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Municipal Employees at the coalface of service delivery: Stories about electricity provision in Thokoza

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies supervised by Professor Bridget Kenny and Professor Zimitri Erasmus.

GUGU MPAPANE

763178

Johannesburg, 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), Johannesburg. This research report has never been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University. Where I have used the work of other authors, I have properly acknowledged them and I have not copied any author's work with the intention of passing it off as my own. All the interviews that have been conducted for purposes of this research report have been cited correctly, and I have not passed off any of my participants' contributions, suggestions and quotes as my own.

Signature…….. Date……..2017

Gugu Mpapane

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DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to my dear friend Nonhlanhla “Nonnie” Modise and her husband Moses Modise who were suddenly and violently taken away from us in February 2016. Their unquenchable thirst for excellence, and their ability to inspire all those around them to have that same kind of thirst, to never be discouraged, and to just keep keeping on will remain forever etched in my heart. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

I also dedicate this report to an Ekurhuleni municipal worker I shall not name out of respect for his family, who was attacked and killed while responding to a service delivery complaint one Easter Monday when he should have been at home with his family enjoying the leisure of a long weekend, which all we working people love to do.

Lastly but definitely not least, I dedicate this report to workers everywhere, especially those rare crop of municipal employees who work diligently to make sure the rest of us enjoy the everyday comforts of well reticulated sewer systems, uninterrupted power supplies, emptied garbage containers, spotless streets and many other services we often take for granted.

To quote words of encouragement from the great Martin Luther King Junior:

> *“If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music… Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.”*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BLA	Black Local Authority
CCC	Customer Care Centre
COO	Chief Operations Officer
COSATU	Confederation of South African Trade Unions
Eskom	Electricity Supply Commission (Kommissie)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	Growth and Development Strategy
GPS	Global Positioning System
HoD	Head of Department
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KwH	Kilowatt-hour
LED	Local Economic Development
MLGI	Multi-Level Government Initiative
NERSA	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
PSEM	Public Service Excellence Model
RCC	Research Coordinating Committee
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Program
SACP	South African Communist Party
SALGA	South Africa Local Government Authority
SAMWU	South Africa Municipal Workers' Union
SDBIP	Service Delivery Business and Implementation Plan
SDR	Service Delivery Region
SSDA	Southern Service Delivery Area

IMATU	Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union
WPTPS	White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Municipalities are the face of the state at the local level[1] and are considered the most democratic level of the state due to their direct proximity to residents, a positionality which creates opportunities for the state to be directly accountable to its citizens (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2011:3). The direct contact between municipalities and local communities makes it necessary that municipalities as institutions, and municipal employees as actors within these institutions be conversant with and responsive to the needs of the country's citizens (Van der Waldt, 2007; Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001). This commiserative approach in the manner that municipalities ought to conduct their business is a particularly important factor for South Africa's relatively new democracy, the country having held its first democratic elections in 1994. Service delivery is central to the purpose for which most governments exist and is a critical performance indicator for measuring government performance, legitimacy and its responsiveness to the needs of the people. This is particularly the case in what are commonly referred to as developmental states.

This study puts a spotlight on the voices and experiences of municipal workers responsible for the provision of electricity in the historically protest-prone township of Thokoza, one of the oldest and densely populated townships in Ekurhuleni.[2]

This township, as did many others around the country, has experienced widespread community protests in the last few years. At the center of these protests have been widespread public disgruntlement over poor service delivery, at least as far as media reports would tell us. What has been glaringly absent from the reports about the community protests and the causal factors thereof are the voices of municipal workers responsible for servicing the protesting communities. This study was conducted in an attempt to obtain the other side of the story about service provision, as understood, experienced and told by municipal workers in a location that typifies the previous service delivery inequality, and a community willing to go to any lengths to fight for the promised reform and access to municipal services.

[1] South Africa's Constitution refers to municipalities as the 'local sphere of government'. This description of local government structures is maintained throughout most literature on developmental local government and the role of municipalities as direct custodians and implementers of service delivery.

[2] See Ekurhuleni Municipality Electricity Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2014/15

Figure 1: Picture of a service delivery protest in Thokoza[3]



1.1 Aim and motivation for conducting the study

There have been insufficient qualitative studies on the internal functioning of state institutions and the nature of South Africa's post-apartheid bureaucracy (Von Holdt, 2010). For this reason, what municipal employees think and have to say about their role in service delivery has not featured prominently in public debates or academic literature. Most studies that have been conducted on service delivery in South Africa focus on the role of political leadership - especially councilors who are responsible for decision-making, budget approval and political oversight on service delivery (Benit-Gbaffou, 2008),

[3](Source: Alberton Record)

while some significant attention has also been paid to administrative leadership within municipalities. Although some very important and relevant lessons can be learnt from studying the upper echelons of municipal leadership and administration, this study intentionally aimed to zoom in on lower-level municipal employees at the coalface of service delivery in order to gain an understanding about how they perceive and perform their specific roles as bureaucrats within a state which has publicly and constitutionally declared itself a developmental state, and a municipality that has branded itself 'the smart, creative and developmental city'.[4]

Attempts to steer government institutions towards a path of outcomes-based governance through the measurement of goods and services delivered to communities, and measurement of the impact of those goods and services on targeted communities have appeared to be sporadic and ineffective (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002). These sentiments were raised by presenters at the Winelands Conference hosted by the University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town in 2001 under the theme "Outcomes-based Governance: Assessing the Results" (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002).

What reportedly emerged during this conference is that prospects for satisfactory service delivery outputs and outcomes were being hampered by various constraints including what Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk (2002) refer to as dysfunctional public entities, jobs-for-pals recruitment practices, poor or absent performance management mechanisms, a parasitic private sector that capitalizes on the weaknesses of the public sector, a frail and often corrupt leadership, ineffective policies, inadequate commitment of public servants to their jobs and insufficient efforts and mechanisms for public participation.

Given that South Africa's democracy has passed the twenty-year milestone it seemed cogent to revisit the issue of service delivery in order to get a sense of how those charged with the delivery of services grapple with the task of outperforming their predecessors in terms of equitable service delivery at a time when expectations especially from previously disadvantaged communities have been so high. It is also important to establish what, if anything, the rampant service delivery protests tell us at a time when South Africa's democracy should be more settled, more accountable, more transparent and more in tune with community needs.

Marcelle Dawson (2010) argues in her chapter on "Resistance and Repression" where she writes about the nature of community protests in post-apartheid South Africa that:

> For the most part, the people who participate in the kinds of community resistance struggles discussed in this chapter are the same people who lacked access to

[4] The 'smart, creative and developmental City' is the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's vision statement and is also frequently used as the catch phrase to identify the Municipality and what it prides itself for.

municipal services (or were recipients of substandard services) under apartheid, and who continue to be marginalized under democratic rule (Dawson, 2010).[5]

Part of the objective of this study was to unravel factors that could be driving inability of public servants to deliver satisfactory services within their localities. The study was also partly inspired by common perceptions that public service employees, compared to their private sector counterparts, are generally sluggish, underproductive and do not take their work seriously (Fakir, 2007). These attributes render them an unnecessarily expensive burden on the taxpayers who pay their salaries (Buhlungu et al, 2007). Despite the National Treasury of South Africa reporting increased expenditure on social upliftment and poverty alleviation initiatives in the last twenty years there continues to be widespread public outcry about government inefficiency and poor service delivery (Fakir, 2007). By implication this observation suggests that South Africa's bureaucracy is ill-equipped to drive the country's developmental state ambitions and the community protests appear to lend some credence to this. Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk (2002) advocate for innovative, energetic and entrepreneurial flair among municipal managers and workers, as well as conscientious measurement of key indicators for the successful achievement of service delivery outcomes.

Although in some instances there have been reports of excellent performance by some public servants, these seem few and far apart. Mediocrity predominates the public sector, alleges (Fakir, 2007). Ill-discipline among municipal employees is said to be rife (Von Holdt, 2010; Pycroft, 2000) and is exacerbated by absent or inadequate performance management systems, sometimes even unwillingness on the part of municipal management structures to institute disciplinary actions against non-performing or reckless staff (Pycroft, 2000). This study was a deliberate attempt to test this hypothesis among a handful of municipal employees, those responsible for the delivery of one of the most essential services, electricity, in order to find out how these municipal employees perceive their roles and carry out their functions.

The White Paper on Local Government, 1998 contends that the delivery of good quality essential services to local communities is the core function and justification for the existence of municipalities. Access to basic services in general, electricity, water and sanitation in particular is the constitutional right of every household in South Africa (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Parnell and Pieterse, 2010). Failure by the state or its devolved structures to deliver essential services that are of good quality and equitably distributed can create public disorder (Waddington, 1992, cited in Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001).

[5] See also media briefing on community protests by Alexander et al, 2013

The intention of the study was, therefore, primarily to hear municipal employees 'tell their side of the story', about their experiences in delivering a high demand municipal service and what could be learnt from the widespread service delivery protests that have gripped different parts of South Africa during the country's maiden term as a democracy. The City of Ekurhuleni has not been an exception to the barrage of community protests around service delivery. The study also aimed to explore how the delivery of electricity and the role played by frontline municipal workers in its delivery resonates with the notion of the democratic developmental state and developmental local government within the South African context.

A lot has been heard of the views held by communities as recipients of services, views of the media who cover and bring the news of service delivery protests to the public domain and views of other third party stakeholders such as developmental agents, political analysts and consultants. Not much is heard of the views and encounters of the municipal employees themselves who are directly responsible for delivering services to disadvantaged communities.

The study seeks to gain some understanding about how municipal employees through their day-to-day operationalization of their roles as providers of services are able to navigate the tensions between the state's commitment to address public sector inefficiency, adhere to prudent fiscal policies and processes, and remain accountable on one hand, and fulfill obligations to put people's needs first by providing essential services equitably, encouraging public participation, ensuring social justice and upholding the principles of democracy on the other (Hart, 2008).

The study was therefore focused on examining an under-explored topic, the role and perception of lower to non-managerial municipal employees responsible for service delivery in the Thokoza area. I have already explained the deliberate exclusion of senior management officials about whom much has already been said in previous studies. The study does not seek an understanding of perceptions and experiences of service delivery from the lofty viewpoint of senior level bureaucrats within municipalities. Previous studies have delved into the contentious issue of policy making, poor planning and the often inverse output ramifications of ill-informed policies, all an indication of the oft disjointed relationship between policy making and the actual delivery of services.

This particular inquiry puts a spotlight on the actual doers of service, those blue-collar public servants whose day to day operational rather than swivel chair directorial function it is to make sure that electricity is provided to the poorest communities in the municipality. It is these frontline municipal employees who have physical control of the 'on' and 'off' switch to each individual household's power supply and who are first on the scene of interrupted services, illegal electricity connections, stolen cables and vandalized transformers. The study focuses on what the direct interactions of these municipal

employees with the communities they service tell us about the realities of developmental local government beyond the idealist views of theoretical propaganda, beyond the journalistic views of the media, beyond the partisan views of politicians, and beyond the tactical views of senior state bureaucrats.

1.2 Administrative framework

For purposes of the study the term 'municipal employees', also used interchangeably with 'municipal workers', is used to refer to staff that are direct employees of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, are at the operational or frontline level of service delivery and are directly involved in the provision of electricity. These include engineers, team-leaders and supervisors, technicians, electricians, and skilled laborers working in the City of Ekurhuleni's Energy department, previously known as the Electricity department. It is these municipal workers whose day-to-day job function is to physically ensure that individual households have uninterrupted access to electricity. These employees are also responsible for maintaining the municipality's electrical infrastructure, disabling illegal connections, attending to service disruptions, interfacing with the community on a daily basis and performing other field-level tasks. These employees are, in my view, the best positioned to shed light on the praxis of service delivery.

Frontline municipal employees are positioned in the lower bottom of the municipality's organogram, close enough to directly witness what happens on the ground in terms of how services are delivered, to whom they are delivered, how they are received by beneficiary communities and the dynamics in-between that make the subject of service delivery the interesting and volatile space it is for engagement and contestation between South Africa's state and its citizens.

Frontline municipal employees are therefore, in my view, a suitable interface in the service delivery conundrum that can best lead us into the world of how local government institutions deliver, in practice rather than policy, some of the most critical public services to local communities, and how these services are received and utilized by the beneficiary communities as told from the mouths of hands-on, directly in-contact with the community municipal employees.

Municipal employees are the operational means by which local government fulfills its service delivery functions. Those engineers, technicians, operations officers and skilled laborers working in the Ekurhuleni Municipality's Energy department are the mechanism through whom the conversion of national government mandates, municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP) priorities, council resolutions and management instructions into actual consumable services is made possible. The White Paper on Local Government, 1998, contends that on a daily basis, frontline employees in municipalities interact with

the community who are the end-users of municipal services, and that for this reason it is necessary to equip them with the skills they need to be of service to these communities.

The end of apartheid in South Africa ushered in a new political dispensation under the leadership of the African National Congress. The ANC-led government not only launched itself as a democratic state but one that was intent on pursuing a developmental agenda aimed at closing the socio-economic disparities that had been created during the apartheid era (David and Mwakasonda, 2004). Although there is no universal blueprint for the perfect developmental state, or how such a state should be organized to guarantee its effectiveness, attributes like sound organizational and human resource management systems are central to the developmental state's construction and sustainability (Chang, 2010). Well-trained and highly competent public servants are an intrinsic part of this ideal (Ibid). This is true for central government as it is for its devolved structures, especially municipalities because of their functional proximity to the communities they service.

Municipal employees are therefore very central to the developmental and service delivery directive assigned by the national government to municipalities. The South African Local Government Authority (SALGA) articulates the role of municipal employees as that of facilitating and promoting developmental local government and, specifically, "improving the quality of life of the communities residing in their areas of jurisdiction, especially those members and groups which were previously…excluded and marginalized" (Handbook for Municipal Councilors, 2011).

In Ha-Joon Chang's view, developmental state bureaucrats must not only be highly skilled generalists but must possess highly intuitive, consultative and responsive skills so that they can be able to decipher and respond appropriately to local needs (Chang, 2010). What Chang is saying here is that in an ideal situation there should not be a disjuncture between the services provided by municipal workers and the needs of the beneficiary communities. It is up to the public bureaucrats to make sure that services provided are in sync with community needs. The reality, however, tends to be a lot different in some instances, with a widely construed perception that the planning and execution of service delivery by public officials is for the most part disjointed and out of tune with community needs, or of poor quality. Dawson (2010) figuratively refers to this state of affairs as the 'broken telephone', which she says is the result of a lack of mutual understanding of the terms of reference between municipal workers and the community.[6]

South Africa's constitution also lists several objectives for local government. These include providing a democratic and accountable government, ensuring the sustainable provision of basic services, and this includes electricity, promoting social and economic

[6] Valla, 1999 quoted in Dawson 2010, p.113

development of local communities and enabling those communities to actively participate in local government decision-making processes. Article 153 (a) of South Africa's constitution further charges every municipality to 'structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community' (Dawson, 2010). Chapter ten of the constitution lays out a list of principles and values to be adhered to by public workers in executing their service delivery function. These include a high work ethic, efficient and effective use of public resources, impartial and equitable service provision and a developmental service delivery mindset (ibid, p. 99). Public service employees are also expected to be supportive to public participation in policy and decision-making processes, be accountable and transparent, be responsive to public needs, and be able to apply effective human resource management to ensure optimal performance of their service delivery functions (ibid).

The City of Ekurhuleni's vision, mission and value statements do specifically and purposefully corroborate the foregoing ethos of developmental local government as shown in the caption below.

Figure 2.[7]

Vision

The Smart, Creative and Developmental City

Mission

Ekurhuleni provides sustainable and people-centred developmental services that are affordable, appropriate and of a high quality. We are focused on social, environmental and economic regeneration of our city and communities, as guided by the Batho Pele (People First) and through the commitment of a motivated and dedicated team.

Values

Performance excellence
Integrity
Transparency
Community centeredness
Cooperative governance

Flowing from the legislative precepts and value statements cited above which formed the founding layers of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy, it is clear that an efficient, effective and community needs driven municipal workforce is critical to the government's

[7] Sourced from the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's Integrated Development Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16

agenda to do away with inequality and in its place to deliver quality services to all without prejudice, especially taking care to do so in previously discriminated communities.

Given the seeming disjunction between the provision of municipal services and the needs of the community, and the apparent disconnection between legislative prescriptions and social realities of service delivery, this study aimed to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of municipal employees on delivering electricity in the context of South Africa's relatively new democracy. The first twenty years of South Africa's democracy has been filled with great expectations for change and unrestricted access to the full range of services that were previously denied to black townships like Thokoza.

1.3 Main arguments

I argue in this report that service delivery tensions between the municipality and its residents living in the townships and informal settlements are brought about by the gap between official norms and practical norms (De Herdt and De Sardan, 2015). Whereas municipal workers operate in a highly regulated work environment, directed by policies, and laws and institutional values, residents behave in ways that are shaped by their practical realities of poverty, landlessness and unemployment.

