (2004b), the ability of the urban poor to play a role in governance depends on the robustness of the legal and institutional framework and on the political and administrative capacity of local government. South Africa has established a comprehensive framework for local government to ensure political representation and participation at the local level (RSA 1998a; RSA 1998b; RSA 2000). Local government is defined as a separate *sphere* of government. The use of the term sphere is deliberate, emphasizing the autonomy yet interdependence of the various spheres of government in order to achieve participatory democracy and development (Oldfield 2000; Beall et al. 2002). Municipalities have the right to govern their own affairs, although they remain subject to national and provincial legislation. In order to fulfil the development agenda, their policies emphasize intergovernmental cooperation, partnerships with private actors and civil society, and citizen participation. According to the constitution of 1996, local government shall:

- provide democratic and accountable government for local communities
- ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable matter
- promote social and economic development
- promote a safe and healthy environment
- encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in matters of local government

Chipkin 2002:71

In 1998 the government launched a White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) (RSA 1998a) that was supposed to give more policy direction grounded in the constitutional framework of local government. WPLG focuses on the construction of *developmental local governments*, characterized by:

> exercising municipal powers and functions in a manner which maximizes their impact on social development and economic growth; playing an integrating and coordinating role to ensure alignment between public (including all spheres of government) and private investment within the municipal area; democratizing development; and building social capital through providing community leadership and vision; and seeking to empower marginalized and excluded groups within the community.
>
> Department of Constitutional Development 1998, in Pieterse 2002:8

These policy frameworks reflect conflicting ideas and interests. On the one hand, there are top-down reforms and market-thinking and, on the other, bottom-up ideas of more radical forms of participatory democracy (Pieterse 2002). The national policies could to some extent be read as transcripts of international policy prescriptions for international development institutions. The introduction of neo-liberal economic policies of Growth, Employment and Reconstruction (GEAR) in 1996 also marked a shift from a developmental (central) state towards more autonomous developmental local government, which was supposed to further the agenda of participatory development and good governance by promoting partnership between the state, capital and civil society (Beall et al. 2002; Pieterse 2002; Edigheji 2003). After 1996, the restructuring of local government was also shaped by increasing pressure for the commoditization of services and the growing role played by private actors in the delivery of local services (McDonald & Smith 2004; Lier 2009). The stress on public-private partnerships and on participation also betrays the assumption that mutually enabling relations between the state, the market and civil society would boost economic growth and create good governance. Also, the focus on efficiency for instance in the White Paper on Local Government (1998) is informed by new ideas about public management that were emerging in the public sector at this time (Parnell & Pieterse 2002).

However, these policies for local government are not just a reflection of international discourses or neo-liberal restructuring. Transformation towards local democratic governance was an important political demand from

the forces central to the fight against apartheid, particularly those who had organized within South Africa and spent their lives resisting the radicalized local governance structures (Stren 2003). But the ANC was also sceptical about giving too much power to local government since this might enable the continuation of a politics of race (Cameron 1999). The former ruling party of apartheid, the National Party (NP), was keen to promote greater local and provincial autonomy in order to limit the powers of an ANC-led central state. This was particularly important in the Western Cape and Cape Town, where the NP might present a challenge to ANC domination. At the same time, given the role of local government in perpetuating the apartheid system of racial separation, exclusion and inequality, it was clear that the new government had to promote democratization and reform at the local level. The ANC's agenda of democratic decentralization has therefore been motivated by the need to transform the structures, institutions, and practises of the state so as to ensure that local political spheres play their expected role within the central state's development and democratization agenda (Oldfield 2002).

Urban governance transformations in Cape Town

> Cape Town was the first city in South Africa to bear the brunt of physical segregation of residential areas. It ranks highest as the most segregated city in this country. The dissimilarity index between black and white ten years ago was 95 percent. I doubt that it has changed much. Of all our cities, Cape Town still remains the most untransformed and inequitable city. Our slums in the City are the starkest manifestation of our grotesquely divided an unequal society. Cape Town is said to be a "world class competitive" city, but it is also known as the "shack capital of South Africa."
>
> Minister of Housing, 18.07.2006[5]

Urban governance transformations in Cape Town are informed by the contradictions inherent in the policy frameworks described above. However, the city also has a particular history of racial segregation and this affects the transformation of urban governance. In 2006, the former president Thabo Mbeki claimed that because of its mixed population, history of segregation and discriminatory labour policies under apartheid, the Western Cape (the province in which Cape Town is the main city) was facing the greatest challenges in the country with regard to racial integration.[6] This means that racial identities continue to play a major role in Cape Town and Western Cape politics. While the majority of the black population votes for the ANC, the opposition draws support mainly from the white and coloured communities. In this first section I describe some of the challenges inherent in these racialized opposition politics and transformations of local government institutions, before turning to a discussion of the N2 Gateway project.

Institutional reforms and limited capacities

> Local government has been in transition forever. They are still in transition….You can imagine how that affects delivery.
>
> Consultant 1, 07.01.2005

> What I basically try to say is that the one department does not know what the other department is doing. And sometimes we are confusing the community because the [department for] town planning is doing this, the housing department is doing this, parks are doing that, and we are not working together as a local authority and as one community.
>
> Local official 5, 18.03.2005

5 Minister of Housing Lindiwe Sisulu's opening speech ath the N2 Gateway allocation ceremony, 18.07.2006 (www.housing.gov.za, accessed 20.07.2006).