I base my argument on the following findings which I discuss in greater detail in Chapters 5 to 8 of the report:

1.3.1 Perceptions of Entitlement

Municipal workers perceive residents in the township of Thokoza as having a strong sense of entitlement to receive municipal services that is unmatched by a reciprocal sense of responsibility on the part of communities, to look after and pay for those services. The municipal workers substantiate this perception by pointing to what appears to be a total disregard of municipal bylaws which they say is displayed by the array of unauthorized backyard shacks that have been erected behind almost every formal structure in Thokoza. Blatant illegal connections to the municipal electricity infrastructure and refusal by residents to pay for services adds to the municipal workers' perceptions of a community that feels entitled to service provision.

1.3.2 A history of violence and crime

Thokoza has a long history of violence and violent protests, a propensity which predates South Africa's democratic era. It appears that this inclination towards violence as a means to get what the community wants has persisted over time. Community is loosely used

here to refer to the masses of residents who take part in the service delivery protests mentioned in this report.

The perception of the municipal employees is that crime also plays a significant role in hampering smooth service delivery in the township. This not only creates confusion about the nature and motive of some protest actions, sometimes even making it difficult to single out poor service delivery as the sole cause for the community protests, but municipal employees face the real danger of being mugged, injured or even killed while responding to service delivery callouts to the community.

1.3.3 Promises, Conflicts and Politics

One of the perceptions of the municipal workers is that councilors find themselves caught between accountability obligations towards their constituencies, solidarity obligations towards council resolutions, and mediatory obligations to smooth out relations between residents and the municipal workers to enable effective service delivery. Municipal workers perceive the difficulty of councilors to cooperate with the service delivery terms and conditions imposed on residents by the municipality as betrayal and dishonesty. The dual role played by councilors as the face of the municipal authority within the community, and the face of the community within the council does not always play out harmoniously according to these municipal workers who say political obligations sometimes weigh down heavily on administrative prerogatives and may counteract the task schedules set by frontline municipal employees to implement service delivery.

1.3.4 State of the Bureaucracy

According to the municipal workers who participated in the study, internal bureaucratic challenges which include inadequate interdepartmental collaboration, ill-discipline among staff, inadequate capacity building measures, an almost absent succession planning strategy and an overbearing union all weigh heavily on work and supervision in the frontlines. Service delivery is said to suffer as a consequence.

These findings will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 5 to 8 of this report.

What follows in the next chapter is the literature review which highlights previous academic studies as well as non-academic but equally informative assessments about service delivery state of affairs in Thokoza. The literature review is particularly important in this study because part of my argument is that the voices of municipal employees have remained muffled within the prominent protest voices of communities against poor service delivery. Municipal employees in the coalface of service delivery are a critical yet

understudied role-player in the service delivery debate. Much of the literature review also focuses on institutional frameworks at the national and local levels that were set up by South Africa's post-apartheid government to provide a moral compass for service delivery and to substantiate the country's constitution in its bid to promote service delivery equity and equality.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

I found reviewing the literature for this study quite a daunting task for two main reasons. Firstly, not much scholarly work has been written about the experiences of frontline municipal employees as agents of developmental local government or their role as implementers of service delivery. A significant portion of available literature focuses on the experiences of residents as often disgruntled beneficiaries of municipal services, and the experiences of politicians as brokers of service delivery. Only recently studies are beginning to emerge that put municipal workers at the centre of service delivery, a factor which was part of my inspiration to undertake this study.

Secondly, although the study specifically sought to obtain the perspectives of frontline municipal workers about their service delivery experiences, the role and accompanying perspectives of these frontline municipal workers cannot be studied in isolation of broader service delivery complexities, and these are too numerous and too wide-ranging to be simply collated into straightforward cohorts of literature without the risk of wandering too far from the research question or confusing the reader about what the study aims to achieve.

Let me be the first to say this literature review is not exhaustive, there is a vast pool of other literature that can be visited in order to strengthen the theoretical framework for this kind of study but as I have mentioned before, this is not a conclusive open and shut study, it is the beginning of an inquiry, a building block and an invitation for further interrogation and more detailed analysis about the perceptions and practices of municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery.

In light of the abovementioned factors and in the hope to identify and follow leading trails to deeper understandings of the world of frontline municipal workers I came up with five broad categories of literature which I thought were of important relevance to this preliminary study and its aims. These include literature on the democratic-developmental state, historical legacy of service delivery, official and practical norms, relationships between politicians and bureaucrats as well as literature on service delivery protests.

2.1. Literature on the democratic-developmental State

The post-apartheid South African state launched itself as a democratic developmental state whose primary aim was to bring about restitution for the past socio-economic and political inequalities that had been the defining feature of the racist government in South Africa prior to Nelson Mandela’s release. The new government planned to achieve this through reconstruction and redistribution initiatives (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2012;

Edigheji, 2010; Fakir, 2007; Parnell, 2005; Pycroft, 2000; Buhlungu et al., 2007; Von Holdt, 2010).

Although Evans and Chang (in Edigheji, 2010) argue that there is no universal or standard model for what a developmental state should look like, the provision of services and infrastructure to help drive development and improve community livelihoods especially for the poor, coupled with redistribution of a country's resources in order to address historical inequality are some of the crucial embodiments of a developmental state (Edigheji, 2010).

Peter Evans (in Edigheji, 2010) adds that as heterogeneous as the developmental state can be in its different contexts its major cornerstone is its ability to deliver efficient capability-enhancement services to its citizenry. This necessitates that detailed attention be given to the state's service delivery mechanisms (Edigheji, 2010). Municipalities, not so much in terms of the buildings and policies but in terms of the employees that staff them, are the lifeblood and engine that gets work done and services delivered to citizens since they are the closest organs of state to the people (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2011). It is therefore absolutely necessary to pay attention to the reconstruction of the state's administrative apparatus towards this end (Mkhandawire, in Edigheji 2010), and in particular to address the brain drain, low skills levels and questionable discipline among bureaucrats in developing countries (Chang, Butler, Akoojee and Von Holdt in Edigheji 2010).

Fakir in fact contends that the state's responsibility is two-pronged, that of providing tangible or physical services to its citizens, as well as providing intangible services such as dignity in order to ensure the latter's loyalty, rationality and compliance (Fakir, 2007). It is also incumbent upon the state to ensure that the functionality of its operational structures serves, among other things, as a mechanism to develop ethical citizens and communities to ensure maintenance of public peace (Chipkin, 2006 cited in Fakir, 2007).

This study hinges on the democratic, developmental state theories which are pertinent to South Africa's post-apartheid state trajectory of not just taking back political power but also restoring black dignity among the previously disenfranchised majority through the redistribution of resources and services. It does however appear that South Africa's state has had to grapple with difficult contradictions that taint its developmental state efforts.

One of these dilemmas is that while subscribing to notions of modern forms of development and its accompaniments of modern science, technological advancements and liberalization as some of the key indicators of development, the South African state through its institutional mechanisms and programs has appeared resolute in its quest to undo racism and foreign (white) domination that characterized the country's economic

growth path for decades under the apartheid government, and assert African sovereignty or nationalism in its place (Chatterjee, 1986; Von Holdt, 2010, Mkandawire, 2001).

Another contradiction is that which is said to exist between South Africa's nationalist developmental agenda on one hand, and Max Weber's notions of a meritocratic and effective state bureaucracy on the other, principles which Von Holdt (2010) says are at odds with each other. Some of these contradictions, explains Hart (2008) have the potential to explode to full blown outrage if not identified and addressed correctly. As such there have been widespread community protests over clean piped water, sanitation and electricity all around the country, including parts of Ekurhuleni. While an effective, meritocratic and cohesive state bureaucracy of the strong Weberian kind is said to be essential for a successful developmental state (Evans, 1995; Sandbrook et al. 2007; Von Holdt, 2010), critics of this model including Von Holdt (2010, 2013) berate it for exacerbating inequality by promoting neoliberal capitalism and reinforcing class differentiation between the wealthy and the poor.

2.2 Literature on the historical legacy of service delivery

Chipkin and Meny-Gibert (2011) emphasize the importance of history in understanding contemporary service delivery challenges experienced by the South African public service and addressing the public administration crisis faced by the country. In their joint paper in which they quote Cameron and Milne (2009) they advocate the importance of extensive research on public sector effectiveness and the challenges that limit it. Chipkin and Meny-Gibert argue that the absence and paucity of scholarly analysis on the subject of public administrators, a category which includes municipal workers as administrators of public services at the municipal level, limits knowledge and understanding about the complexities of service delivery in modern-day South Africa (2011:2). They argue specifically that in order to understand contemporary public sector practices it is important to understand how public sector structures have emerged, how they have evolved over time in terms of their organization, leadership, personnel and behavior (2011:3). This is especially important given South Africa's history of inequitable service delivery during the apartheid era and how the service delivery space has been transformed in the post-apartheid era.

Bénit-Gbaffou (2011:3) quoting Corbridge et al (2005) in their assertion that how citizens experience the state depends on, among other factors, their historical memories of the state and how they have experienced it also agrees that history is important for understanding current service delivery challenges.

Mapping out South Africa's historical trajectory, most scholars assert that despite some significant successes such as an improved GDP growth, improved access to housing and

other basic services including health, education, and social grants there is still a rising number of the urban poor in South Africa, and wealth redistribution remains a challenge (Evans, 2010; Parnell, 2005; Von Holdt, 2010; Pillay, Tomlinson, Du Toit, 2006). Some of the reasons articulated by Parnell (2005) for this state of affairs include government's reluctance to acknowledge urban poverty and how it impacts on local government's service delivery capacity, a misleading focus on racial inequality as the overarching causal factor for urban sector socio-economic disparities, and inadequate institutional frameworks which work against the principles of an effective developmental state. This is despite the state's establishment of metropolitan and district municipalities to facilitate intra-urban redistribution (Parnell, 2005). Most South African municipalities are said to be crisis ridden and unable to deliver services because of skills shortages, lack of institutional memory and numerous vacancies in key positions, all this on top of allegations of endemic corruption (Atkinson, 2007; Von Holdt, 2010; Edigheji, 2010)

The post-apartheid civil service, of which local government is part, has had to contend with requirements to downsize, the result, higher vacancy rates and under-expenditure (Ruiters, 2005/6). Ruiters reiterates that much of the poor service delivery discontent that has been unfolding in the country is attributable to inadequate skills levels among public servants. He identifies nepotism, political deployment of personnel to key positions, tender rigging, self-enrichment and corruption as some of the ills of the public service. Municipalities are said to be ill equipped to even compile and implement their own Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) (Pycroft, 2000: 149) and depend on consultants for strategic direction and day to day operational guidance (Ruiters, 2005/6).

The state of local government during the first decade of post- apartheid South Africa is said to have also been hit by a wave of vigilant awareness among citizens about their political, social and economic rights enshrined in the country's Constitution (Ruiters, 2005/6) and the realization that political rights could be translated into social rights (Heller, 2001). The dawn of democracy in South Africa ushered in a dynamic shift from what was previously a 'racialized bureaucracy' that focused on serving the needs of the white community, to an ideologically transformative, developmental bureaucracy aiming to reverse the historically ingrained racial inequality (Ruiters, 2005/6).

The new democratic government adopted different strategies to balance the racial scales including creating job opportunities for previously marginalized groups and improving service delivery in areas that were previously underserviced (Ruiters, 2005/6). Despite this obvious quest for change, the responsiveness of newly democratized states and their devolved structures to the needs of the poor and marginalized tends to be questionable in reality (Heller, 2001), and it does seem that one of the greatest frustrations faced by the public in new democracies is that of unresponsive, arrogant bureaucrats (Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001).

The above analysis seems to hold true for South Africa's post-apartheid government's initiative to create an institutional framework for a developmental local government that was expected to build cities that are equal and just (Local Government White Paper 1998). This plan appears to have not been very successful in yielding the desired results owing to governance structures at the subnational level being ill-equipped to effectively implement government's developmental agenda (Parnell, 2005). Parnell and Pieterse (2010) suggest that a more radical rights-based approach is vital to ensure that communities have uninhibited access to basic rights and services as an alternative to the neoliberal service delivery model, adding that these rights to access must be at all times protected by the government, no matter where or what kind of spaces individuals and communities occupy. Parnell and Pieterse (2010) premise their argument on the 'universal right to the city' upon which the role of the developmental state should be defined and neoliberal alternatives framed. Access to urban services like water and electricity should be needs-based rather than dependent on the ability of households to pay (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010). They contend that this ideal cannot be achieved without a clearly articulated and operationalized cooperative governance system and the incorporation of pro-poor administrative design systems within the bureaucracy (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010).

2.3 Literature on official norms and practical norms

The issue of practical norms and how they challenge official norms take center stage in my analysis of the municipal workers' perceptions.

The study is primarily framed around Olivier de Sardan's (2015) practical norms theory which challenges the relevance of official or institutional norms and labels them as being prescriptive and unresponsive to the practical realities of communities in how they experience and relate to the state. Here De Sardan emphasizes the importance of dealing with the gap between institutional or official norms, and practical realities which he also interchangeably refers to as unofficial, informal, cultural or community norms. De Sardan warns of the tendency by development analysts and theorists to avoid dealing with this gap as many right wing thinkers perceive it as a state of normlessness or state of anarchy which should be avoided at all cost while other critics loathe it for contradicting Western notions of the state and of democracy (2015:2). De Sardan warns against normative or judgmental analysis of the gap which he says inhibits objective analysis of the social problems that plague service delivery in Sub-Saharan democracies (2015:3).

I also drew some valuable lessons from literature on the 'right to the city' which I found relevant in the debate on institutional norms which are said to make it difficult for the urban poor to access the state and its services. Literature covered here includes Harvey, (2008

& 2012); Lefebvre, (2003); Marcuse, (2009); Mitchell, (2003/2012) and Purcell, (2002). Founder of the 'right to the city' concept, Henri Lefebvre and other scholars who support the ownership and reconstruction of urban spaces discourse primarily argue that the city and its services belong to all who live in it, while critics of this theory counter-argue that those who do not belong in the city, referring to those without property rights within the city's borders, should not be allowed entry into the city nor allowed access to its services as this creates a nuisance for the city's inhabitants. Critics of the 'right to the city' accuse the theory of creating anarchy and that the state should use force if necessary to weed out illegal inhabitants from the city space (Mitchell, 2003, p. 1,4). In the context of this study illegal inhabitants would include informal settlement dwellers as well as those township residents who occupy unauthorized backyard shacks whom the respondents in this study accuse of benefitting illegally from the municipality's electricity supply.

2.4 Literature on power relativity within a plethora of relationships

Bawa (2011) writes lengthily about the importance of relationships between councilors and those possessing the power of influence over service-delivery decisions. Apart from senior politicians which includes the mayor and members of the mayoral committee in whom decision-making power is vested at the local level, a point also repeatedly raised by Bénit-Gbaffou (2008, 2011, 2016) also repeatedly raises, Bawa identifies nodes of power at the top of government leadership structures including powers within the national ruling party, the ANC as having direct and indirect influences on decision-making at the local level and she highlights the need for politicians to align themselves accordingly in their mediation efforts on behalf of service delivery for the poor. Bénit-Gbaffou (2008,2011) points out that councilors who are often caught up in clientelist relationships with their communities are also often scapegoats for poor service delivery when they fail to make their electoral campaign promises come true because of their relative powerlessness to influence decisions.

Von Holdt (2010) focuses on the nature of the bureaucracy in South Africa and the effects of poor coordination between policy and practice which he says hinder service delivery success. He identifies five key features of South Africa's post-apartheid bureaucracy which negate the country's democratic developmental project and renders its bureaucracy ineffective in terms of driving the country's service delivery agenda. These factors include class formation and the persistent focus of public sector employees to move up the professional hierarchy rather than performing effectively in their current positions; lack of skills and expertise among public service workers also inherited from the apartheid's racially based skills development and profiling agenda; relationships between seniors and juniors based on deference or what Von Holdt refers to as 'face' which bring about a bureaucratic form of clientelism between managers and their

subordinates in the public sector; a breakdown of discipline among public personnel which he says has replaced the apartheid regime's authoritarian style of management and yet it compromises service delivery as bureaucrats get away with all forms of delinquency; lastly but not in any way least, centralization of the budgeting process fails to take into account community-based needs while mismanagement of allocated budgets compromises effective and equitable service delivery as budget allocations get diverted to activities that were not part of the initial plan.

Lipsky and Weatherley (1977) view street-level or frontline bureaucrats and how they navigate the challenges of their work in order to achieve desired results as the actual makers of policy. Their proximity to practical realities of their work and the context within which their work is done is viewed rather as a strength than an obstacle, allowing street-level bureaucrats to take independent decisions about service delivery based on real life practicalities.

Drawing from Max Weber's views about the underlying challenges facing contemporary governments, Aberbach et al. (1981) offer a detailed review about the discordant and complex relationship that often exists between politicians and bureaucrats as they work side by side as part of the state mechanism, and how this difficulty or "uneasiness" as they call it, affects policy and decision-making, development priorities and ultimately the governmentability and praxis of the modern democratic state. The below extract from their book *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* succinctly sums up the complexity of this problem:

> "…at the levers of power in the modern state stand these two uncertain partners, the elected party politician and the professional state bureaucrat. Indeed, so familiar is this pattern that some effort is required to recognize that in historical terms it is far from 'normal'…The problematic relationship between these two institutions is perhaps the distinctive puzzle of the contemporary state, reflecting as it does the clash between the dual and conflicting imperatives of technical effectiveness and democratic responsiveness." (Aberbach et al., 1981, pp. 3-4)

Conversations with the municipal employees proved the above statement could be true as respondent after respondent testified about the difficulties they experienced as a result of the plurality yet questionable effectiveness of the role played by councilors in mediating service delivery on behalf of their constituencies.

2.5 Literature on service delivery protests

A significant amount of scholarly work has focused on community protest as a direct response to poor service delivery (Pillay, Tomlinson, Du Toit, 2006; Pycroft, 2000; Hart,

2008; Dawson 2010) and failure by councilors to address the needs of their constituencies (Botes et al, 2007; Dawson and Sinwell, 2012; Ballard et al, 2006). The service delivery protests are the background to my interest in asking the question how frontline practitioners of service delivery understand their roles in executing their functions, and to ascertain the understanding and meanings they attach to the service delivery protests. Failure to understand the root causes of unsatisfactory service delivery may lead to irrelevant and ineffective responses (Pycroft, 2000). Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2014) emphasize the importance of context specific and in-depth ethnographic inquiry into how state bureaucrats in transitional democracies perceive and undertake their roles in service delivery. This is necessary in order to understand the before, present and after of what the bureaucrats do, how they do it and why they do it in order to avoid non-empirical and possibly untrue generalizations (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014). Leonardo A. Villalón refers to this process as 'tracing the elements that have formed them', referring to how different contexts and experiences shape the type of state bureaucrats that emerge in each particular case.[8]

Fakir (2007) points out a few causal factors for the service delivery protests South Africa has experienced. These include inadequate staffing, ill-supervision and poor management of public service structures, ineffective streamlining of policies and processes, poor intra and inter coordination systems within and among state institutions, as well as a complex and more demanding public, fueled by the equally complex challenges that face contemporary South Africa.

According to Atkinson (2007) three root problems underlie South Africa's service delivery protests. These include poor responsiveness of municipalities to community grievances, corruption and self-enrichment tendencies by senior public officials, as well as poor skills levels among municipal employees which occurs as a result of familial and political nepotism in the appointment of personnel (Ibid). Low skills levels among public servants is also said to be the result of inadequate government investment on the skills development of the staff that are expected to administer and maintain good quality local government services (Alexander, 2010; Pycroft, 2000).The skills drain in municipalities has been exacerbated by the exodus of skilled and experienced professionals who leave government jobs (Atkinson, 2007) in search of better job opportunities in the private sector, while others resort to self-employment often returning as freelance consultants to charge the very municipalities they used to work for exorbitant fees for their services (ibid).

Atkinson goes on to list a number of concomitant difficulties related to the three broad challenges mentioned above. Despite government's commitment to reverse past service delivery inequalities that severely disadvantaged black communities, the distribution of

[8] Commentary on Thomas Bierschenk and Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan's "State's at Work – Dynamics of African Bureaucracies" (2014)

services remains inequitable as a result of patronage networks that benefit certain individuals and communities resulting in some communities being perceived to have better access to services than others (Atkinson, 2007; Malzbender, 2005). Existing infrastructure is poorly maintained leading to a poor quality of services which is characterized by incessant disruptions of services. South Africa has been besieged by regular power outages in the last few years as the sole giant power provider, Eskom, battled to generate adequate supplies of electricity. Prices of electricity, among other equally important services such as water and sanitation, have become unaffordable particularly for the prevalently poor households living in black townships and informal settlements. Self-enrichment antics by councilors and senior municipal officials and the uncooperative and discourteous behavior of frontline municipal employees towards community members are said to add to the ire of aggrieved communities who then take to the streets demanding solutions (Atkinson, 2007).

Unless the state and public servants engage in an adaptable, progressive, contextual and time-conscious relationship with citizens and create an environment for the development of a common vision and discourse using effective channels of negotiation and problem solving (Evans,1995 cited in Fakir, 2007), South Africa's developmental agenda and service delivery will remain compromised and disconnected to the needs of the public even if managerial effectiveness, technical expertise or even clearly articulated procedures for service delivery were to be put in place (Fakir E, 2007).

Although other possibilities for community unrest cannot be ruled out, including South Africa's history of racial and ethnic intolerance, ideological divisions, class differentiation and inequitable wealth distribution as well as cross border influences that have dire spillover effects on the country (Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001), most of the community protests experienced by South Africa in the last two decades appear to have been primarily service delivery related (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012).

Peter Alexander (2010; 2014) sums it up by calling the insurgence of the public against the state 'the rebellion of the poor.' In his article of the same title he gives a detailed account of the frequency and nature of the service delivery protests and traces the protests back to the era of apartheid which he says brought about policies that have maintained inequality in South Africa despite the country being declared a democracy in 1994.

The next chapter covers methodological approaches and processes used to complete the study including sampling, consent, ethical limitations, data collection and how the data was analyzed to reach plausible findings.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Municipalities and municipal employees operate within a highly politicized work environment. Therefore, one had to tread very carefully at each step of the research in order to create and maintain good rapport with the municipal employees who had offered to participate in this study when many others had opted not to for whatever reason they gave. Of particular importance to also note is that the study took place at a time when service delivery protests and debates about them had been trending for some time in South Africa's news media. Councilors and municipal officials all around the country were coming under all sorts of fire for poor service delivery. Some lives were lost during clashes between the police and protesting communities while various public assets including schools, hospitals and vehicles were burnt down. Sometimes even the private homes of councilors and other municipal officials were targeted and often set alight by angry protestors. The volatile atmosphere at this time, and the arrival of a 'researcher' wanting to conduct a study about service delivery was certainly not an unjustified cause for apprehension and intimidation among municipal employees considering to participate in the study.

The value of qualitative studies in generating understandings about the social context of social phenomena, actions and statements (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) cannot be overemphasized. Qualitative studies use descriptive words and sentences to record and make sense of information about the world (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000), in this case the world of frontline municipal employees at the coalface of delivering electricity in previously marginalized communities. Qualitative studies also have the added benefit that they enable the generation of trust and rapport between the interviewer and interviewees (Babbie and Mouton, 2001), a critically important aspect of this study as employees of the Ekurhuleni municipality would let the researcher into the world of their work at a time when service delivery has been under intense scrutiny by the public and other stakeholders. This is much more so the case as stories told by the municipal employees may confirm or falsify common notions about public service employees (Burgess, 1982). Qualitative studies are also great for making comparisons about social events over time (Neuman, 1997), while allowing for the generation of themes or generalizations and drawing contextually coherent pictures from the data (Neuman, 1997). It is however important to note yet again that this study is not representative of all the municipal employees of the City of Ekurhuleni, nor is it representative of all municipal employees responsible for electricity provision in Ekurhuleni. Findings of the study may therefore not be generalized.

I chose the inductivist approach to conduct this study, that is, to start by collecting data and then draw understandings or theorizations from my findings rather than starting with a specific theory and then collecting data to prove or disprove that theory as tends to happen with deductive or quantitative studies (Neuman, 1994). However, it was not

entirely possible to refrain from the deductivist[9] approach given the nature of the study since the stories told by the municipal employees would often oscillate between confirming or falsifying common notions about public service employees (Burgess, 1982).

The inductive method was particularly helpful at the initial stage of the study as it gave the respondents an opportunity to be heard without any premediated outcomes, and although subjectivity could not be altogether avoided, it was important to keep an open mind and minimize my own thoughts and beliefs in relation to the research question as recommended by Seibold (2002). My hope that this openness to new and previously untold stories about service delivery would lead me to clearer understandings paid off as the municipal employees shared with me some very intimate facts and feelings about their work as my conversations with them moved from the mundane accounts about their work to the deeply reflective. For example, I was taken aback when one employee casually told me he would sometimes reconnect disconnected electricity users if he thought they could prove they had been wrongfully disconnected without waiting for such proof to be provided. There were many other revelations which I thought would not be ordinarily disclosed were it not for the level of nonjudgmental stance I took in my line of questioning. It was important to undertake this study in a way that allowed the participants to lead me to what they believed were their realities rather than imposing my own impression of their realities onto their stories.

The office of the Head of Department for the Energy Department in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality was gracious enough to grant me permission to conduct the study during a time that service delivery protests were pretty much the order of the day around the country, Ekurhuleni not excluded. Senior managers working in the department were also very welcoming and keen to support the study. After preliminary administrative formalities of explaining the purpose of the study and seeking permission to speak to municipal employees at the Customer Care Center, I approached individual employees to ask if they would like to participate in the study, explaining that the study was for academic purposes. As could only be expected, some refused to participate citing busy work schedules, not being the relevant person to speak about their work or some other reason. However, the wealth of information and insights I gained from the municipal employees I eventually interviewed was more than enough to make up for the shortfall in the number of municipal employees I initially intended to interview.

My initial intention was to interview 10 municipal employees but it became evident during my early interactions with individual employees that I might not be able to meet that target. This hurdle, though not totally unexpected, was primarily because employees in the municipality's energy department are highly mobile, constantly up and about responding

[9] The deductivist approach entails beginning with a hypothesis which guides data collection and analysis, almost with the aim of validating or refuting the hypothesis. See Neuman, 1994 and Burgess, 1982.

to various complaints they receive from the public. In addition, the prospects of being interviewed about their work was not top of the agenda for many employees as this did not form part of their official duties and there was no directive imposed on them to participate as I expected them to do so purely on a voluntary basis. Thankfully, the few that I got to interview were more than excited to share their stories which could be because they felt the importance of their work was being acknowledged in some quarters, and to some extent the reason for such excitement could be that they were being given a chance to talk about the highs and lows of their work.

Once I had explained the purpose of the study to individual participants and obtained their consent to proceed, I used the semi-structured interview method to gather the data I needed to gain an understanding about the municipal employees' attitudes and practices. The importance of semi-structured interviews is that they serve as a non-rigid guide to steer the conversation between the researcher and the respondent and that while this tool gives power to the respondent to take charge of what is said and not said it also leaves room for the researcher to follow up and loop strands of the conversation together to generate findings (Brinkmann, 2013 & 2014). My interview schedule included questions about what the municipal employees perceive to be their role as service providers and the importance they attach to this role in terms of quality of services rendered; what challenges they face as providers of electricity and how they deal with those challenges; what enabling or disabling factors affect service provision in their experience; how they set work targets and how they organize their work to meet those targets and measure service delivery outputs and outcomes. Lastly, I asked them to share how they experienced day to day interactions with the community and what they thought of the service delivery protests that have taken place in the areas they service.

My specific interest was to explore how these municipal employees understand and undertake their work within their particular institutional and organizational context, and how this fits in with the characteristics of the state bureaucrat in South Africa's democratic developmental state. The study tried to find out, among other things, the municipal employees' understanding of the organizational hierarchies within which they operate, the skills sets required to optimally perform their work and what performance measurement mechanisms were in place to measure the quality of the services they provide. A key part of this study was also to try to establish the kinds of relationships the municipal employees have with the community where they provide services. The study also tried to examine how these municipal employees deal with the triangular relationship between management, councilors and the community and how this translates in terms of decision-making, lines of command and responsiveness to community service. The aim was to gain an understanding of how they perceive their world of work and the communities they serve as well as how they perceive the service delivery protests.

3.1 Sampling

Study participants were selected using a mix of convenience and purposive sampling of middle, lower management, team-leaders, operational supervisors and skilled labourers. I refer to a convenient sample in the sense that the study deliberately targeted municipal employees working in an accessible duty station for the researcher. I refer to the sample as being purposive in the sense that the employees selected to participate in the study all fall within specific employment categories that were the focus of the study. These include frontline project managers, technicians, engineers and skilled labourers in Ekurhuleni's Energy department and responsible for delivering electricity in the Thokoza. Of course the study would yield more generalizable results if it were conducted among the total population of workers employed in this department, or better still, the entire municipality as this would give us a more holistic sense of how municipal workers employed by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality perceive and experience their roles in service delivery. However, this would not be possible to achieve given the number of employees of the municipality, and the time-frame within which this study needed to be completed. The rationale for sampling is that it provides a practical means for data collection for very large population sizes which makes the inclusion of all units impossible (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000).

Each of the interviews lasted about an hour, with only two out of the seven lasting almost two hours. A few of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants while the rest took place in a boardroom down the passage of the office building. It was important for the employees not to be taken away from their duty station because they might miss an important call or not be able to respond on time to an emergency. Needless to say there were a few interruptions during some of the interviews, telephone calls, community members coming in to lay complaints, other employees needing to verify this or that with a colleague or supervisor. On more than one occasion I encountered a large group of irate residents at the reception area there to demand restoration of electricity to their homes and sometimes this meant having to wait for hours before I could eventually sit down for an interview with the participant I had come to see. I found this encounter frustrating and delaying my study's progress at first until I realized that it was actually providing me with a very rich first-hand, unscripted and unrehearsed experience of the world of work of municipal employees in the coalface of service delivery.

3.2 Consent

Prior permission to conduct the research study was sought from the Ekurhuleni Municipality's Head of Department for Electricity (Energy). Ethical clearance was also requested from the Municipality's Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) who advised

that it would not be necessary to obtain the committee's approval as this particular committee only presides over clinical research applications. The informed consent of participants and their supervisors was also obtained prior to commencement of the study. Participants were reassured that necessary measures would be taken to protect their identities during and after the study as well as in the research report that would be compiled at the end of the study.

3.3 How data was recorded and analyzed

Permission was also sought from study participants to record the oral interviews using an audio recorder after-which the recorded material was transcribed into written text. The data was then analyzed in three phases with the aim of drawing common threads and findings in conversation with the research participants. The first part of the analysis was to establish the what, how and why of delivering electricity in Thokoza. The next phase involved the identification of patterns or irregularities in the information gathered about the practices and procedures of electricity provision and the rationale behind those practices and procedures. In the third and final phase of analysis I focused on comparing the theory of developmental local government with the lived realities of the municipal employees participating in the study. Common patterns began to emerge as I conversed with the respondents. The trajectory of more senior employees was significantly different from that of employees lower down on the organizational chart. It is within the folds of these very incongruities that I made the most remarkable findings which I speak about in greater detail in the remaining chapters of this report.

3.4 Ethical concerns and limits of the project

I have been intrigued by local level politics for as long as I have worked in the local government space. I have been as intrigued by the power tussles of politicians as I have been by senior level executives and lower level operational staff. I have been intrigued by bureaucratic processes and community contestations alike and how they all together shape service delivery in their different contexts. The challenges faced by communities and the responses of local government to those challenges create a fertile opportunity for analytical study. This is what got me interested in unearthing the voices of frontline municipal workers who have all along been a silent partner as studies and findings on the tempestuous character of South Africa's post-apartheid service delivery trajectory unfolded. I have questioned my own motives for wanting to do this study and have made peace with the fact that my curiosity was indeed piqued by both my long tenure in the local government field as well as emerging novelties of protest actions by disgruntled residents unfolding at the dawn of South Africa's democracy. I believe any other intuitive

academic would have wanted to explore this phenomenon as many have and I too have felt convinced to do.

So rather than pose itself as a deterrent from undertaking the study, my own positionality as an employee of the Ekurhuleni municipality encouraged me to make use of this advantage of proximity and advantage of trust which might not be extended to an outsider in the search for service delivery nuances not yet fully interrogated or developed. I undertook this project in the hope that it might enhance current and future understandings about the complex nature of service delivery and about which not any one stakeholder can claim to have a full understanding of why things happen the way they do in the service delivery realms. Municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery experience first-hand the praxis of service delivery, they do not read about it in reports or hear about it from third parties. They, just as residents who are the beneficiaries of municipal services, are the primary witnesses of how service delivery unfolds at the coalface. This gave me the conviction to go ahead with the study without the fear of personal bias but with the zeal of an excavator who does not shy away from digging up familiar fields in the hope of making new discoveries. After-all it is not entirely possible to eliminate bias or subjectivity in a qualitative study like this. Research questions and hypotheses do not originate from a thought vacuum but they mostly emanate from a place of opinionated curiosity. A good researcher acknowledges this and makes sure to manage it carefully and sufficiently in order to not unduly contaminate the novelty and validity of findings.

Studies like this one require a high degree of moral and ethical awareness and practice, not just because this is a general requirement in research practice (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) but much more so because municipalities operate in a highly politicized environment. This reality requires that both the interviewer and interviewee exercise caution in the manner of asking or responding to questions as well as in the packaging of or reporting on the knowledge produced from the interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). By sharing their work experiences with the interviewer research participants may expose themselves to possible negative repercussions (Birch et al. 2002 cited in Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) which is why the issue of anonymity and confidentiality was taken very seriously while conducting this study. Efforts have been made throughout this report to conceal the identity of municipal employees who participated in the study. Although reference is made to levels of seniority of those who were interviewed in order to identify common or contrasting threads between senior and junior employees, care has been taken not to mention position titles or names of those who were interviewed because of the sensitivity of some of their contributions.

I have already alluded to the main limitation of this study, that its findings cannot be generalized for all employees of the municipality nor for South African municipalities since each municipality faces unique contexts, challenges and experiences. This is despite some findings confirming what may already be generalized assumptions and conclusions

made in previous studies in relation to the delivery of municipal services and about state bureaucrats responsible for service delivery. It is therefore my hope that the study will help us get a sense of how differently or similarly municipal employees who participated in the study view and experience their roles with regard to service delivery and service delivery protests in Ekurhuleni. Though limited in its scope the study might give us some useful insights into the perceptions and experiences of municipal employees in other spheres although there may be variations within each specific context.