6 Mail and Guardian 26.08.2006 (www.mg.co.za, accessed 29.08.2006).

The political and administrative institutions in Cape Town have been in a constant process of restructuring since the early 1990s. This has put intense pressure on their implementation capacities. During apartheid, local government was racially segregated, and in Cape Town there were 40 local authorities operated by 19 administrations (Pieterse 2003b). Local governance transformations were therefore concerned with both deracializing the local state apparatus and constructing inclusive modes of political representation and participation.[7]

From the first interim local elections in 1996 until 2000, Cape Town was organized into six local municipalities in addition to a city-wide metropolitan council that had some coordinating powers. During the first phase of transformation, a major challenge was the establishment of trust between a bureaucracy that was in its first phase of transition from apartheid modes of operation and politicians who were coming in after the first local elections. While newly elected politicians blamed the non-delivery of services upon bureaucratic red-tape and non-transformation of the apartheid bureaucracy, officials argued that politicians had trouble understanding what their role should be and that it would take time for them to learn what to do (provincial offical 1, 07.01.2005). These tensions were perhaps unavoidable, and it would take some time for new and old actors to adjust to a new reality. Councilors and officials were now insisting that they had better working relations than they had during the initial stage of the reforms. However, the tensions were seen to significantly constrain capacity building efforts in the 1990s. They also made it difficult to implement many of the development projects that were initiated at the time since those involved had to maneuver within a conflict-ridden political and administrative landscape (consultant 1, 07.01.2005).

After the local elections in 2000, the 6 municipalities were replaced by one metropolitan municipality (the UniCity). Although the political structures were soon established, it proved difficult to merge the administrative structures and functions across the metropolitan area. Local officials argued that the constant state of restructuring had left the UniCity with a structure but no organization, that the merging of the municipalities had been done in name only and that city management still operated as if the city was still divided (local official 3, 14.03.2005). Many local officials nevertheless felt increasingly pressurized by higher spheres of government while they were struggling to uphold their devolved responsibilities and build sufficient capacity amidst ongoing political shifts and restructuring. Also, as some operations within the UniCity had been merged and coordinated, there was uncertainty among the staff about where they would be placed within the future organization. It is also important to see the difficulties of the restructuring process in relation to the political situation in Cape Town. For instance, with each change in Cape Town's political leadership, there have been shifts in top management. Some officials have left voluntarily; others have been forced to leave because of their assumed or real political affiliations.[8] While this enables the victorious political party to ensure that the bureaucracy acts according to political directives, it also limits its capacity to deliver services.

The City of Cape Town is therefore characterized by fragmentation of state operations and it struggles to coordinate departments and formerly territorially defined municipal responsibilities. The experiences of a local official who wanted to establish a community centre in Delft in order to coordinate the various government services to the area is illustrative:

> My director signed this document [proposal for a community office]; the [director of planning] of the Tygerberg administration signed this. [The director of community services] signed it and the two ward councilors signed it. So they all approved this document. Then I took it to [external project manager] for approval. Then he start calling [town planning official] and then he says sorry but because of all the changes, I'm not responsible for town planning anymore, I'm now sitting in Cape Town. And then he phoned [CEO for Tygerberg] and he says: but I'm not the CEO for Tygerberg

7 See Cameron (1999) for detailed analyses of these complex processes and their politicized nature.

8 The City Manager is a politically appointed position. The shift from ANC to DA led to a dispute over the ANC-appointed manager, whose contract was extended a month before the local elections. The DA-led council appointed a new City Manager, while the previous manager continued to work. The dispute ended up in the judicial system, where the ANC-appointed manager lost the case.

> anymore, there is no Tygerberg anymore. He was then the City Manager. And then he phoned [official community services] who said: but I'm not there, they moved me. And then we tried to take it down to the lower level but…. So the timing wasn't right. I think if you take this same document now (thinking) but then you must wait for the next municipal elections (laughter), you mustn't take it now – because we got the local elections at the end of the year and there are going to be changes. And I mean at the moment they are appointing our new executive directors [part of finalizing of the restructuring process]. And that is the problem in local government; there are too many changes too often.
>
> Local official 5, 18.03.2005

The slow rate of transformation of local state administrations is being identified as the main cause of non-delivery in South Africa. In a speech shortly after his State of the Nation Address in February 2005, President Mbeki blamed the lack of service delivery on local government officials who lacked the capacity to implement the otherwise excellent policies of the national government. His State of the Nation speeches in 2004 and 2005 have also been analyzed as signs of the return to a technocratic development strategy of the central state (Southall 2006) the 2004 national elections gave the ANC a mandate to deliver, and that is what they will do. In the background documents (DoH 2005) for the N2 Gateway project, non-transformation of the bureaucracy is also targeted as the main reason for the housing delivery crisis in Cape Town and Western Cape. However, the picture is a little more complex; although transforming the composition and mind-set of the bureaucratic machinery of the apartheid state has presented major challenges, the problem is more than simply a matter of non-transformation. The main cause of the delivery crisis in Cape Town seems instead to be the constant state of (slow) restructuring combined with political instability.

Opposition politics and centralization of political power

> I think some things have improved. Because we had six different policies and people got confused, so from that point of view there is a more unified approach now; there is one mayor, one policy. So politically it is more stable. Although we have had a lot of changes, we have had four Mayors in three years… oh my…. Every time we had a new political [leadership] we got new political things. We had new political masters, they got new ideas. So it has been good and bad. Now it is stable; it is not good I would say, but it is stable.... But yes, all these changes that we had in the last four years were terrible in terms of that [delivery].
>
> Local official 1, 12.01.2005