In the next chapter I discuss the key motivations for conducting the study in Thokoza and why I selected electricity as my service of choice. I also discuss the contestations around electricity provision with the aim of generating thoughts about the lived realities of service delivery in under-resourced communities and households, and how these contestations corroborate or challenge political ideology on the developmental state, its manifestations and its limitations in driving South Africa’s developmental agenda.

CHAPTER 4. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Why Ekurhuleni? Why Thokoza?

Ekurhuleni was selected for the study firstly because this is one of the larger metropolitan municipalities in South Africa[10] and has experienced a number of service delivery protests during South Africa's first twenty years as a democracy (Bènit-Gbaffou, 2011; MLGI, Vol. 14, October 2012).

A second incentive for conducting this study in Ekurhuleni was that I have spent many years working in different municipalities and observing the similarities as well as differences in the practice of service delivery among the different local authorities. In this time, I have also observed with interest how each municipality is as good as the people who staff it, not just at the top, but also workers at the lowest operational level.

A third motivation for choosing to conduct the study in Ekurhuleni was that being an employee in one of the departments of this municipality meant that I could have easy access to employees in other departments without having to travel long distances to interview participants. I gave considerable thought to the question of ethical bias throughout the conceptualization, planning as well as implementation of the study. The vastness of the municipality as well as the operational and physical distance between the Department of Health, where I work, and the Energy Department where this study was conducted ensured that I had no prior knowledge of the municipal employees that would be participating in the study, nor any pre-conceived ideas about the nature of work they do besides the general understanding that all municipal employees contribute in some way or another to service delivery regardless of the department in which they are employed. The Ekurhuleni municipality is a big organization. The municipality came about as a result of the amalgamation of nine previously independent local authorities. As a result, the municipality has over 18000[11] employees distributed across 26 departments located all over the nine previously independent towns that make up this municipality. This makes it difficult for any individual employee to be conversant with employees working in other departments or understand the intricacies of their daily functions without a conscious effort to do so such as during this study.

4.2 The making of Ekurhuleni: A brief overview

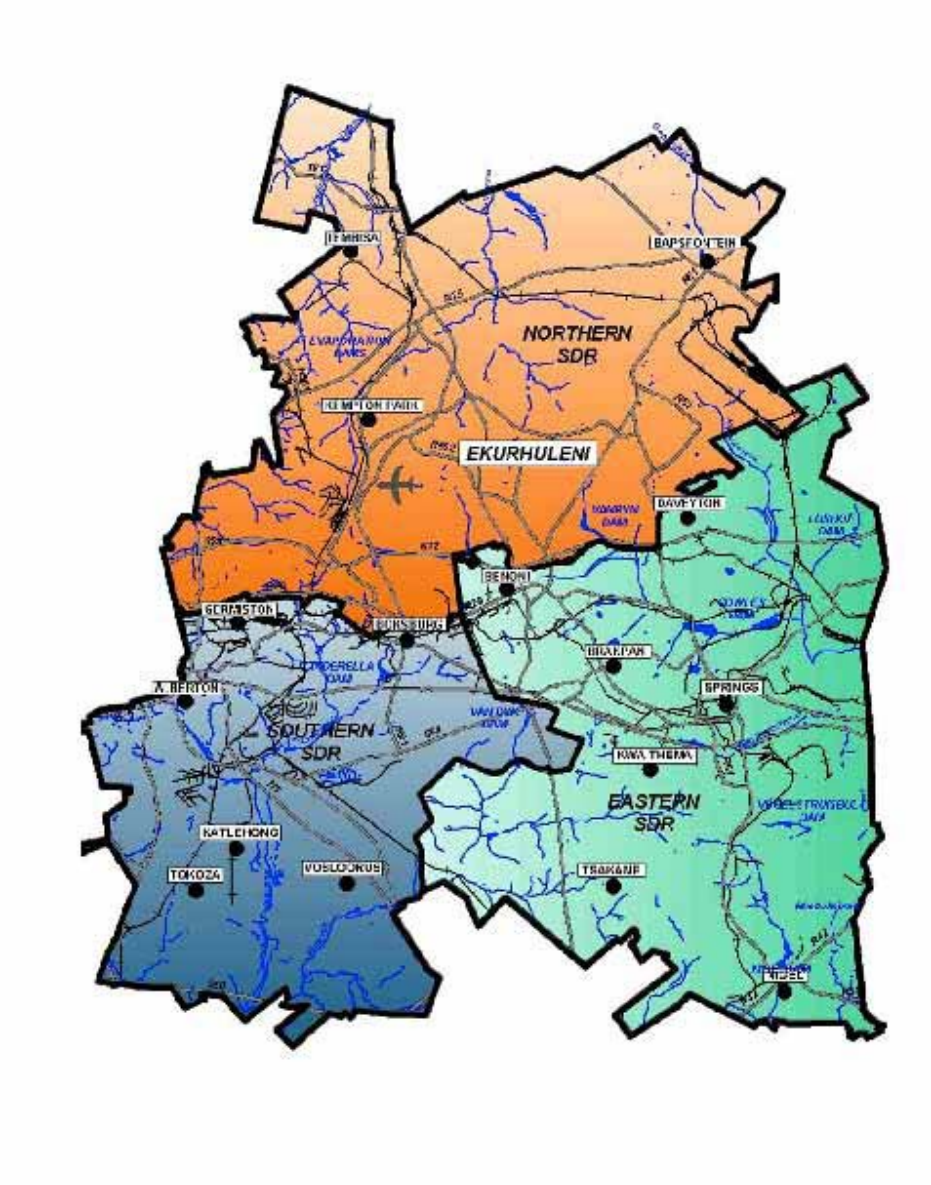
In this section I provide a brief history about the formation of Ekurhuleni as well as an overview of the administrative structure of this municipality. This will give the reader a

[10] See Municipal Structures Act of 1998, also mentioned in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's IDP, Budget and SDBIP 2013/14 – 2015/16

[11] See Ekurhuleni Growth and Development Strategy – GDS 2055

sense of how the municipality is structurally organized for service delivery and how historical events in the formation of the municipality and the Thokoza township have shaped the space within which frontline municipal employees carry out service delivery in this particular context. Here I have also included a map of Ekurhuleni.

Figure 3. Map of Ekurhuleni[12]



Ekurhuleni, also known as the East Rand, developed first through the discovery of gold in the area and then emerged as the industrial centre of the country (Lowitt: 2011 cited in

[12]Sourced from Marx and Rubin, 2008

the Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy - GDS 2055). This industrialization era resulted in the formation of the nine towns constituting the East Rand, namely, Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Edenvale, Germiston, Kempton Park, Nigel and Springs, each with their associated segregated townships (Lowitt: 2011 cited in the Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy - GDS 2055). These nine towns were later amalgamated to form the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in the year 2000 (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2012).

The Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality is one of 8 Metropolitan Municipalities in South Africa and has a population of about 3, 178, 470 people distributed across 101 municipal wards (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality IDP, Budget and SDBIP 2013/14 – 2015/16). Despite the city of Ekurhuleni being dubbed "the workshop of the country" (South African LED Network, 2010), and reported to be the largest single urban region in South Africa owing to its sprawling manufacturing, industrial and mining sectors (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2012), unemployment rates and poverty among those living along the city's periphery remain high in spite of a high literacy rate estimated at 84% (South African LED Network, 2010).

According to the municipality's 2014-2015 Energy Department Infrastructure Asset Management Plan and despite Ekurhuleni being dubbed the 'industrial workshop of the country' boasting a 99.40% urbanization rate[13] this municipality's income distribution shows the most distressful household income levels when compared to the two other Metropolitan cities in the Gauteng Province, that is, the City of Johannesburg and City of Tshwane.[14]

[13] See Ekurhuleni Municipality Electricity Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2014/15 which also provides a synopsis of the municipality's service provision outlook. The document however does not make any specific categorizations of electricity supply demand, usage or projections by specific townships or informal settlements, the delivery of electricity to these areas is included in the summaries provided per service delivery area (SDA) which includes each of the Municipality's major towns and their satellite peripheral townships and informal settlement. In the case of Thokoza, this would be the Alberton Service Delivery Area.

[14] Ibid

A comparative table is shown below:

Figure 4: Distribution of household income[15]

	Low low	Low	Low Medium	Medium	High Medium	High	High high	Total per category
	<R1200	R1201 – R2000	R2001 – R5000	R5001 – R10000	R10001 – R20000	R20001 – 50000	R50000	100%
Ekurhuleni	32.46%	10.95%	16.65%	16.29%	11.67%	8.27%	11.97%	100%
Johannesburg	29.31%	10.42%	16.31%	15.56%	11.82%	9.67%	16.58%	100%
City of Tshwane	27.00%	10.01%	15.10%	15.63%	14.14%	11.78%	18.12%	100%
Total	29.64%	10.47%	16.08%	15.80%	12.41%	9.82%	15.60%	100%

If the above figures are anything to go by they show that just above 60% of Ekurhuleni's population live on less than 200 rand a day to cater for their basic needs like accommodation, food, clothing, health, water and electricity, and this is a positive projection since close to three quarters of households in this category are said to live on just above 50 rand a day or less.[16] These figures clearly communicate a dire situation pertaining service provision and the ability of households to pay for municipal services in Ekurhuleni.

Because of its rich economic landscape during its early formation the East Rand attracted a mass of job-seekers from near and far-off places, including migrants from neighboring countries, Britain and other European countries (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2012). This influx of immigrants into the East Rand's urban center was contrary to the apartheid government's Group Areas Act whose sole aim was to contain the black population in designated areas away from civilization and service delivery. In response the then Nationalist government pushed the black immigrants out of the East Rand's major towns resulting in the formation of the Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus Townships (jointly referred to as Kathorus) outlying the Germiston, Alberton and Boksburg towns respectively (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2001). The forced removal of African, Indian and Colored communities created a desperate need for low cost accommodation in the periphery, and as could only be expected the mushrooming of these low cost townships around the East Rand's economic centres exerted a lot of pressure on municipal

[15] Ibid
[16] Ibid.

infrastructural services (ibid). The cosmopolitan nature of the East Rand's working class population made what was to later become Ekurhuleni an important site for cultural and political diversity, violence and conflict (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2012) and therefore my chosen site for conducting a study about service delivery and service delivery protests in this municipality.

The need to accommodate black communities that had been displaced by the apartheid state from well positioned areas to make way for the industrial growth agenda, coupled with the need to provide housing to the scores of migrants who settled in the area to provide labor to white capital resulted in the formation of townships and migrant labour dormitories scattered all around the East Rand (Marx and Rubin, 2008; Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy – GDS 2055). This segregation between the rich and the poor resulted in a pattern of periphery communities that were poorly serviced surrounding a core of affluent white suburbs closer to the town center that were opulently serviced. Scarcity of affordable accommodation closer to the East Rand's economic hubs coupled with stern efforts by the apartheid government to curb the growth of black townships, resulted in large overcrowding and construction of backyard shacks in the late 1980s (Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy – GDS 2055) as people forced their way to settle in close proximity to the towns.

The Thokoza township is located south west of Alberton and is a historically important human settlement, not only because of its origins but also its propensity to violent protest during the period leading up to and following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Interestingly, although the direct translation of the Zulu word 'Thokoza' means 'rejoice' or 'be joyful' the township's name is gazetted as meaning 'Place of Peace' (Marx and Rubin, 2008) precursory to its mother city, Ekurhuleni named years later, also meaning 'Place of Peace' in Tsonga. Thokoza is surrounded by a number of informal settlements that are home to thousands of low-income households that depend heavily on the township's municipal infrastructure for their daily subsistence.

The naming of the metropolitan municipality along the same sentiments of naming the Thokoza township many years before is in my view not coincidental. The translation of the name in each case has deep connotations of peace-building after a period of great strife that was clearly the case in the East Rand in the 1990s. Thokoza has continued to feature prominently as one of South Africa's protest-prone townships. Both Chipkin (2011:3) and Bénit-Gbaffou (2011:3) contend that history, as in this particular case, matters in the generation of theories and understandings about the state and its practices.

To this day Ekurhuleni is characterized by well-manicured and well serviced suburban parts in and around city areas on one hand, and the not so plush townships and informal settlements that sprawl around the city's urban hubs on the other. Townships and informal settlements battle poverty, unemployment, unsatisfactory provision of basic services such

as electricity, water and sanitation and consequently experience a rising frequency of service delivery protests (Buhlungu et al. 2007).

4.3 Why electricity?

Electricity is one of the world's turnkey discoveries and holds a special place in discussions about the pace and outcomes of modernization and development in different parts around the world. Electricity is esteemed as one of the distinguishing divides between rural and urban, developed and underdeveloped spaces and provides an important backdrop to the social, economic and political experiences of households and communities worldwide. Among the many important tasks assigned to local municipalities in South Africa is the task of providing infrastructural services to the communities within their jurisdictions. This includes the provision of electricity at affordable rates to each and every household.

Electricity was singled out for this study because it is one of government's top priorities on the list of critical public services (The White Paper on Local Government: 1998). Electricity is pivotal for the social and economic development of households, communities and countries. It is central to Africa's war on poverty as it enables households to meet the basic needs of food and shelter as well as health and education, also serving as an enabler for the general improvement in the livelihood of communities.[17]

Electricity is also a key performance indicator for South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (Khosa, 2000). Electricity provision is one of the strategic priorities in the ANC's election manifesto since 1994, and is also prioritized in the country's National Development Plan and vision for 2030 (Khosa, 2000). Electricity provision has also been identified as one of the triggers for the spate of community protests that have gripped South Africa in recent years and the evidence of this is the frequency in the number of community protests occurring during the winter months.[18]

Surveys that have been conducted in the past indicate that the majority of South Africans rate electricity as one of the most important services and comes second only to water (Khosa, 2000; Van der Waldt, 2007). The provision of electricity as a public service is enshrined in the universal access policy which is proclaimed mandatory by the country's Constitution and forms a core part of South Africa's local government obligations (Khosa, 2000).

Electricity is a basic necessity and its multiple uses indispensable. It is on the back of electricity that the country's young population are able to successfully complete their education as they are able to continue with their school assignments at home under the

[17] See World Energy Outlook, 2004, p. 330

[18] See Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012

light provided by electricity. It is thanks to the marvel of electricity that mothers can go to work each day but still be able to come home and prepare meals on time for their families; it is because of electricity that crime and sometimes even the loss of life can be prevented because of the high mast lights which illuminate street corners and dark alley ways where criminals often lurk waiting to pounce on unsuspecting passers-by. The life-saving nature of electricity is glaringly felt each time that news breaks of a fire caused by a candle, paraffin stove, or some other open fire implement used for cooking or keeping a family warm. Many of these fires have resulted in fatalities often of young children or sometimes whole families. In many instances entire settlements have been razed down to ashes and many families left homeless by runaway fires that snowball from one shack to the next, particularly the case in informal settlement areas such as those surrounding the Thokoza township. The benefits of electricity are far too numerous to mention.

The delivery of electricity is not a menial task. It is a highly technical field of work which requires the deployment of well-trained artisans. Meticulous caution and stringent safety practices are observed when working with electricity, and the fear of possible electrocution is real even among the best trained electricians. As one participant in this study told me:

> …in the medium voltage and high voltage electrical field if you're not sure what you're doing you'd cause an explosion, you can die. The risk factor is very, very, very high on electricity, if you don't know what you're doing there…it's not like a house plug that makes a little spark and you can actually sweat if it does touch you, I mean if a 33 thousand volt current touches you you're gone, bye-bye, dead…[19]

It is therefore very concerning that reports issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa indicate that qualified electricians are in very short supply in the country.[20] In-fact the occupation of electrical engineer takes number one spot on the country's rankings of top 10 scarce skills, while that of electrician ranks number nine (ibid). It is also a costly exercise to generate power and make the cables that bring electricity to households and industries come alive. The spate of load-shedding power outages that plunged South African households into darkness and halted industrial activity sometimes for hours at a time in recent years were a harsh reminder of the costliness of electricity and its indispensable uses. Left entirely to the laws of supply and demand, electricity would not be as affordable for the majority of South Africans who battle unemployment and poverty and can barely put a decent meal on the table (Dawson, 2010). According to

[19] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

[20] The Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa releases a list of critical and scarce skills each year aimed at providing guidance about the country's skills profile and highlight most needed skills so that stakeholders like government departments, employers, labour, learners and learning institutions can make informed decisions about skills development priorities each year.

Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) which is the government's official engine and custodian of all the country's demographic statistics, the official unemployment rate for the country increased from 22 to 25 percent between 1994 and 2014 while the country has also been battling to recover from a debilitating economic recession that hit the county in 2009 (www.statssa.gov.za). It is primarily because of the high unemployment rate experienced by the country as well as other social, political and economic reasons that South Africa's constitution makes provision for a free quota of electricity to be allocated to each and every household. This social security measure would not be possible were the provision of electricity left in the hands of the free market economy and given the profit making preoccupations of the private sector.