The Western Cape and Cape Town now constitute the only province and metropolitan area in which the ANC has strong opposition, and the local political context has been characterized by polarized party-politics and shifting political leadership. While the Democratic Alliance (DA), initially an alliance between the Democratic Party (DP) and New National Party (NNP), won the 2000 elections, the ANC took power two years later when most of the NNP broke out and formed an alliance with the ANC in the city council (2001 in provincial government). Hence, in the years 2002-2006, the ANC controlled all three spheres of government. This period was characterized by centralization of political power both at a city as well as a national scale. At the national level, decision-making powers were increasingly centralized around the Mbeki Presidency, and there was a return to the rhetoric of the "developmental state" that had a mandate to deliver (Buhlungu et al. 2006) and this put the spotlight onto local government performance. In Cape Town, the centralization of political power occurred mainly through the Executive Mayoral system, which was introduced when the ANC came into power in 2002. This is a mode of governing in which the majority party or coalition forms a city government led by the Mayor, with substantial decision-making powers being delegated to the Executive Mayor and the Mayoral Committee (MayCo). This system thus tends to shift decision-making powers towards the Mayor at the expense of the City Council and to

remove certain decision-making powers from the administration. The city council has 210 representatives (200 before 2006). 50 percent of local councilors are elected according to party lists (proportional representation) and 50 percent are elected as representatives of a particular ward[9] (local voting districts). The City had 20 sub-councils (before 2006) consisting of a certain number of wards. In January 2005, following national policies, the City of Cape Town established ward committees, which to some extent also replaced previous community-based forums in many areas. The ward committees, led by the local ward councilor, can make recommendations and administer some resources for community development. Wards are increasingly seen as the arenas for securing both political representation through ward councilors and citizens' and community participation through ward committees; I return to this below. First, I shall explore the challenges of restructuring and opposition politics further in a discussion of how the N2 Gateway project played itself out in the city.

Governance transformations and the N2 Gateway project

The N2 Gateway project was formally launched in February 2005, and was a pilot project for the new ambitious national housing policy known as Breaking New Ground (BNG). This new policy was the result of a growing realization that although over two million houses had been built nationwide, delivery was not keeping pace with increasing demand for housing. It was also acknowledged that the housing policies of the 1990s were failing to achieve the desired spatial integration and were instead cementing existing patterns of segregation that were the legacy of the apartheid city (DoH 2004). When the N2 Gateway was announced, Cape Town was facing an escalating housing crisis. Since 1994, over 250,000 new houses have been built in the Western Cape. The housing backlog in Cape Town has increased from an estimated 150,000 units in 1998, to at least 265,000 units in 2004[10] and it has become "a welfare bomb waiting to explode" (CCT 2006a:15). Among the causes of the slow housing delivery rate in Cape Town are the problems with restructuring, political tensions, bureaucratic red-tape, limited capacity and lack of clarity about the roles of various government institutions (Provincial government of the Western Cape 2002; Khan & Ambert 2003). While the BNG and N2 Gateway were supposed to provide an answer to these problems, centralization and limitations of capacity, communication and participation instead characterized the project. The launching of the N2 Gateway project also coincided with two major factors. Firstly, the World Cup bid had just been awarded to South Africa and this provided an incentive to clean up the city so that the first thing that tourists would see would not be the informal settlements along the N2 highway linking the airport to the city centre. Secondly, the project was interpreted as a means of increasing the ANC's support in the city for the coming local elections in 2006.

The aim of the N2 Gateway project was primarily to upgrade the informal settlements along the N2 highway in Cape Town. The initial goal was to build 22,000 housing units before 2006 and at least 5,000 houses were also planned for Delft. The scale of the goal reflects the delivery driven character of the project. Also, the ANC government presented the N2 Gateway project as a question of delivery in technocratic terms, which relates to the drive after the 2004 elections to draw up measurable national targets against which to assess the performance of the municipalities (van Donk et al. 2008). While the new policy was supposed to learn from past mistakes, it did not really represent a break with previous strategies (Charlton & Kihatoo 2006). Private actors were still central, but BNG also awarded local government in partnership with other spheres of government a more central role than had been the case in earlier housing projects (DoH 2005). However, the role of local government was not straightforward, and the part to be played by the City of Cape Town soon became a hotly contested issue.

9 Wards are areas that are demarcated mainly for political and administrative purposes, where citizens elect a ward councilor through single member elections; the candidate who receives most votes within the ward wins the election. In South Africa wards are also spaces for state-citizen engagement and in Cape Town, the demarcation of wards has been a major political issue because of the segregated nature of the city. Wards have been re-demarcated several times; the last time was in relation to the 2006 local government elections.

10 Later reports, following a survey conducted in relation to the N2 Gateway project, estimated a backlog of 400,000 units.

Before 2002, when the city had been led by others than the ANC, there had been severe tensions with higher spheres of government which made housing delivery difficult. Hence, the assumptions were that since the ANC now controlled all three spheres of government, it should be easier for a project such as the N2 Gateway to surmount obstacles to cooperation (Khan 2004). However, these factors also meant that the project became politically driven and politically sensitive. The N2 Gateway project was headed by the so-called M3: the National minister of housing, the Provincial minister of housing and the Executive Mayor of Cape Town, all of whom belonged to the ANC. The centralization of power within the Executive Mayoral System in general, and in the M3 leadership group in particular, was met with some concern by officials in the city and by civil society organizations that were working with housing development. Officials were mainly concerned that shifting powers upwards to the M3 could actually slow down delivery. The rationale for centralization was to speed up decision-making since decisions would not have to await council meetings and the Mayor and MayCo members would be central to collaboration with senior management. It was thought that better and more efficient cooperation at higher levels would help in dealing with the red-tape in planning and implementation and that it would help prevent fragmentation. However, officials saw this shift of power away from the bureaucracy as intensifying pressure on a few people in political and administrative leadership positions and they felt that moving more decisions up to this level had slowed down rather than speeded up the implementation process:

> Now we have an executive Mayor. We used to have what you call an executive committee, but now the Mayor has executive powers. So there is very little delegation to the officials at the moment. All of the decision-making sits at a very high political level, which we didn't have even during the transition phase. The last two years all of the powers have been moved up to a political level. Officials have close to no decision-making powers. So that has certainly affected delivery. It is a long approval process, to execute things takes long and yet we are under pressure to perform. You see, it is a frustrating situation regarding that.
>
> Housing official 2, 24.01.2005

Local housing officials felt that the project put new pressure on them from above to meet politically set targets (from the national level) that they considered to be unreasonable given their limited capacity. However, officials also argued that a high political profile through the M3 could award the project and city government with a degree of political accountability. Active involvement from high levels of the city's political leadership had strengthened the political legitimacy of earlier housing projects. Officials argued that this political buy-in from the council, the mayor and other political actors was important for the outcome of housing development in the newer parts of Delft; a successful outcome was considered to be that of a structured development process in which there were few obstacles and few delays and in which 6,500 houses could be constructed in two years. However, this framing of service delivery in terms of the number of houses constructed was contested by local activists in Delft who claimed that they had been included in the process only as casual labour for private contractors in what remained a neo-liberal housing development strategy.

Moving certain decisions from the administration to a political level should increase political accountability of elected politicians and potentially promote more transparent decision-making to the extent that officials do not take decisions behind closed doors. But councilors representing other political parties, NGOs and community organizations nevertheless expressed frustration over a lack of accessibility, accountability and transparency in the planning and decision-making processes. MayCo meetings were often closed to the public and the press, and many cited the centralized nature of decision-making and information within the MayCo and office of the Executive Mayor as obstacles to the accessibility of information about the N2 Gateway project. The primary concern of committee members at a housing portfolio committee meeting held in February 2005 was the lack of information provided to the city council and to communities. Accusations of secrecy and party political control were also evident at the community level, where N2 Gateway houses were to be built. A DA ward councilor in Delft claimed he was kept in the dark and that the local ANC councilors had access to more information than he did, and that he could

have used such information to strengthen his own position in the community. There is, of course, no guarantee that a DA-led city would be more committed to broad-based inclusion than the ANC leadership and the councilors' claims cannot simply be taken at face value, but their comments do reflect the political divisions in the city and they suggest that those who are able to secure political majority by small margins tend to try to monopolize power so as to remain in control. The situation also illustrates how such disputes were replicated in local communities, which in turn interplayed with the dynamics of community politics and organizing in areas such as Delft.

While the project documents acknowledged that there was limited space for participation in the N2 Gateway, the need to involve civil society organizations and community actors was a major concern for officials and civil society actors involved in the housing sector. An NGO worker claimed that with the exception of a short meeting in May 2004 the housing NGOs had not been involved at all (NGO worker 2, 24.02.2005), and that the whole project was about cleaning up the city rather than creating sustainable and integrated human settlements:

> There was a very clear tactical decision taken to minimize community involvement in the N2 Gateway process as much as possible. And to ensure that it only took place through the mechanisms of elected councilors, ward committees and officials of government, and not to involve any NGOs or CBOs. Because their primary focus is not the people, but rather the physicality of the development….There is a lot of wonderful rhetoric floating around and a lot of things being said, but most of the stakeholders in government will clearly admit to you that it is all just nonsense. That it is a top-down project that is driven by the need to clean up the city as quick as possible, and that's it.... ….So at the moment you have this state policy which I think is in disarray, with this new attempt on an extremely top-down extremely state-driven centralized approach which is inherently fragmenting communities because it's driving in and identifying particular groups that can be done on a big project basis.
>
> NGO worker 2, 21.02.2005

The importance of NGOs and of taking the politics of communities into consideration were major issues for local and provincial housing officials who had experience of working with similar housing projects in the city. Many officials in the local and provincial administration argued that the project ignored experiences gained from earlier large-scale development projects, particularly with regard to the time needed for negotiating with communities and with their representatives. Development projects represent a flow of resources and opportunities that may give rise to new conflicts or exacerbate existing tensions. Officials claimed that they had tried to create opportunities for participation or consultation with communities but that the M3 had blocked this and said that they would deal with it later:

> It was raised right in the beginning; the need to consult and bring the communities along. We've all been involved in housing for many years, and that [community participation] is a ground rule. But we were instructed by this level [the M3)] that we haven't got time for that, it will be done later, and they will deal with it.
>
> Question: Do they deal with it?
>
> Answer: No (laughter).
>
> Local housing official 6, 07.06.2005

The N2 Gateway project was also affected by the fact that local elections were coming up in 2006. In the context of opposition politics and racial divisions, a major issue was how the houses that were built should be allocated. Allocation of government houses has been a controversial issue in Cape Town, and the city has a long waiting list for accommodation that goes back to the final years of apartheid. At the same time housing development must also cater for the increasing number of people who are moving to the city. When the N2 Gateway project leadership

announced that 70 percent of the new housing would be allocated to existing residents in the informal settlements that were being upgraded, and 30 percent to people on the waiting lists, local DA councilors accused the ANC of racism because of the decision to prioritize the mainly black residents of the informal settlements along the N2 highway. The ANC for their part blamed the DA for playing the race card to discredit the ANC's efforts to rectify the legacies of apartheid segregation and provide decent housing for the urban poor.