Whilst endeavoring to provide an efficient supply of electricity that is also affordable and accessible to the population, South Africa's state-owned enterprise Eskom serves as a wholesale bulk supplier while the wider distribution to households at the grassroots level is left in the hands of local authorities, particularly where these are ranked as class A or metropolitan municipalities.[21] In practical terms this means that the responsibility for delivering electricity to households is entirely in the hands of municipal workers whose daily function is to ensure that municipal infrastructure for the supply of electricity is in perfect working condition, and that electricity reaches each and every household perennially. The study set about to find a small sample of municipal workers who could shed some light on what this responsibility means to them and how it translates in practice to the delivery of electricity in Thokoza.

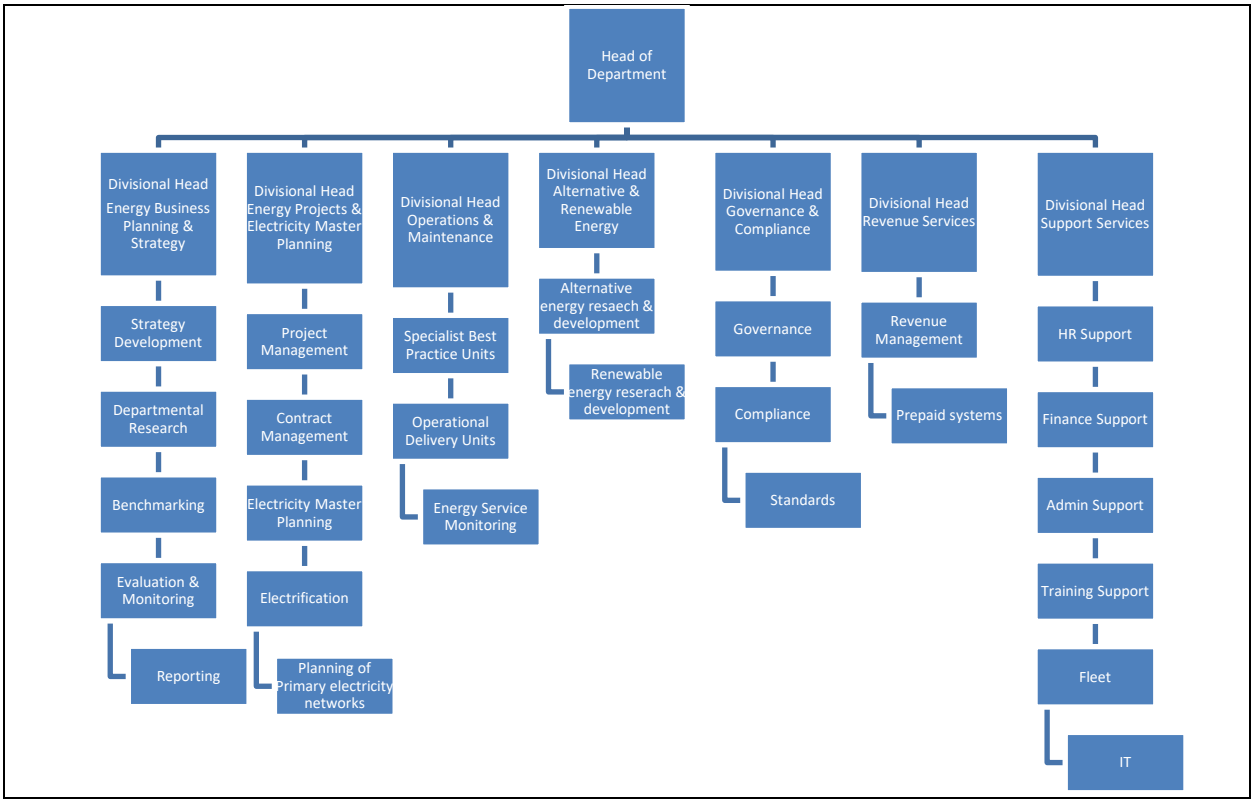
The Energy department in Ekurhuleni is at the heart of the day-to-day provision, regulation and maintenance of this municipality's electrical infrastructure. Workers in the Alberton Customer Care Center keep the town and surrounding suburbs and townships, Thokoza included, illuminated. They provide a service that is one of the tangible measures of the municipality's service provision gauge. Efficient provision of electricity is not just an important indicator of development. Governments invest a huge portion of their budgets into ensuring there is an efficient supply of electricity to their citizens.

I have included here a two-part organogram profiling the Department of Energy Corporate structure which I deliberately excluded from the study due to its behind-the scenes oversight scope of function which does not entail daily contact with residents but is included here to showcase the continuum of proximity to residents between upper-level and lower level municipal workers. The corporate structure is followed by the Alberton Customer Care Center, Operations and Maintenance Section structure from which frontline municipal workers responsible for servicing the Thokoza township were selected to participate in the study. These are the municipal workers whose daily functions entail

[21] Sourced from the Municipal Structures Act of 1998, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality IDP, Budget and SDBIP 2013/14 – 2015/16)

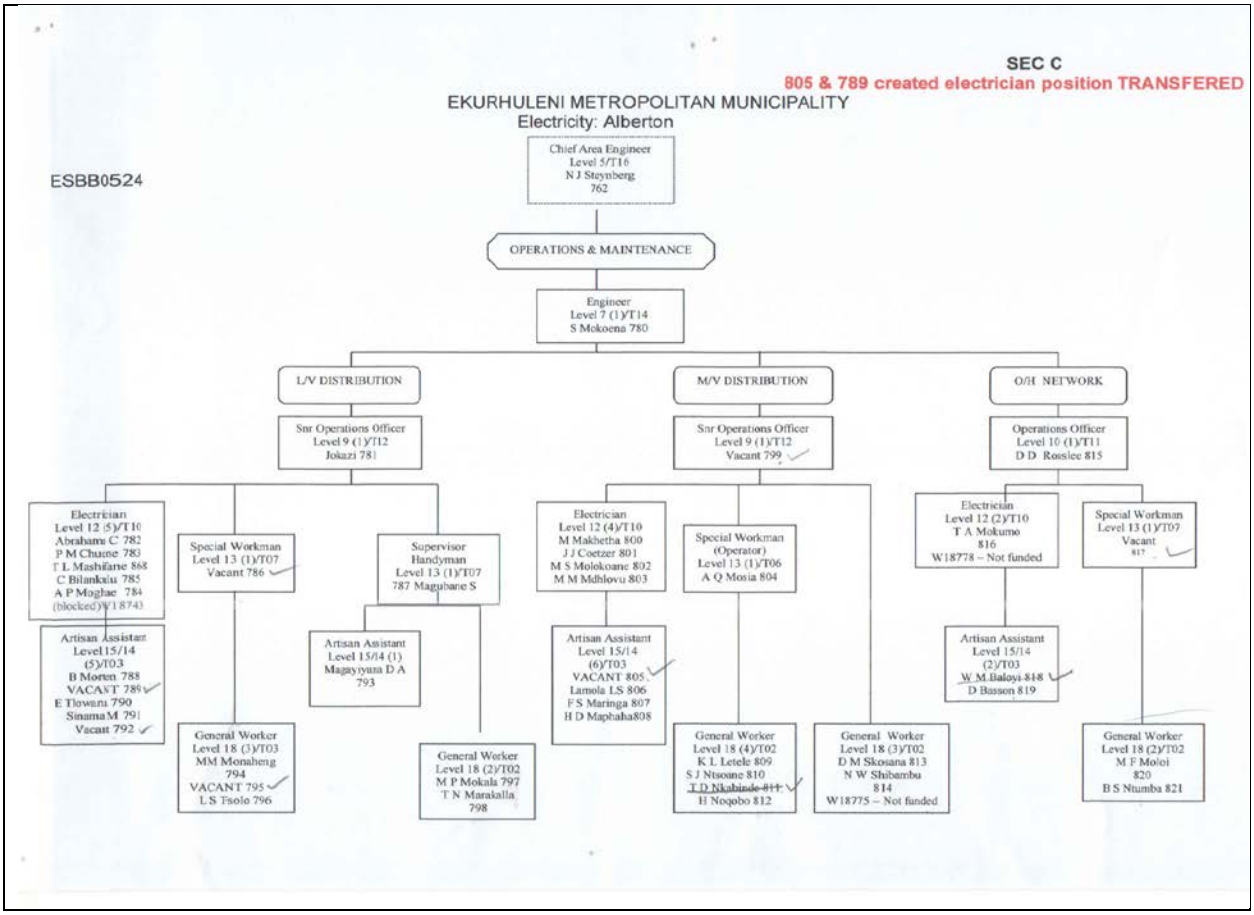
physical entry into the community to address power interruptions experienced by individual households or sections of the community.

Figure 5: Energy Departmental Structure[22]



[22] Source: Electricity infrastructure asset management plan 2014/15

Figure 6: Alberton Customer Care Center structure[23]



In the next section I give a historical background about the struggles faced by township and informal settlement residents to pay for electricity.

4.4 Struggles to pay electricity tariffs

I start this section by revisiting stories about Thokoza's early resistance to pay rents to the municipality in protest over a number of draconian conditions imposed by the apartheid government. This part of Thokoza's history is revisited in order to establish possible linkages with present-day attitudes and behavior towards the local authority and municipal employees, and towards payment for municipal services. It must be noted however that it has been contested in other literature that the non-payment of rents during the apartheid era was inspired by different reasons than those behind non-payment for services in the post-apartheid era, non-payment was used as a form of political resistance

[23] Source: Administration office of the Alberton Customer Care Centre

during the apartheid era whereas genuine inability to pay is the main reason behind non-payment of user fees in the post-apartheid era (Malzbender, 2005). The differentiation between reasons for non-payment is mentioned here solely to point out the different motivations for non-payment in the past and present eras but since these motivations are not the subject of this study they will not be pursued further in this discussion. The aim is simply to draw possible linkages between Thokoza township residents' refusal to pay for services in the past, and their refusal or inability to pay for services now. Inequality and poverty are some of the common denominators linking the issue of non-payment then and the issue of non-payment now.

The township of Thokoza has a long history of service delivery inequality which has been confronted by relentless resistance by the township's residents as they demand what they believe is their constitutional right to electricity following many years of deprivation under the white supremacy government. History has it that despite the economic and industrial boom experienced by the East Rand from the end of the nineteenth century (Marx and Rubin 2008) this success did not translate to better wages or improved way of life (Alexander et al, 2013; Marx and Rubin, 2008) for the throngs of black workers working in the mines who were now concentrated in the townships after they were pushed out of the white dominated city centers (Marx and Rubin, 2008). Worse still, the Nationalist Government had introduced economic rentals to be paid for units allocated to the black working class in the township so that the municipality could make savings to put towards allocating more land and housing units for the growing back population (ibid). This caused a lot of resistance and tension among the black people living in the townships (ibid). Owing to this and other reasons including growing frustration over the pass laws, poor service provision and the imposition of Afrikaans in schools, widespread public protests broke out in Thokoza and neighboring townships. These culminated in the full blown riot of June 1976 (ibid). The rental increase imposed by municipalities at the insistence of the Nationalist government, aggravated by issues of low wages and high unemployment rates among the black population and a general economic downturn all fueled the tensions and led to an even greater resolve by the township dwellers to boycott payment of rents as many could not afford to pay (ibid).

The situation intensified during the 1980s as people reacted in anger to statements from the municipality that they were owing thousands in electricity and water bills whereas they had not been provided with these services for a while (ibid). To add salt to injury the Black Local Authorities (BLA's) who had assumed some kind of oversight role in terms of managing housing and infrastructure issues in the township were accused of colluding with the municipal authorities and embezzling funds that had been collected from the community for specific community projects. This led to a huge protest culminating in the declaration of a state of emergency as political authorities declared Thokoza

ungovernable (ibid). The scarcity of land and housing for black township dwellers exacerbated the problem as property owners in the township raised rents for lodgers in their backyards so that they could in turn pay the municipality what they owed and also make a little profit to survive the harsh economic conditions at the time (ibid). The situation was no different for lodgers in the hostels as costs of getting permits kept escalating until people seeking beds in the hostels stopped buying permits. A standoff between the community and leadership structures ensued resulting in the cutting off of electricity supplies to the hostels, followed by forced removals of non-paying occupants, demolition of shacks in some parts of the township and the establishment of some of the informal settlements (ibid) that form part of present day Thokoza.

Non-payment for electricity continues to plague the Ekurhuleni municipality and this has resulted in huge losses in revenue collection.[24] Poverty and unemployment exacerbates this situation. Municipal employees at the coalface of service delivery bear the brunt of non-payment of tariffs as they constantly have to fix power disruptions caused by an overloaded grid as residents tap onto the network to access electricity illegally.

4.5 Municipal leadership

Leadership of the municipality is shared between the political sphere otherwise known as the Council, led by the Executive Mayor, and the administrative sphere which is led by the City Manager. The Mayor governs with a ten-member mayoral committee made up of councilors who are handpicked to be the political heads of departments, much like the cabinet of ministers in the national government. The senior management structure of the municipality is made up of the Municipal Manager who serves as the Chief Executive Officer, supported by the Chief Operations Officer (COO) and various Heads of Departments (HoDs). The municipality has been undergoing structural changes in recent years and the number of political portfolios and departments has been undergoing revision.

Political regulation of the municipal business and monitoring of service delivery in particular are fortified by the existence of various regulatory and oversight structures within Council. These include the legislature, which is constituted through a multi-party representative process to ensure proportionate representation of all political parties in decision making; oversight committees, which as the name suggests provide political oversight on the administrative departments; and various standing committees designated to ensure that the municipality's governance and strategic priorities are adhered to.

[24] This is according to the Ekurhuleni Municipality's Electricity Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2014/15

The administrative structure was initially made up of ten departments being *City Planning and Economic Development; Community Safety; Corporate and Shared Services; Environmental Management; Finance; Health and Social Services; Human Settlements; Roads and Transport; Sport, Heritage, Recreation, Arts and Culture; Water and Energy.* The municipality's administrative structure is currently undergoing a review which has resulted in the dissolution of some departments which previously had broader scopes of function into about 26 more functionally specific departments.[25] This has been done with the aim to further unpack the municipality's service delivery mechanisms.[26] This process resulted in a split in what was previously the Water and Energy Department culminating into two separate departments: the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Energy (electricity) that is the subject of this study.[27]

The dual nature of the municipality's leadership structure is meant to fortify service delivery. The ruling party, through its political representation by the Executive Mayor, elected and representative councilors, is expected to consult with constituencies, identify service delivery needs and set the agenda as well as the means and pace for delivering those services. The City Manager and team of heads of departments are expected to ensure that political resolutions concerning service delivery are translated and operationalized into actual deliverable services and to make certain that the municipality's developmental agenda, resources and pace of service delivery are executed within acceptable standards and timeframes. It is a reasonable expectation then that developmental priorities ought to be determined through a consultative process between councilors and the communities they represent, framed around the developmental needs of those communities and expressed through the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP). To what extent these ideals are the case in reality, and how the municipality's frontline human resources are deployed to carry out this purpose is one of the underlying interests of this study, and more specifically how employees lower down in the municipality's administrative structure comprehend and act upon these ideals in the manner that they deliver services to the community.

4.6 The personnel factor in service delivery

The provision of electricity requires the expertise of highly skilled electrical engineers and technicians. According to the country's list of critical and scarce skills issued periodically by the department of Higher Education and Training in conjunction with the Department of Labour, South Africa does not have the required number of qualified and experienced

[25] See Ekurhuleni IDP, Budget and SDBIP 2011/12 – 2013/14, p.24
[26] Ibid
[27] See Ekurhuleni IDP, 2012-16

electricians it needs for effective delivery of electricity.[28] The late Minister in the Presidency for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr. Collins Chabane noted in his speech about government's development indicators in 2012 that the shortage of skills in the engineering sector was worrisome and that this shortage was bound to hamper South Africa's infrastructural growth program.[29] Engineering and technology graduates are part of a list of 85 indicators adopted by the South African government to track progress on the country's developmental plan since 1994 (ibid). Municipalities have to contend with competition posed by Eskom, private sector electrical engineering companies as well as international recruitment agencies all vying to recruit the few electrical engineers and electricians produced by the country each year (Erasmus and Breier, 2009). What this means then is that municipalities get by on a very porous staff compliment when it comes to electricity provision because institutions of higher learning do not generate enough of these (ibid) and the state cannot match the salaries provided by the private sector or global recruiters to those who qualify.

The Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality employs about 18000 workers whose jobs it is to individually and collectively ensure the efficient provision of municipal services.[30] Interestingly, although municipal records show that electricity is Ekurhuleni's main source of revenue and accounts for almost 50% of the local authority's total share of income, of the estimated total of about 18000 municipal employees, only 40 Professional electricians and 125 technicians were listed on the human resource database for the entire municipality during the 2010/2011 reporting period.[31]

4.7 Struggles for service delivery

Delivering good quality essential services to local communities is the core function and justification for the existence of municipalities (The White Paper on Local Government, 1998). Access to basic services in general, electricity, water and sanitation in particular is also the constitutional right[32] of every household in South Africa (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010). Failure by the state or its devolved structures to deliver essential services that are of good quality and equitably distributed can create public disorder (Waddington, 1992, cited in Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001).