After much controversy, including accusations of irregular tender processes and over spending, and just before the DA came to power in Cape Town in 2006, the City of Cape Town was excluded from the N2 Gateway project.[11] A private consortium called Thubelisha took over some of the responsibilities as project manager. Since then, intergovernmental tensions have been a major obstacle for implementation. In 2006, the now DA-led council claimed that the implementation of the N2 Gateway did not follow the principles of the national housing policy and ignored the City's own Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is the city's main tool for participatory planning.[12] The ANC's national Minister of housing blamed the DA-led city council for deliberately delaying the N2 Gateway project by refusing to sign the intra-state land transfer agreements necessary to get the various building phases off the ground.[13] By June 2006, only a little over 700 N2 Gateway units were completed and at the time of writing (2010), intergovernmental tensions continue to plague the project.[14]

The decision to exclude the City of Cape Town as project manager reduced their role in one of the largest urban development projects in the city. At the same time, the controversies of the N2 Gateway and the tensions with higher spheres of government may significantly weakened the legitimacy of the city's political leaders, who are often blamed for the lack of service delivery, irrespective of their function and power within a particular sector. In Delft, thousands of residents are housed in the temporary settlements Tsunami (built in 2006) and Blikkiesdorp (tin can town, built in 2008) and this is causing new frustrations and tensions within the township (personal communication with residents 2009). There have been numerous protests, several invasions of newly built houses followed by evictions and court cases, and a simmering frustration in the temporary settlements that were erected to house those who had to move to make way for the N2 Gateway. This should come as no surprise; officials and housing NGOs in the city all expected "fireworks" when talking about the N2 Gateway project. As a provincial official (07.01.2005) put it: if you skip community participation in housing delivery you will win a month and lose a year. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze these post-2006 conflicts, but in the remaining discussion I will argue that they are partially the results of limits to participation in urban governance more generally.

Limits to participation in urban governance

In March 2005 I attended a meeting between a sub-council administration unit and a local community organization from Delft, the Concerned Residents of Delft (CRD). At the time of this meeting, Delft was part of three different wards with councilors representing two different parties (ANC and DA) and two different sub-councils. CRD had called the meeting on behalf of a Delft-wide network of community organizations that they had tried to establish to address the way that temporary jobs were allocated within the community. The chairperson, who represented the sub-council, opened the meeting by stating that as a sub-council they would only relate to an organization that was representative of the community, proven to them by a copy of the statutes and membership database. Further, he stated that with the launch of the ward committees, the sub-council would no longer have time to meet "whenever and wherever" outside of these meetings. He instructed the CRD leader to stop sending them letters and try to talk with them about this issue without going through the local ward councilors and committees. CRD, he said, should stop trying to communicate directly with him, the sub-council or any other level of government without going

11 www.iol.co.za/index.php?sf=174&set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20060613023646791C919828&singlepage=1, visited 01.09.2010

12 www.mg.co.za, visited 18.07.2006

13 www.iol.co.za, visited 07.06.2007

14 http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20100204042842781C762288 visited 01.09.2010

through these appropriate channels.

This meeting reflects some significant features of the latest institutional reforms in the City of Cape Town: at the same time as there were moves towards centralization of decision-making by the city's MayCo, spaces for citizen interaction was pushed downwards towards elected ward councilors and ward committees. The meeting described above also revealed the fact that it is mainly state actors who can decide who or what may legitimately be included in governance processes. Critical research on post-apartheid state-society relations has also pointed out how certain approaches to "community" and "participation" show continuity with the past. There are seldom clear breaks between the way in which state power was configured before and after regime change; new spaces of state power continue to be influenced by earlier configurations of state space (Lind 2003). The ANC government's approach towards community interventions and development in South Africa has been criticized for replicating former top-down and objectifying approaches:

> As had the old, so did the new government evoke notions of community, and as had the old, so did the new government objectify communities as sites of governmental intervention.
>
> Jensen 2004:187

The national government seeks to exercise control by making communities and civil society actors manageable. The government thus constructs "communities" and "community representation" in ways that assume that "community interests" can be transferred from local to national level through representatives such as NGO workers or ward councilors. These strategies conflate the multiple interests and voices in civil society and community politics and assume that organized interests in civil society all have the same capacity and power to exert influence. As Oldfield points out "Groups at the local level – political parties, local state officials, non-governmental organizations, ratepayer associations and so on – are not embedded into the system equally" (Oldfield 2002:99).

In Delft, class, race, gender, affiliation to political parties, contacts with NGOs and informal relations to individual officials affect the political opportunities and constraints for community organizations that are mobilizing to achieve their aims. However, the following discussion does not aim to conduct an in-depth analysis of the politics of community organizing in Delft. Rather, it discusses some of the challenges that the residents and activists who were interviewed for this project had encountered in trying to engage with the state-initiated spaces for participation in their community. However, Delft is politically fragmented and racially divided and this influences association life in the township. Bearing in mind the argument that state policies frame "community" in ways that reproduce a non-political understanding of "community" development, I use the word community with a degree of uneasiness. However, I find the term useful for clarifying what I wish to say about the limitations to invited participation in Cape Town.

Local representation and participation

Cape Town has introduced a range of mechanisms to include citizens and civil society in urban governance. Political representation is based on a combination of proportionally elected and ward-based elected councilors, and the municipality emphasizes participation by citizens and civil society in urban governance. National policy dictates that all municipalities must develop Integrated Development Plans (IDP), and the City of Cape Town has IDP community meetings at which citizens may give their input. While some participatory mechanisms in Cape Town are regular arenas for participation, such as formal community forums and committees, or the annual IDP meetings, other practices tend to be more informal and ad hoc. Open community meetings are common; sometimes they are initiated by local ward councilors and/or the city administration and sometimes they are hosted by local community organizations. Some participatory forums cover a specific community, such as the community health forum and community police forum in Delft, but after 2005 the city also introduced ward-based arenas,

comprising representatives from pre-defined sectors (CBO's youth, business etc.). After the local elections in 2000, wards increasingly became the main space for securing community representation and participation through elected ward councilors and with the introduction of ward committees in January 2005.