[28] See General Notice number 380 of 2014, National Scarce Skills List: Top 100 Occupations in Demand: Draft for Public Comment- Department of Higher Education and Training, Republic of South Africa

[29] Sourced from http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/engineering-skills-shortage-hampering-growth-says-chabane-2013-08-20

[30] See Ekurhuleni Growth and Development Strategy – GDS 2055

[31] See Ekurhuleni IDP 2011-2014

[32] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Rapid population growth in South Africa's towns and cities, alongside challenges like inverse economic growth, escalating unemployment rates, high government expenditure and tax rates, growing inflation and food prices, have all made it increasingly difficult for government to provide for the needs of the people (Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001). South Africa has witnessed widespread service delivery protests as a result (Fakir, 2007; Atkinson, 2007; Dawson, 2012; Alexander, 2010) particularly in the last 10 years and the country has been labeled in some quarters as the "protest capital of the world" (Leadership, 5 February 2013). This report was confirmed during a media briefing led by Professor Peter Alexander, Dr. Carin Runciman and Mr. Trevor Ngwane about the number and nature of public protests in South Africa during the 2004-2013 period. The report showed a steady upward climb in the number of community protests from the year 2004, peaking in 2009 and rising even more sharply in 2012.[33] Of the grievances cited for the public protests, service delivery was number one followed by directly related grievances which included housing, sanitation, representation, electricity, corruption, municipal administration and unemployment (ibid). At least 73 % of the total number of protests experienced during the reporting period were directed to either the local municipality in general, or the Mayor, Councilor or municipal officials specifically (ibid). Road barricades and tyre burning were the most preferred methods of demonstration followed by attacks on property and vehicles and marches (ibid).

Provincial analysis indicates that Gauteng was until 2012 leading in having the highest service delivery protests before its displacement by the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and the North West Province in first, second and third position respectively (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012).

Between February 2007, and August 2012, the Multi-Level Government Initiative (MLGI) recorded an estimated 1000 service delivery protests around the country with statistics showing a steady increase throughout this period (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012). Data for 2012 suggests a more than double increase of service delivery protests when compared to the previous year (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012). Trends indicated by the MLGI Barometer show that service delivery protests tend to escalate during winter months. The data also shows that the protests have not only been escalating in number but also in degree of violence, with the Barometer showing that 79.2% of the service delivery protests were violent in 2012, where violence is defined as "actions that create a clear and imminent threat of, or actual eventuality of harm to persons or damage to property" (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012). Lack of electricity was among the list of most frequently cited grievances for the service delivery protests (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012). Other recorded grievances include land and housing, roads, broken

[33] Sourced from Media Briefing notes on Community Protests 2004-2013: Some Research Findings by P. Alexander, C. Runciman and T. Ngwane – University of Johannesburg (2013). See also Alexander and Pfaffe, 2014

promises and communities feeling that their grievances were being ignored by municipal officials (Local Government Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue 3, October 2012).

4.8 Transformative Legislation

Service delivery in South Africa is underpinned by various legislative statutes including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 which sets the agenda for a democratic, developmental government at the national, provincial and local levels (Pycroft, 2000: 148) and makes the provision of basic services such as water and electricity a mandatory government requirement. The Local Government Transition Act of 1993 which came about soon after the release of former President Nelson Mandela in 1990 ushered in a new era of democratic local government that resulted in South Africa holding its first democratic local government elections in October 1995 (Buhlungu et al., 2007).

A few years down South Africa's transitional timeline a number of equally important statutes and national policies were promulgated with the aim of safeguarding service delivery efficiency and effectiveness. These include, not in any particular order: the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 which defines the different categories of municipalities; the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 which provides the legalistic guidelines for how municipalities' human resources can be managed effectively in order to ensure sound, acceptable and responsive service delivery; the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 whose aim was to establish the basis for a developmental local government with the principal mandate to provide essential public services, provide for the social, economic and material needs of communities, address past inequalities and enable the attainment of holistic improvement of the quality of life for the people of South Africa (The White Paper on Local Government, 1998; Buhlungu et al., 2007; Van der Waldt, 2007).

Apart from these legislative directives Ekurhuleni's service delivery program is guided by the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Growth and Development Strategy 2055. Both of these policy documents provide important information about key priorities and strategic plans for improving service delivery within the Municipality. Other related guidelines for ensuring effective service delivery include the municipality's Urban Renewal Strategy, Provision of Essential Services Policy, Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure as well as the Performance Management Policy Framework.

In an act of reaffirming its commitment to improve the lives of its citizens the South African government adopted the Batho Pele Principles, whose direct translation means 'People First'. The Batho Pele Principles are a value system that makes it a requirement for employees within the public service to prioritize the needs of citizens when planning or

delivering services. The Batho Pele Principles were first introduced in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) of 1995 and adopted in 1997 by the new Nelson Mandela led government (Batho Pele Handbook, 2007). There are eight Batho Pele principles in all and they include C*onsultation:* listening to what people say regarding the quality and level of services; S*ervice Standards:* which make it a requirement for government departments to publish standards for existing and new services, cautioning against the lowering of standards and calling for the standards to be monitored at least once a year and raised progressively; *Access:* ensure equal access to services; *Courtesy:* citizens to be treated with courtesy and dignity-including monitoring of staff performance; *Information:* public servants to give citizens full and accurate information about services; *Openness and Transparency:* citizens entitled to know how public service entities are run, how much it costs to run them and who is in charge; *Redress:* public servants to keep a record of service delivery complaints and take appropriate action to correct them; *Value for Money:* public servants to ensure economic and efficient use of public resources (www.palama.gov.za, accessed 29 May 2014).

Needless to say South Africa has some of the best institutional frameworks in place to enable the effective delivery of services and to operationalize and validate the state's developmental agenda. This includes the country's constitution, post 1990 legislative Acts, policies and programs whose summary details I have already dealt with above. However, it is in the translation of these statutory guidelines into practice that the state appears to have encountered significant pitfalls and local government is the level at which these drawbacks seem most apparent.

Southall (2007) contends that although the intentions and efforts made by president Thabo Mbeki during his term to lead the country on a modernizing, democratic and developmental path were noble, particularly in their aim to correct the service delivery imbalances of the past and to put South Africa on the map for being a model type African developmental democracy, the reality twenty years later indicates that these efforts were not altogether successful although some key milestones cannot be ignored. Ill-suited policies, an inadequately skilled public workforce, and corruption are some of the obstacles that are said to have stood in the way of South Africa's post-apartheid state from attaining its quest to become a developmental democracy (Buhlungu et al. 2007). In fact, if anything, South Africa's democracy is said to have become more dysfunctional than developmental, a state of affairs that is characterized by what Southall refers to as 'developmental deficits' whose dire effects are mostly felt by the poorest of the South African society (Buhlungu et al. 2007). It is for this reason that the country's second democratic local government elections held in 2006 are said to have been shrouded under a dark cloud of tension as public discontent over poor service delivery mounted and concerns over lack of access to basic services such as housing, water and electricity gained momentum (Buhlungu et al., 2007).

Butler (2007) notes that although the success of the ANC led liberalization movement to end apartheid and usher in democracy is not doubtable, there has not been sustained effort to embed the principles and values of democracy among the country's political leaders, bureaucrats or the population. It is little wonder then that allegations of widespread corruption among those holding high office in the country's governance structures remain rife, high levels of intolerance for dissenting views, allegations of the African National Congress placing party dominance above public interest (Butler, 2007) all tarnish South Africa's story of a developmental democracy and pours cold water on prospects of the country becoming a great model for African democracy.

4.9 The state of local government in South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa sets the framework for a development centric public service that is professional, efficient, impartial, transparent, accountable, broadly representative, skills developmental and one which puts the needs of the people first.[34] These stipulations are further expounded in the Batho Pele Principles already outlined above.

In order to operationalize these constitutional requirements government and the public service are divided into three hierarchical administrative spheres: National, Provincial and Local government (Pycroft, 2000). This study is interested in the latter sphere because of its proximity to people and communities at the lowermost level (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2011). Citizens experience public service through service delivery institutions or service points (Fakir, 2007) of which municipalities, apart from national services such as hospitals, schools and Home Affairs, are at the coalface (Fakir, 2007).

The challenges that constrain municipalities from effective and efficient service delivery fall into two distinct but interrelated categories: systems constraints and structural constraints (Pycroft, 2000). The former refers to capacity related challenges such as personnel and finance management inadequacies, while the latter refers to weaknesses in organizational configurations. The decentralization frameworks underpinning the country's governance and administrative mechanisms at the national, provincial, municipal, district and zonal spheres, and the resultant intergovernmental relations between and among these spheres appear to have put municipal service delivery systems under enormous strain (Pycroft, 2000).

Some scholars express skepticism about the effectiveness of the decentralization strategy that is often used by emerging democracies to govern. They argue that for decentralization to work effectively requires significant institution and capacity building,

[34] The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108, 1996 S 195(1)

and reinforcement of the decentralized local government structures (Heller, 2001). Effective decentralization also requires conscious adaptation of administrative policy and procedures to suit local contexts rather than rigidly applying First World prototypes that are ill-fitted to suit new Third World democracies (Heller, 2001; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014). This can be enabled by allowing active public participation, proper planning and constant coordination between and among state agencies, along with the need to develop managerial, organizational and technical capacities that are a necessity for local authorities to function effectively (Heller, 2001).

Reorienting the public service so that it could address its post-1994 developmental priority has faced a number of challenges including a need to downsize so that the state could make much needed savings and cut down the country's deficit (Pycroft, 2000). Consequently, the country experienced a high exodus of skills as public servants accepted voluntary severance packages and left public service employment (Fakir, 2007; Pycroft, 2000; Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002). Training offered to municipal employees to recoup skills levels within municipalities was also reported to be inadequate and inappropriate (Pycroft, 2000). Other challenges facing South Africa's post-apartheid transformative local government include the need to create a new culture of service and work ethic among government employees; the need for institutional restructuring, human resource capacitation, new policy, procedures and legal frameworks, and the need to revise government's strategic goals and priorities in line with the new constitutional values and mandates (Fakir, 2007).

It was of paramount importance to transform the previously racialized service delivery to one that was equitable and aiming to purposefully redress past inequalities so that the justice and dignity of previously marginalized and underserviced sub-populations could be restored (Pycroft, 2000; Von Holdt, 2010). Managing public sector human resources has however proved to be very complex and some of the strategies that have been invoked to address these complexities have backfired (Fakir, 2007). For example, attempts to unify the municipal employees of former Black Local Authorities with municipal employees from former White Town Councils are said to have led to overstaffing in some municipalities and understaffing in others (Pycroft, 2000). Another example of a good strategy gone wrong is that the move towards greater decentralization and devolution of power to local authorities that was meant to enhance smoother, faster decision-making in the hope that this would ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency was in some instances counterproductive as it provided a breeding ground for corruption in the form of nepotism and unfair human resource practices within local municipalities (Pycroft, 2000). The absence or inadequacy of performance measurement standards and practices within the public service further makes it difficult if not impossible to assess the productivity of municipal employees or apply consequences where public servants fail to

meet set standards and this state of affairs appears to have permeated the entire public service organizational culture (Fakir, 2007).

Lack of autonomy and accountability to local constituencies is said to cause municipalities to struggle with delivering quality services or respond effectively to their constituencies' needs as they lack the motivation and sometimes even the authority to do so since local government officials tend to pay greater allegiance to the central government (Dillinger, 1994, Evans, 2010). Generalized maladministration and poor communications between the national, provincial and local strata of government may in some cases also spark or exacerbate service delivery protests (Alexander, 2010). This requires greater clarification of functional responsibilities between central and local government. It also requires proper allocation of resources for service delivery, appropriate accountability and incentive mechanisms as well as meticulous regulatory measures to ensure responsiveness of local level bureaucrats to public needs. Technocrats need to actively consult with beneficiaries of service delivery and not solely rely on their own expert understanding in the planning and delivery of services (Evans, 2010).

Government places an imperative on municipalities and other spheres of government to develop and implement Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The primary aim of the IDP is to ensure that public service entities adopt a business-like approach that encompasses strategic planning and project implementation to enhance service delivery efficiency (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002). The IDP is aimed at ensuring the social and economic upliftment of communities by making certain that essential services are accessible, affordable and of high quality (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002). The IDP also places local government at the helm of sustainable development to mitigate escalating rates of urban poverty (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002)**.** These sentiments are also expressed in the definition given for developmental local government in the White Paper on Local Government: 1998 wherein it is defined as the kind of development that places priority on the social, economic, material needs and quality of life of citizens. The IDP also aims to assist municipal workers to make the best use of resources at their disposal to deliver quality services (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002).

Promulgation of the Republic's Constitution and its entrenched Bill of Rights placed an even greater burden on Municipalities to materialize the rights expressed in these founding documents of South Africa's democracy. This responsibility was not accompanied by a pronouncement on the additional means or resources that would be required to materialize these rights at a universal scale, particularly in light of the thin tax base at the disposal of municipalities that is largely reliant on property rates, water and electricity revenue (Hart, 2008; Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy – GDS 2055).

Another reason given for service delivery failures in some municipalities is that the devolution of power from the national government to local authorities occurred at the same time that the government undertook to cut back expenditure costs (Hart, 2008). This move starved local authorities of the resources they needed to effectively perform the enormous responsibility laid upon them by the national government (Hart 2008). As if this were not enough, during the year 2000 the South African government announced a Free Basic Water policy that would ensure the provision of a minimum 6 kilo-liters a month to every household no matter its size (Hart, 2008), a promulgation that dealt a big financial blow to municipalities. During its 2006/2007 financial year Ekurhuleni increased this free quota of water to 9 kiloliters for households on the Municipality's indigent household registry (Policy: Provision of Free Basic Services – Water and Waste Water, 2012).

4.10 Politics of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'

The post-apartheid government inherited a backlog of over 100 years of racial inequality which was characterized by neglected, underserviced black townships, high unemployment among the black population, and a fragmented city governance and management framework (Edigheji, 2010; Ekurhuleni Growth & Development Strategy: GDS 2055).

Under the rule of South Africa's apartheid regime there was systematic under-investment in municipal infrastructure and other essential services in black areas (White Paper on Local Government: 1998). The White Paper further notes that although the amalgamation of the bigger metropolitan municipalities with Black Local Authorities during South Africa's early democratic era did present new opportunities, it also brought about new challenges. These include inadequate strategies to improve the capacity of the newly formed administrative structures, and failure to eradicate historically entrenched class-based mindsets among decision-makers and municipal officials regarding the equitable delivery of public services (White Paper on Local Government: 1998).

South Africa's democratic state continues to battle service delivery disparities based on race and unequal power relations since the economy is still largely white controlled, affluent suburbs are still predominantly occupied by the white minority while the massive black population remains stuck in townships and informal settlements (Von Holdt, 2010).

4.11 Privatizing public services, universal access and the cost recovery dilemma

The South African Government's cost recovery policy and commercialization of basic public services like water and electricity is said to have created a huge rift between

municipal bureaucrats, politicians and communities (Ruiters in McDonald and Pape, 2002). The dilemma often faced by municipalities is that whilst emphasis is placed on universal access to basic, good quality services like water and electricity on one hand, it is expected on the other that these basic, high quality services should be provided at the least possible cost to both government and consumers (McDonald and Pape, 2002). Implications of this are that either quality and or universal access are likely to be compromised, or these services will be delivered at a high cost to the public.

It is not surprising then that the privatization of basic services like water and electricity that was meant to ensure greater efficiency and quality has made these services highly unaffordable for the majority of unemployed and poor people (Ruiters, 2005/6). This situation has resulted in the rise of illegal connections to water and electricity and an equally rising number of public protests (Ruiters, 2005/6). Not much is said about how privatization has affected municipal employees in their role as principal custodians of service delivery.

Faced with the challenges of cost recovery for delivering mandatory services, high levels of poverty and unemployment, and a 'culture of non-payment' for services in many of South Africa's townships (McDonald and Pape, 2002), municipalities grapple with the struggle to find a functional balance between neo-liberal ideals for transforming service delivery on one hand, and ensuring universal access to essential services especially for the poor and previously marginalized communities on the other (Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt, Jonker, 2001). Non-payment for services continues to be the norm in the majority of black townships and the resultant disconnections from water and electricity supplies remains widespread long after the country became democratic (McDonald and Pape, 2002) and its leadership envisioned a bright and prosperous future for its people (Khosa, 2000).

4.12 Measuring the performance of municipal employees: Why this matters

Performance management within the country's local government structures is sanctioned and prescribed by the White Paper on Local Government: 1998 which also lays out a set of principles and guidelines on how service delivery can be optimized for the benefit of local communities (Van der Waldt, 2007). Accountability of public servants is central to the country's service delivery values dubbed 'Batho Pele' or 'people first' principles whose sentiments of equitable accessibility, affordability, quality, sustainability, value for money and accountability must be upheld at all times and partnerships developed among councilors, municipal managers and organized labour to improve service delivery (Van der Waldt, 2007).

Performance management within municipalities is also important to ensure successful implementation of IDP priorities and effective use of resources (Van der Waldt, 2007). Municipalities are called upon to carry out their functions in an economic, effective, efficient and accountable manner (Van der Waldt, 2007; Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000). Clear roles and responsibilities must be assigned to municipal employees who for their part are expected to adhere to clear codes of conduct. In addition, effort must be made to ensure the continuous development of municipal staff in accordance with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (Van der Waldt, 2007).