The above may all provide important mechanisms for realizing participatory governance, but the divided nature of urban areas makes it unclear to what extent participatory planning based on such forums is sufficient or even a useful strategy for inclusive governance (Beall et al. 2002). Rakodi (2004a) observes that a ward-based system of political representation may benefit the urban poor, but this depends on how the wards are demarcated and on the function of wards within the broader governance system. In Cape Town, it has been difficult to find a system that would take into consideration the segregated nature of the city. Delft was divided into two sub-councils and three wards and this presented a major obstacle for community organizations. The wards dividing Delft were led by the two opposing political parties in Cape Town, DA and ANC, and the councilors were unable to co-operate. The reluctance of councilors to interfere in each other's wards created problems for organizations that were working with broader issues of community development. For instance, although they were working with Delft-wide issues, community organizations that were more visibly present in one section of the community were considered irrelevant by the ward councilor in one area because they were not present in his ward, and he used this as an argument for not dealing with the organization. He ignored the fact that while the organization was stronger in one section of Delft, it had several members from his own ward. Also, at the time, activists from different wards in Delft had regular contacts with each other and were trying to establish a Delft-wide community forum.

The emphasis on wards as spaces of representation and participation meant that ward councilors were awarded new responsibilities as representatives of "the community"; councilors became caught up in the tension between obligations "from above" and commitments to community. Formal policies define the role of the ward councilors in particular ways, and these encouraged politicians and officials to view ward councilors as the primary actors who could speak and work for a community. However, ward councilors were elected with small majorities and they became part of a dynamic and contested field of community politics that included multiple interests and actors. At the same time, the position of the ward councilors as mediators between city and community gave them considerable power to decide which issues and voices from the community they would convey to local government. In the divisive context of Delft, this fuelled allegations of clientelist practices and a politics of exclusion, and community activists claimed that councilors were working in the interests of the council and/or party structures and did not have the interests of the whole community in mind (note how local organizations also reproduce the idea that there exists a common community interest that is threatened by the party political system). Councilors were accused of using their position to strengthen their own constituency through personal connections and informal relations; ANC councilors gave jobs to ANC supporters and allies, and DA councilors gave jobs to DA supporters and allies.

The powers of the ward councilors derive in part from the fact that they control some of the money and projects coming into the community and in part from their status as the only legitimate spokespeople for the community in the eyes of the state and outsiders. These two roles do not easily blend and may, indeed, conflict. Ward councilors find it difficult to balance their obligations to council with the expectations of their communities. The idea of South Africa's mixed system of political representation in local governance is to take the best of both models; party-list proportional elections and ward-based representation. However, with the fragmented nature of associations and the dynamic character of community organizing that includes multiple interests and actors, the councilor's mandate is always open to contest. While proportionally elected councilors have limited obligations to a specific constituency, ward councilors are caught between party and council politics and obligations, and a commitment to the mandate from the ward which they represent. The legitimacy of councilors in their wards depends on their ability to secure resources, realize community projects and include residents and collective actors in decision-making processes. Hence, councilors are in a position to mediate relations to government, to channel information to sections of the community and to decide who to include in various activities. In short, the ANC state elite tends to replicate a consensual, non-political understanding of community, in which elected councilors are able to

transcend different identities and conflicts. In reality, this may not be possible since they are part of the dynamics of community politics.

Two quotes from an interview with a local councilor about the implementation of the N2 Gateway project in Delft reflect how a councilor partially reproduced this essentialist view of "community development" while at the same time using projects like the N2 Gateway in party-political contests so as to strengthen his position in the next elections:

> My point of view is that I don't play politics with community development. At all my community meetings I never talk about politics and I'm on record for that. I never push my party forward. I only deal with the community at hand and that's it.
>
> Local councilor 2, 02.03.2005

By distancing himself from politics in this way, the local councilor was actually reinforcing existing distinctions between party-politics and community development. This was no doubt in part a response to the contradictory position he found himself in as both a party representative and a "community voice". However, later in the interview, the councilor said the following about his role at a local community meeting that had been initiated by one of the community organizations in Delft:

> Out of courtesy I went there Sunday, and it was a beauty I was there. I was the only councillor there… To give them the message about the N2 Gateway project was a beauty.
>
> Local councilor 2, 02.03.2005

At the time of this meeting, the N2 Gateway had already become a contested issue in Cape Town, and the message about it was a critique of the ANC and the chosen allocation policies, which would not benefit Delft residents. While delivering this message should have been part of "normal politics", the depoliticized approach to community development and the deep level of mistrust towards local political parties and councilors weakens the legitimacy of party-political representation at the ward level.

Many activists in Delft and from other townships argued that the power imbalance, which privileged the ward councilors, had to be redressed in order to strengthen local democratic governance.[15] One demand was that local councilors should engage continuously with other community actors to apply their mandate to local grievances; the allocation of community resources, such as food parcels and jobs, whether formal or informal, should be open and transparent and should be conducted in collaboration with other community actors. The lack of this kind of collaboration undermined the legitimacy of the ward councilors and fuelled allegations of corrupt conduct. Councilors acknowledged this but felt that the ward demarcations (which meant that a wad councilor often represented a ward constituted by sections of several neighbouring communities) meant that they had to be present everywhere, all the time, and this left them no time to implement programmes and projects. In short, the ward councilors struggled to balance the expectations of members of their wards with their limited capacity fulfill them. This suggests that some of the major challenges faced by ward councilors have to do with systemic factors rather than with the poor conduct of individuals. The legitimacy of ward councilors is not simply a question of their ability to represent their community or involve residents in decision-making; they are also blamed for non-delivery, despite the fact that both local government officials and councilors have such limited powers.

Although local councilors play only a limited role in planning major housing projects, they play significant roles in the implementation phase, when resources are made available in communities. The N2 Gateway project is a good example of the complexities involved and the challenges that emerge when a fast tracked "no time for politics" project of this scale interacts with community dynamics. In February 2005, ward councilors claimed that they did

15 Conclusion from ILRIG workshop on local democracy, 8-10 June 2005.

not know what would happen, when building would start, to what extent the community would be able to acquire access to the new houses or to what extent residents would receive training and job opportunities following from the project. Many rumors about the project were circulated and community actors started positioning themselves in order to access resources. For community organizations, the N2 Gateway was not just a question of being part of decision-making. It also represented an opportunity to access resources that in turn could strengthen their position, so they began demanding more houses for Delft residents, and skills training and employment and the use of local builders and sub-contractors in the building process. This intensified the competition between community actors to gain positions as labour providers so that their members could be secured an income or as community liaison officers, who would act as mediators between private companies and the community. This meant that there was an "outsourcing" of participation; due to limitations in time and in participation in policy-making and planning, and because of the neo-liberal underpinnings of housing delivery more generally, the involvement of residents was reduced to the provision of casual labour during the implementation phase.[16]

In short, growing resentment and tensions were the results of the interplay between the top-down, technical and politically centralized character of the N2 Gateway project, the fragmented nature of the wards and the absence of communication with and participation by citizens affected by the project. The first broadly announced community meeting in Delft about the project was held in March 2005, when the Mayor came to address the issue. Later, there were ward-based information meetings at which the local councilors had separate meetings to allocate training and jobs to residents of their wards. The conflict between the ward councilors continued to characterize the process and was a major concern both for the developers and for community organizations that tried to involve themselves. According to one developer, this tension delayed the building phase in Delft by several months because the councilors could not work together. When building eventually did start, tensions over the allocation of houses and removal of people from informal settlements to Delft intensified. Eventually, this led to an invasion of N2 houses in 2008; local DA councilors were accused of encouraging people to move in, and the ANC national government accused the DA-led city government of deliberately disrupting the project. The families were evicted and while some were moved to a temporary site (Blikkiesdorp), others who had joined the Anti-Eviction Campaign (a social movement in the city) set up a squatter camp and have since taken their grievances to the courts.[17],[18]

The ward committees

In accordance with national policies on local government (RSA 1998a, 2000), Cape Town institutionalized the ward committees from January 1st 2005. The ward committees did not function for a period after the 2006 elections, but were re-introduced by the DA leadership in 2008 as a new ward-forum mechanism directed by the larger sub-councils.[19] While this discussion is based on the committees as they existed before 2006, it draws attention to some general features of ward-based participatory arenas in divided urban areas.

Ward committees were local forums for participation that linked community demands to the council. They were also used to allocate some resources to communities. They are a good example of invited spaces of participation (Miraftab & Wills 2005); they are defined and largely controlled by the state, which has the power to decide who should be included in these spaces. The ward committees were also established as political power was becoming increasingly centralized in the Executive Mayoral system and this influenced the role and power of local councilors and participatory forums. Community organizations were now expected to use the ward councillor and committees to channel their grievances to local government. As discussed above, the ward councilors struggled to reconcile their obligations to the council with the demands of communities. The ward councilors led the ward committees and

16 This is discussed in depth in my PhD thesis (Millstein 2008) and will be the subject of a forthcoming paper co-authored with David Jordhus-Lier.

17 http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20080219153915605C906883, accessed 01.09.2010

18 http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20080207063451131C373424, accessed 01.09.2010

19 www.capetown.gov.za visited 14.09.2009

represented the ward in the sub-council and council, while the ward committee members represented pre-defined sectors such as business, sports, CBOs and youth. As long as the various sectors were represented, responsibility for ensuring that other actors within the same sector were included or informed was awarded to the ward committee member.

Given that Delft was divided into different wards, it was difficult to disseminate information about whatever was discussed at the meetings to non-members. In terms of the various categories, such as CBOs, association life in Delft and the surrounding communities was fragmented or based on fragile and informal networks. These often competed for the same scarce resources and this made cooperation even more difficult. There were also poor links between community organizations from the different areas. For instance, one of the areas in Delft was in the same ward as the neighbouring community of Belhar. Organizations in Delft therefore had difficultly promoting their interests in the ward committee if they were competing with an organization from Belhar that was also on the committee, or if the meeting were held close to Belhar rather than Delft. Local politics are deeply embedded in territorial identities and interests. One example of this is the way in which community activists opposed outsiders being employed in the construction of N2 Gateway houses in Delft; they argued that construction work should benefit local residents. This argument is put forward in many of the poor townships around Cape Town and, as noted, it is used by ward councilors in their communication with their constituencies. Even when there are shared interests, it is not easy for community organizations from other areas of the ward to access relevant information. The localized character of community activism complicates the access to information, and the assumption that there are networks between communities that enable the dissemination of information is not borne out in reality. Consequently, the access that community organizations have to information often depends on informal relations with people from Delft who may be on the committee, or upon other channels. Councilors claimed that this was not a major problem because most of the ward committee meetings were open and everyone was allowed to express their opinion. However, if meetings were held in a part of the ward that was outside Delft, it was difficult for community organizations with limited resources to participate.