The rationale behind performance management, whether it takes place in the private sector or public sector, is primarily to improve service delivery, guard against maladministration and waste of resources. Performance management is also a prerequisite for guarding against general inefficiency and unproductivity of personnel. Having a performance management system is a must for municipalities (Van der Waldt, 2007) and Boyne *et al* (2006) defines this obligation as the 'character and consequence' of service provision by public institutions (in Van der Waldt, 2007). Performance management of municipal workers is also sanctioned by the country's Constitution, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery:1997 as well as the Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003. The common practice in most municipalities is that performance management tends to be limited to senior leadership or what are commonly known as Section 57 employees (Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000). This is also the case in Ekurhuleni where only the senior level management employees sign performance management contracts while the thousands of municipal employees below them are not subjected to formalized performance management requirements. The complexities of this differential performance management system are implicit in the municipal workers' stories about ill-discipline and insubordination which I will be dealing with in chapter 8.

In the following chapters I discuss in greater detail the study's key findings to which I have already alluded earlier in this report. My main argument is that there is a multi-layered disjuncture between what I believe are the South African state's normatively restorative ideals which seek to redress historical inequality, and the practical realities of service delivery implementation as experienced and perceived by frontline municipal workers in their day to day role of delivering electricity in a previously disadvantaged community. This disjuncture that is at the heart of my analysis is apparent from the very formative foundations of South Africa's young democracy as encapsulated in the country's constitution and it meanders all the way down to the coalface of service delivery where state meets citizens in a face-to-face encounter between frontline municipal workers and township dwellers.

CHAPTER 5. OFFICIAL NORMS, PRACTICAL REALITIES AND COMMUNITY ENTITLEMENTS: DISJUNCTURES BETWEEN STATE NORMS AND COMMUNITY DEMANDS

In this chapter I discuss the disjuncture between the Thokoza community's 'right to the city' (Harvey, 2008 & 2012; Lefebvre, 2003; Marcuse, 2009; Mitchell, 2003/2012 and Purcell, 2002) demands for electricity and what the municipal employees of the Ekurhuleni local authority perceive as an unreasonable sense of entitlement to the city's services by township dwellers. I also present anecdotes from the municipal employees themselves about the difficulties they face in providing services in a community they deem excessively entitled, and how these municipal employees find this behavior to be not only not normative and against the rules but also undermining the municipality's efforts to deliver efficient and effect services in one of the city's historically disenfranchised communities.

The disjuncture that is the subject of my analysis in this chapter unfolds in two main ways. Firstly, institutional frameworks surrounding the service delivery mandate given to municipalities by the national government seem at odds with the realities of just how needy the previously disadvantaged communities like Thokoza are, not just for state services but also for the capacity to pay for those services, only offering what appears to be superficial relief to this under-resourced community.

Secondly, the relationship between municipal employees at the coalface of service delivery and the communities they service appears to be marked by hostility. Such hostility is perhaps the result of tensions between the normative rules about service delivery such as the 'user pays' rule *vis a vis* practical realities of the majority of consumers of those services living in the townships and squatter areas, namely, that they cannot afford to pay for those services. An underlying question that could be asked here is to what extent are communities responsible for their own fate in accessing the state's services, and in what form does this responsibility materialize? Should this responsibility be exercised through cooperative participation and in line with the prescriptions of law, policy and regulations or should it be wrestled from the state using uncooperative means if necessary in order to ensure that the citizens get the services they have been promised by South Africa's post-apartheid government (Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield, 2011).

Bawa (2011) notes that the disjuncture sometimes occurs even between and among the different fragments of the state such as that which is sometimes experienced between national government structures and their provincial or municipal counterparts; between departments and between offices and officials within state departments. As a result of this fragmentation, policies promulgated at different levels or sites of the state are not always mutually coherent or beneficial even among the state's own divisions. A quick example that comes to mind is the constitutional allocation of free quotas of water and electricity

as part of the state's universal access project without allocating funds to the municipalities to compensate or recover the costs for the 'free' quotas (Hart, 2008).

Speaking of institutional disjunctures affecting service delivery, and before I proceed with the analysis of my findings, it is imperative that I re-emphasize that the study and its findings focuses on one side of a triangular story, the side presented to me by municipal workers. Had it not been for this study's sole mission to unravel the perceptions of municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery, I would have extended the study to councilors who are the mediators of service delivery on behalf of their political constituencies (Bawa, 2011), and to residents who are the beneficiaries of those services in order to draw a more comparative analysis. However, both the residents and councilors were intentionally excluded from this study because of time constraints and my particular interest in the underexplored topic of lower-end municipal bureaucrats.

In not including councilors and residents, I have not discarded the wealth of knowledge and understandings that have been gained from previous studies which have focused on these groups. That knowledge and understanding form a very important background and springboard to this study. It is my hope that the stories that have been told by councilors and residents, together with the stories being told by frontline municipal employees in this study will reshape existing literature and understandings about the minefield that service-delivery is as a subject and a practice, and especially how service delivery has unfolded in South Africa's transitional years as a democracy. It is in-fact on the basis of those insights from councilors and residents that my focus on frontline municipal workers originated. Much is already known about the perceptions of South Africa's peripheral communities on the state of service delivery in their areas. This is especially the case for communities living in townships and informal settlements. Many of these communities have protested very publicly against poor service delivery. Apart from academic inquiry into the subject, the frequent outbreak of service delivery protests speaks volumes about the challenges that plague communities in South Africa's post-apartheid era. For that reason, the perceptions of municipal employees in this study have been mindfully juxtaposed against the backdrop of the incessant protests that have swept through the country in recent years.

A majority of the municipal employees I interviewed said it was difficult to deal with the residents of Thokoza because of what these frontline bureaucrats thought was a deeply ingrained sense of entitlement to municipal services that was blinding residents to other matters of importance concerning service delivery. Such matters include an apparent lack of a sense of mutual or shared responsibility between the municipal employees as providers of service, and communities as recipients of those services. The perceived absence of mutual responsibility between municipal employees and residents over service delivery was said to cloud the judgement of residents about what are legitimate basis and means to claim their constitutional rights to quality and equitable service

delivery. Community members were accused of feeling excessively entitled to not just the free quota of electricity that is allocated to them in terms of the law but to as much electricity as they require, and that their inability to pay for electricity is not a good enough reason to deprive them of this entitlement. One of the municipal employees elaborated:

> …they say they have fought for this country, so they want to do everything as they wish, hence you find that they won't pay for services, when they are being cutoff they will fight…No! You don't have to come and switch off our lights…[35]

In the introduction and throughout this report I point out that the South African constitution does indeed make it mandatory for all South African households to have access to free basic minimum amounts of electricity.[36] The Human Settlements Act of South Africa further makes it a primary requirement for local authorities, planners and contracted township developers to ensure the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, water, sewerage system and electricity to cater for the day to day basic needs of residents before plots or housing units can be allocated to the public. In addition, the Municipal White Paper on Local Government (1998) also emphasizes this public right.[37] Several other legislative instruments corroborate the right of access to electricity. These include the *Electricity Regulation Act 4 of 2006,* the *Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000,* the *Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003,* the *Electricity Pricing Policy Government Notice 1398 of 2008* and the *Electricity Basic Services Support Tariff (Free Basic Electricity) Policy Government Notice 1693 of 2003.* According to the statutory provisions it was anticipated that the free quota of 50kWh worth of electricity allocated to each household per month would be sufficient to provide basic lighting, heat up water in a kettle, do basic ironing and be able to operate a small black and white television.[38] However this has proved not to be the case as most households consume much more than this.[39]

The provision of basic lighting is also listed as one of the Ekurhuleni Municipality's own key development priorities as spelt out in the local authority's Integrated Development Plan. In addition to the monthly 50kWh free electricity allocated to households per month, the Ekurhuleni Council reviewed its Provision of Free Basic Electricity Policy and doubled the free quota to 100kWh for low income households.[40]

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[35] Interview with Respondent #7, 8 December 2016

[36] The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; see also Parnell and Pieterse, 2010

[37] Sourced from The White Paper on Local Government, 1998; see also Buhlungu et al., 2007; Van der Waldt, 2007

[38] Sourced from the RSA government website: http://www.gov.za/faq/south-african-citizens/how-do-i-access-free-basic-municipal-services (accessed on 11/20/2015); see also Malzbender 2005

[39] Ibid

[40] Provision of Free Basic Electricity Policy of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

Some of the respondents felt that it is this very charitable provision of free electricity sanctioned by the constitution and its affiliated statutes that has brought about an unreasonable sense of entitlement, demand and abuse of electricity among township dwellers.

> "…they will tell you electricity is for them, …they think it's their right…you're selling something which they tell you is theirs. They want it, you cannot tell (them) you don't have.[41]

The respondents were of the view that although the Constitutional provision for free electricity and other essential services had the good intentions of addressing previous racial inequality and was intended to give consideration to the high levels of poverty among the throngs of South African black people, this leniency could be indirectly linked to the rampant illegal connections, cable theft, subsequent power interruptions and public protests that have swept over South Africa in recent years. One respondent explained that it was difficult for some people to understand how the same government that was willing to give poor South Africans free houses would turn around and expect the very recipients of free houses to have money to pay for services. Some township residents were said to be of the view that it is only logical that being allocated a free house should be accompanied by the provision of free state services to make life in those free houses livable.

The reasoning behind this kind of thinking is that if a community member is so poor that they cannot afford to build themselves a home then how can the same government that donates a home to them expect them to afford to pay for services. In-fact in some instances community members were said to illegally occupy the houses built by government as soon as they have been built without waiting for the government to officially allocate them to the intended beneficiaries. Once the houses have been successfully expropriated, the illegal occupants then demand that electricity be connected to those houses. "How are we going to open the account for someone who is not owning the house?" asked one respondent not particularly expecting me to answer that question.[42]

Another respondent complained about how the government's Batho Pele Principles were one-sided in their attempt to foster a culture of accountability and respect among public employees while making no such requirements of the public. One municipal employee even went on to claim that the actions of some community members who had staged a march to the municipal offices had landed him in hospital for stress-related reasons. This

[41] Interview with Respondent #3, 21 September 2015
[42] Interview with Respondent #4, 6 October 2015

municipal employee, one of the technical team's supervisors, said he could no longer cope with what he perceived to be a confrontational and discourteous behavior of one community member who was part of a crowd that had marched to the municipal offices to table their demands for electricity.

Narrating the story, he said he had spent long hours working in the rain trying to resolve power outages that had occurred as a result of two transformers blowing up in Thokoza and an industrial area nearby. A group of community members from Thokoza had come to confront him at the municipal offices demanding immediate replacement of the transformer and immediate restoration of electricity in their area. The respondent said he couldn't take it when a young woman in the group swore at him and that this experience, in addition to the mounting stress of his job, had landed him in hospital. He blamed this incident on feelings of entitlement among community members who he said treat municipal workers with disrespect and make unrealistic demands. His troubles for the day had not ended as not long after this encounter another group of residents from another section of Thokoza arrived at the municipal offices demanding to see him. He went on to narrate how this second encounter had unfolded.

> While I was still busy with that…here's another community, coming in, looking for a transformer. (I) tried to explain 'guys, this transformer needs to be tested, I need to make sure it's in working condition… They said 'no, no, no, no, no, we need the transformer now, we need the transformer now'…failing to do so, they are going to 'toyi toyi…' [43]

To 'toyi-toyi' means to protest, so the community went ahead and staged a march in protest when the transformer they had insisted be installed blew up five hours later. The respondent mentioned here says he was booked off sick for a month to undergo treatment for job-related stress.

The ANC's slogan 'Amandla Awethu' which used to incite a nostalgic euphoria of tenacity, resilience and a 'we mean business' among both the South African black people who were fighting to end apartheid as well as the government of the day which was unwilling to give up power is as potent today as it was during the country's political struggle. This is especially so when the slogan is not just said to symbolically punctuate political statements and fervors in meetings and conferences of the ruling party, with whom the slogan is historically associated, but is more packed with meaning and intention when it fills the air during community protests.

[43] Interview with Respondent #4, 6 October 2015

Loosely translated the slogan means ‘all power is vested in us’ or ‘power to the people’ and it is the war cry that continues to punctuate speeches, gatherings and marches demanding the fulfillment of all forms of rights be they political rights, basic human rights, worker rights, women’s rights, student rights and other civil rights including the right to state services. The slogan is heavy with literal and metaphorical meaning, literal in the sense that it often incites physical violence among protestors and metaphorical in that it spurs those who feel their rights are being undermined to stand up and do something about it. The slogan is mentioned here because of its relevance to the struggles of the poor living in townships and informal settlements and their determination to put the slogan into practice by taking matters into their own hands in demanding service delivery.

The municipal workers expressed a clear understanding of the tangible and intangible meanings that the people of Thokoza ascribe to electricity and electricity provision. That electric power is not just the current that brings light, heat and warmth to households but that it is also a complex commodity packed with socio-political meanings and opportunities for claim making. These meanings and opportunities are continuously exploited, especially by previously disenfranchised black South African communities living in townships, and are used as bargaining power, claims and demands for the transformational and developmental promises of South Africa’s democratic government (Alexander et al, 2013; Bénit Gbaffou and Oldfield (2011). Whereas electricity forms part of the basic infrastructure required for the establishment and livelihood of communities especially where previously there was none, the institutional structures through which and by which electricity is delivered have taken center stage as niches or spaces for community participation and decision making. Miraftab (2004) refers to these as ‘invented spaces of participation’. This may be viewed as a sign of no confidence in the ‘invited spaces’ or institutional structures created by the South African government to enable public participation and consultative decision making processes.

It was not without just reason that South Africa’s post-apartheid government went to great lengths to promulgate laws, policies and operational frameworks which sought to ensure equitable and quality service delivery for all, especially to previously marginalized communities. South Africa’s new democratic government also promulgated a number of legal statutes and policies which sought to safeguard the public against the abuse of power by public officials. It was important for the Nelson Mandela-led government to do this in its bid to reverse the service delivery inequalities that had prevailed during the apartheid era. It does appear, however, that not even constitutional pronouncements, political slogans nor the allocation of free quotas of electricity to the poor has been sufficient to correct the inequalities that were orchestrated and cemented by the apartheid government. What the municipal employees appear to be experiencing in their interactions with the Thokoza residents shows how official norms and practical realities

fail to compliment or validate each other and therefore that the behavior of the residents cannot be explained or understood from a normative point of view. Thokoza residents have resorted to violent protests to force the state to deliver on its promises and in so doing, have bypassed institutional avenues for claim-making. This behavior has not been limited to Thokoza but also other townships and communities in different parts of South Africa who felt their demands for satisfactory service delivery were not being heeded.

Claims and claim-making can take a variety of forms depending on the practical realities of the claim-makers. Speaking about the violent uprisings that were erupting in different parts of the world in the late 1990's and gaining intensity in the early 2000s, Tarrow (2011) chronicles the emergence and growing pervasiveness of what he calls "contentious politics" (ibid) to describe the increasingly violent social movements taking place around the globe, South Africa included, and the inventive means to claim-making which these social movements seem to be resorting to in order to get the attention and answers they seek. Roger Gould had earlier referred to this phenomenon as "contentious collective action" (Ibid, p. xvii) which he said was rapidly replacing 'contained contention' (ibid, p. xvi) referring to the utilization of institutionally accepted platforms and means of contention to express dissent. Tarrow posits that contentious claim-making is shaped by experiences and events in the 'real world' (Ibid, p. xv), and not idealistic impressions of how things should be. Claim-making, whether it takes place at the international, national or grassroots levels needs to be understood within the broader political scheme, in particular the failure of institutional structures to effectively address real life problems. Of even more significant importance, adds Tarrow, is that contentious collective action is 'learned' and if it succeeds to achieve the desired results over a period of time it becomes 'modular' (Ibid, p.5), in other words it becomes the alternative norm. Tarrow's observation seems to hold water considering that South Africa's service delivery protests have been duplicated in different parts of the country and have become increasingly violent over time. Narrating why community protests have been gaining prominence and violent intensity, Bénit-Gbaffou (2008) chronicling the struggle of a group of community members from Eldorado Park to be heard when they complained about the huge electricity and water bills they had received form the municipality says the unresponsiveness of the state and its agencies to claims that are made using official channels is the reason why communities resort to violent demonstrations. She quotes one particular community member who explained, "it is only when you are radical that you are getting heard" (2008:27).