The nomination and election processes were also contested. The central position of the ward councilors meant they could decide who would be included in local decision-making and this led to allegations of non-responsiveness and corruption. Many community actors complained that only those who had close political or personal relationships to the ward councilors could secure a position on the ward committees. Activists in both the DA-controlled and the ANC-controlled ward made similar allegations of favoritism and non-engagement with the community in the set-up and election of ward committees. Some activists claimed that the councilors took the nomination forms to their friends and made sure that the committee members supported their own political agenda. Others claimed they could not get hold of the councilor to deliver their nominations or that they never received a nomination form in the first place. The councilors insisted that they had followed the prescribed procedures and that independent observers have been present. Nevertheless, the general lack of trust in the mechanisms of democratic governance poses a major challenge and illustrates how problematic it may be to implement institutional reforms in segregated urban areas in which there is inequality, fragmentation, poverty and conflict over the control of scarce resources.

Community organizations opposed the constitution of ward committees and wanted equal representation for organizations in Delft, following the model of an earlier forum in Delft. The ward committees represented a departure from this broader participatory structure, which used to constitute an important forum for deliberation and community-government relations. Each organization had two representatives in this forum and the ward councilors participated on the same basis as other actors. While the area forum was not without problems, it secured equal representation for organizations and insight into funding opportunities and information from local government about ongoing and future plans. By contrast, the ward committee system has awarded greater power to the ward councilors. This set-up and the central role played by the councilor may also exclude other political actors. The ward committees comprise non-political, civil society members but are led by the only elected community representative who represents a political party. This means that other local party branches become partially

excluded; they may have contact with the local ward councilor and participate in open ward meetings but they have limited presence, though some are related to other community organizations, businesses or other community. One local builder, for instance, who was a member of one of the ward committees in Delft, decided to withdraw because he claimed that the councilor was using the committee to play party-politics (again note the negative perception of party-political representation). He believed that the limited resources were being spent inappropriately in the more affluent parts of the wards, where the councilor received most support.

It may seem to make sense to define wards according to the size of their constituency and taking into consideration the segregated nature of Cape Town. However, this has been detrimental to community-government relations; it has split neighborhoods and resulted in a top-down approach that is poorly adapted to the dynamic and fluid character of community organizing. This also compromises the legitimacy of the local party-political system and party-politics are now considered to hinder rather than further collaboration and solidarity in relation to broader development issues. However, the pan-Delft area forum that was organized without regard to ward demarcations seemed to make it easier for people to find common ground, to negotiate and to resolve conflicts. The way in which the wards were defined did not take cognizance of these experiences or of the networks that already existed between state and local civil society actors. Fragmentation between and within wards and institutions has made it difficult for community actors to become involved in decision-making or to cooperate on community issues. If local government had been better coordinated across sectors and the former municipal territories of the UniCity, the divisions between the wards and sub-councils may not have mattered so much. But with today's political and institutional fragmentation, organizations are sent from ward to ward and from sub-council to sub-council when they wish to raise issues. This institutional fragmentation adds to the strain upon the political space of community organizations.

Concluding remarks

South African policy on local government is based on the assumption that a decentralized government will be closer to people's lives and therefore be more effective, more accountable and more democratic. Checks and balances have been introduced to ensure that local governments play their role within the central state's vision of broader transformation. However, instead of experiencing a deepening of democracy, the City of Cape Town is facing a crisis of legitimacy. There has been a widening of spaces for participation since 1994, but the city has also experienced centralization of political power, difficulties with restructuring and institutional fragmentation. Urban governance in Cape Town is best described as a system of hierarchical networks (Swilling 1997; Oldfield 2000) that are dominated by actors in or close to the ANC-led state. State-market networks and partnerships interplay with state-community relations that are formulated according to ward-based representation and participation that re-territorialize township politics and fragment state-society relations. There is a variety of options for participation and consultation, but these are defined and governed from above and tend to be poorly coordinated. With the myriad local organizations, it is unclear whose interests are being voiced in the participatory forums but it seems that the authority to define who should be invited lies with the local state apparatus and with the local ward councilors. These invited spaces for participation are inadequate for channeling local grievances and complaints or for including the voices of the urban poor in governance processes.

The idea of splitting the system into both proportional and ward-based representation is to take the best of the two models of local political representation. The ward committees and ward councilors need not necessarily stand in tension with other participatory systems. However, if the elected ward councilors are awarded too much power, this may be counter-productive for the vision of creating an inclusive city by facilitating dialogue between various domains of urban politics (Pieterse 2003a). The above analysis supports this view. With the centralization of power, narrowing of state-community links through ward councilors, committees or forums, civil society actors are becoming excluded while the local political elite are able to use their positions to strengthen their powers within

the community. These factors exacerbate existing tensions between various community actors who are struggling to gain access to limited resources for community development. Today's governing structures and participatory mechanisms lack the flexibility necessary for dealing with the dynamic and fluid characteristics of community organizing. The over-emphasis on public-private partnerships and the centralization of political power mean that participation is reduced to technocratic exercises that limit the de-politicized space available to civil society organizations and the urban poor.

Ward-based arenas may eventually help deepen democracy and promote local development in Cape Town. However, the weak legitimacy enjoyed by party branches and local political representatives and the hierarchical and centralized nature of urban governance mean that the ambition to strengthen the role of the urban poor in urban governance is currently far from fulfilled in Cape Town. The ward committee system is vulnerable to systemic constraints and elitist manipulation and is of limited importance for local movements among the urban poor. It is made still more vulnerable by that fact that grievances, mobilization and politics are fragmented between and within local communities. One determinant of how things are likely to develop is the extent to which the ward committees will prove able to bring local grievances into higher levels of urban governance and to allow new voices to be heard in decision-making processes. The various institutions and forums must also have sufficient openness and flexibility to be able to adjust to local circumstances in ways that help enhance democratic governance in communities such as Delft, which, like many other poor urban areas, is characterized by fluid, complex, fragmented and contested community politics.

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