The municipal employees working in Thokoza were increasingly feeling demotivated by what they perceived to be a community that was driven by an unreasonable sense of entitlement which these municipal employees thought was the reason behind the intermittent protests taking place in the Thokoza township and elsewhere. The demand

by township residents for uninterrupted power services were said to keep the municipal workers so busy to such an extent that all they ever seemed to do was to 'put out fires' referring to the incessant power-related callouts they needed to respond to at the request of Thokoza residents. All the municipal workers described their typical work day as attending to public complaints about power interruptions while some even went as far as to say this persistent crisis mode of operation meant that very little time was left to conduct routine maintenance of the municipality's electricity infrastructure. Narrating this predicament one municipal employee explained:

> …we call it just the 'dosing of fires' because when those problems arise you run and you just smooth out…, just get it going again. There's no real scheduled maintenance, keeping it up to what it's supposed to be, it's just killing of fires and just keeping the network going although it's critical and falling apart, that's what we basically do. I literally…wait for the telephone to go and react on the call, go and fix something that is blown up or…vandalized or…stolen. I've got no schedule to say…by the end of this week I have to service one or two breakers…You'll never run Ekurhuleni without maintenance, you cannot, it's just gonna keep on going down more and more until it's gonna break. You saw it happen in the country with Eskom, exactly the same. We're coming to a critical failure point and I'm waiting for it.[44]

This municipal employee did not foresee the municipality's electric grid surviving for long before it packed up entirely due to the lack of proper maintenance. According to this employee there was very little the municipal employees could do to prevent a total collapse of the municipality's electricity grid. It was a disaster waiting to happen and it would require the intervention of senior managers in the department and the joint effort of other departments including the department responsible for town planning, human settlements and law enforcement to turn this situation around. Confirming this concern about a tired and under-coping infrastructural grid, it is noted in one of the municipality's strategic documents that "the condition of the electricity networks has deteriorated to a level commensurate with their age and the loads on several substations are exceeding firm capacity. The combination of these factors has the implication that condition related outages are increasing and these outages take longer periods to restore".[45]

There appeared to be growing despondency among the municipal employees because of the difficult circumstances of their work. Much of this despondency seemed to emanate from their perceptions that residents were placing an unreasonable burden on the municipality by what appeared to be the former's insatiable demand for electricity brought about by the growing density of unauthorized dwellings in the township and surrounding informal settlements. In the view of the municipal workers, stricter measures need to be

[44] Interview with respondent #5

[45] Sourced from the Ekurhuleni Municipality's Electricity Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2014/15, p.O

taken to stop the escalating growth of unauthorized dwellings and the municipality needs to find ways to enforce its by-laws. The municipal workers also felt that it was necessary for residents to conduct themselves as responsible citizens by adhering to the municipality's by-laws as this would make the task of providing the residents with quality services easier for the municipal workers.

The dilemma is whether or not the residents consider it a viable option to follow prescribed rules and procedures to demand basic municipal services. History has taught us that they do not and that this could be because those normative mechanisms grind at a snail's pace, oblivious to the urgency of the needs of the township residents, or that the bureaucracy is more inclined towards institutional dogma and the performance of their scripted roles rather than finding innovative solutions to the real-life problems they encounter in the service delivery frontlines.

The perceptions of community entitlement held by frontline municipal workers are therefore not necessarily untrue but may perhaps be contextually misplaced, idealistic and not taking into account the historical experiences and present realities of the Thokoza residents and the majority of South Africa's poor. This is not to suggest that the perceptions of the municipal workers would not be legitimate or plausible under different circumstances or in an ideal world where all the residents could afford to own property and pay for municipal services. The perceptions of community entitlement held by the municipal workers contrast sharply with Henri Lefebvre's 'right to the city' narrative concerning the ownership and reconstruction of urban spaces (Lefebvre, 2003). Those in support of Lefebvre's theory argue that the city and its services belong to all who live in it, while critics hold this theory and its advocates in contempt for promoting anarchy against which force should be used to keep those who do not belong in the city and those who pose a threat to the city's middle and upper classes at bay (Mitchell, 2003, p. 1,4).

The municipal workers' perceptions contrastingly validate Olivier De Sardan's 'practical norms' theory which essentially proposes that there be a shift from normative ideals and towards finding practical alternatives to address the developmental challenges of countries and their citizens. Several of the municipal employees I interviewed found it very disturbing how some of the residents dared expect free electricity from the state, worse still that these residents were not willing to negotiate terms with the municipality regarding their ability to pay but were insisting that their demands be met by the municipality without any imposition of terms or conditions. Appearing quite fazed by the residents' reasoning, one of the municipal employees shared:

> That is the unfortunate part of the culture we live in nowadays, that the community, the majority of our lower level unskilled community are under the impression it

> doesn't matter what happens, we're not allowed to disconnect their supply because…in my opinion is a government promise to (give) electricity and water to everybody even if it's for free. But they don't want a small little portion, they want enough electricity to feed their house and the squatter and the squatter, and another mkhukhu (shack) in the back. So you can never control it, if it isn't coming from higher level government… we're losing this battle…[46]

Another interesting fact that could be drawn from the sentiments raised by the municipal employees about an entitled township community is that the workers appear to see themselves as in 'battle' and not working alongside or in the interest of the residents to improve service provision and its inadequacy, especially for the poor who cannot afford to pay for services. The normative stance taken by the municipal workers that all consumers of services should pay no matter their ability to do so appears to be deeply entrenched and yet it is these frontline officers who interact almost daily with the township's poor who are better positioned to advise the decision-makers higher up in the municipality's management structures to tailor municipal decisions, developmental priorities and budget according to grassroots needs.

Also quite interestingly normative is the idea that only those who have legitimate access to housing either as property owners or official tenants qualify as recipients of the basic services package which includes the supply of electricity. This is despite the large majority of Ekurhuleni's households, 55.4% to be precise according to the 2011 census, living on a monthly income of less than R3,200.00.[47] It seems that the poor residents who do not count as legitimate residents in the township, Chatterjee cited in Bawa, (2011) calls them the 'illegal population, are dealt multiple blows as they are further ostracized from other basic services enjoyed by those who can afford to own or rent housing through legitimate means. Even households living in backyard dwellings in formal residences do not have individual meters but access electricity indirectly from the official customer residing on the property,[48] (referring to the legal occupant of the main house). While the municipal employees justify their stance not to connect power to unauthorized structures such as shacks because of the dangers they say could result from makeshift connections in poorly built structures and overcrowded spaces like informal settlements, or that residents applying for electricity connection have to prove their legal occupation of the dwelling where the electricity needs to be connected, it is not clear what other options are there for the homeless whose only hope for a roof above their head is an unauthorized structure in someone's backyard, or a shack in the informal settlement.

[46] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015
[47] Sourced from the Ekurhuleni Municipality's Electricity Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2014/15, p.1-6
[48] Ibid, p. 1-4

The municipal workers' perceptions also bring to the fore the three questions raised by Bawa (2011), 'Who is the State? Where is the State? How is the state?' which she poses in her critical analysis of the relationships which she says define access to the state and its resources, and the struggles that shroud those relationships. Bawa contends that because of the politically, socially, economically and administratively nuanced relationships upon which service delivery is framed, the result is that the state benefits its citizens unequally depending on their 'political, social, economic and social' positions (Bawa, 2011). Bawa contends that the delivery of municipal services to different categories of the population depends on contextual institutional and political frameworks within which relationships are formed between politicians, bureaucrats and residents, and that within those relationships different packages of service delivery emerge for different population groups (ibid, see also Bénit Gbaffou, 2011:6,9). This differential approach in providing municipal services exemplifies the intricacies of service delivery according to people and spaces and their proximity to the state and those in authority, Bawa asserts.

To visualize Bawa's contentions one need only look to the differential development between spaces occupied by the rich and spaces occupied by the poor and how the quality of services significantly differ according to the population demographics within each space. It is only to be expected therefore, Bawa contends, that the experiences and responses, claims and entitlements of the poor are not likely to be expressed as normatively as could be expected nor in line with institutional norms. The poor experience the state and state services in dissimilar ways to how the more socially, economically and politically privileged experience the state and its services.

Although Bawa's article focuses primarily on the role of councilors as mediators of service delivery, she notes that the success or failure of councilors as political representatives of their constituencies to ensure service delivery to the residents who voted them into office depends on the strength of their relationships with key stakeholders in the service delivery domain. These stakeholders include mainly the political leaders, municipal workers at different levels, and the residents themselves. Bawa notes that a great amount of negotiating goes into the process of making municipal services accessible to the so-called 'illegal populations' which loosely defined includes the homeless who usurp municipal-owned land to set up makeshift homes, or those residents who have right of tenure but cannot afford or refuse to pay for municipal services. Access to municipal services for this category of residents depends, among other factors, on the ability of the councilors to negotiate or coerce municipal workers especially those working at the coalface of service delivery to bend the rules and allow members of their constituencies who do not meet the official criteria to access municipal services to be included as beneficiaries. In Chapter 7 of the report I discuss in greater detail how the municipal workers perceive the role played

by councilors to make municipal services accessible to their constituencies including non-paying residents.

To summarize this chapter, the forces that appear to be at play in the struggles between providers of municipal services and recipients of those services seems to be, on one hand, a struggle between what municipal workers consider inappropriate behavior of residents seeking a free ride on state services, electricity in this particular case, and claims to constitutional rights and the right to the city's services by the poor collective living in the city's periphery on the other.

Politicians mediate the service delivery space between their constituencies and municipal workers. This means that the municipal workers not only have to contend with the frustration of residents who, on top of other poverty-related challenges they face, are barred from accessing municipal services. The municipal workers also have to deal with the pressure applied on them by politicians to bend the rules in order to allow universal access to municipal services even for non-paying residents.

What we also learn in this part of the report is that the rampant service delivery protests are an expression of disappointment in the state for its failure to deliver on its promises rather than a sign of collective disdain for the state and disregard for rules (Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield, 2011). In this chapter I have discussed at length how the urban poor in Thokoza claim their right to the city's services and how municipal workers perceive these claims as ridiculous delusions of entitlement that need to be corrected in line with official norms and principles of good governance (Ibid).

In the next chapter I discuss the issue of crime and how it contributes as one of the root causes of a flawed service delivery system and how it impacts on the efficacy and speed with which municipal workers attempt to address electricity-related challenges at the community level.

CHAPTER 6. A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND CRIME

There is no guarantee that when a municipal worker leaves their duty station to attend to a service disruption complaint in the township they will return unharmed or even alive. Municipal employees constantly have to watch their backs while delivering services in the townships and informal settlements because of criminals who may be lurking among the crowds.

This chapter puts a spotlight on the precariousness of work of frontline municipal workers in the energy department as they often have to enter the unpredictable territory of distressed communities to resolve power interruptions. Some of these power supply problems occur as a direct result of residents tampering with the electricity infrastructure in their attempt to connect to the system using illicit means as most cannot afford to pay the electricity tariffs. Working in the midst of community members who face daily subsistence struggles puts the municipal workers at the risk of possible attack by irate community members or even opportunistic criminals wanting to rob the municipal workers of anything they might deem valuable. This chapter is punctuated with direct narratives of the municipal workers themselves as they recount personal dangers they have faced from community members during field assignments.

The nature of the work of frontline municipal workers involves close encounters with the country's poor majority who live in the townships and informal settlements. My main argument in this chapter is that while social and legal norms promote the principles of the 'good citizen' who is expected, among other things, to act responsibly to ensure a strong democracy (Barber, 1984 cited in Westheimer and Kahne, 2002:11), and frown upon deviant behaviors from these norms, the reality is that crime is one of society's inevitable ills especially in situations where the gap between the rich and poor is wide. Good citizens are expected to be honest, manage anger and conflict responsibly without causing malicious injury to anyone (Westheimer and Kahne, 2002: 3-5). The good citizen should be mindful of and adhere to the country's laws, and these include the municipality's by-laws. The good citizen also pays government taxes (Ibid) and these include property rates and user fees. In addition, the good citizen should also be self-disciplined and hardworking (Ibid). These traits can hardly be associated with the spate of crime and violence-riddled protests Thokoza and South Africa has experienced in the last few years.

Townships and informal settlements tend to be more prone to crime for a number of reasons. These include high levels of poverty and unemployment, widespread alcohol and drug abuse, as well as the ease with which criminals are able to blend almost invisibly within the over-crowdedness of the townships and informal settlements. Municipal employees whose work involves physical entry into under-resourced communities

sometimes walk straight into death traps while on duty. They not only have to contend with angry residents resolute to unleash their frustrations on anything or anyone that bears the state's identity in protest for poor service delivery but have also been easy targets for random acts of crime. Unlike senior officials in leadership positions within the municipality whose visits to the community are conducted under the heavy guard of metro police and sometimes even private body guards, frontline municipal workers are among the lower rank personnel and therefore not entitled to any security accompaniment during field assignments. Frontline municipal workers respond to service delivery complaints armed with little else other than a 'can do' attitude towards the communities they service that is driven by the municipality's 'siyadiliva' slogan, loosely translated from Zulu to mean "we're here to deliver". Frontline municipal workers conduct onsite community service-provision without any mandate or means to vet the authenticity of those callouts, nor the callers, nor the safety of the surroundings where they are being asked to come and intervene.

On the 28th March 2016 which happened to be a public holiday falling on Easter Monday a municipal employee from the then Department of Water and Energy was attacked and killed by members of the Palmridge community just outside Thokoza. This gruesome incident happened while he and five other municipal employees from Ekurhuleni were attending to a service delivery complaint.[49] According to media reports and a statement released by authorities of the municipality at the time, four men pounced on the municipal employees killing one and injuring another. This incident happened on a day when the municipal employees should have been at home enjoying the long weekend with their families but they happened to be on standby tasked to respond to service related emergencies that might arise during the public holiday. Although the suspects were found and arrested, a municipal employee had lost his life during the call of service.

Needless to say, working at the coalface of service delivery comes with a significant amount of risk for municipal workers. But it is also important to register the inevitability of crime in settings where extreme poverty coexists alongside pockets of wealth being held in the hands of the few. Von Holdt (2010) contends that crime is likely to be rife in developing democracies especially those that are crafted after the Weberian model as they tend to be typified by neo-liberal capitalism (Ibid) coupled with the emergence of an elitist middle class breaking ranks from the rest of society. Add to this a bureaucracy that would rather uphold institutional ideals and adhere to legal precepts rather than be responsive to the needs of the public (2010: 244 - 251) community disappointment and public protest become an inevitable result (Alexander, 2010; Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield, 2011).

[49] This story was reported by a number of news media including an article on The New Age dated 30 March 2016

Neoliberal capitalism which tends to be closely associated with democratic governance also leads to class formation (Von Holdt, 2010:246) and worsens preexisting inequality as society fragments into two main classes, the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The first group consists of those citizens who have unrestrained access to resources and enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship with the state. The 'haves' include those members of society who hold high offices either in the public or private sectors, are mostly likely rewarded well by the social, economic and political systems and therefore get the best out of the state and the economy. They often live in the finer parts of town, enjoying the best infrastructure the state has to offer which includes good schools, clinics, transport networks, and other important state services. Apart from material wealth earned from good jobs or business interests, the proximity of the middle class to the nodes of power gives them more bargaining power and they are therefore able to negotiate for better services from the state and its branches including municipalities (Bawa, 2011). They therefore thrive under comparatively better living conditions and have access to better livelihood opportunities such as jobs, business and government tenders compared to the second group.

The second group consists of those who battle to make ends meet because of circumstances such as poverty, joblessness, homelessness and other debilitating constraints. These limitations are compounded by the social, political and economic detachment of this group from those in power and authority. Every day is a struggle for even the most basic needs for this group, shelter, food, clothing, healthcare, clean water, fuel just to name a few basics. Because of the chronic survival struggles they face, they are hard-pressed to comply with institutional norms and prescriptions such as those which dictate 'build here, not there, pay for this or that, do not steal, do not connect illegally to municipal services, and a long list of other 'do's' and 'don'ts'. Many of them live in shacks in the backyards of registered property owners while the rest find spots to erect their shacks in the nearby informal settlements. Their failure to comply with normative behavior, including their unauthorized occupation of structures and spaces has earned them the title of 'illegal community' (Chatterjee cited in Bawa, 2011) and they face a vicious cycle of law enforcement, exclusionary policies and deprivation. They live as outsiders in their communities, enviously looking through the invisible wall that separates them from the elite few who enjoy uninhibited access to the best state resources. Under these circumstances the insurgence of crime between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' becomes inevitable and Peter Alexander (2010; 2014) calls this the 'rebellion of the poor'.

South Africa's constitution, Batho Pele Principles, various policies, laws, and other institutional mechanisms like the presidential hotline, ombudsman, public protector's office all make it mandatory for employees of the state, and this includes municipal workers, to exercise utmost courtesy, commitment and diligence to the public and to

public service at all times. The municipal workers who work in direct contact with the public have very little capacity to defend themselves from dangerous situations which may arise during their fieldwork visits to the community. According to the municipal workers no meaningful effort is made to educate residents about extending the same courtesies to municipal workers, a situation which the municipal employees perceive as unfairly one-sided. One of the municipal employees who had attempted to take the law into his own hands following an incident in which he was stabbed with a screwdriver while attending to a power failure in Thokoza could not believe it when the court presiding over the matter told him it was against the law for him to enter the community armed even as a precautionary measure.[50]

Apart from direct attacks on municipal officials who get singled out as being directly responsible for the inaccessibility of municipal services especially in the townships and informal settlements where the majority of the country's poor live, there is no clear indication whether or not the various crimes committed against municipal workers are the result of public anger related to service delivery or if these attacks are opportunistic crimes committed against unarmed, easy targets who happen to be working in the township when the criminals strike.

Some of the municipal employees narrated how they constantly have to exercise the highest degree of caution while performing their functions in the township precinct as well as in their day to day interactions with the community. One employee despairingly complained that despite the imminent danger they face when they go out to service communities they do not have an option to refuse to go because going out to service communities is the primary work they are employed to do. While some respondents explained how they sometimes had to altogether avoid entering the township in order to stay out of harm's way during protest episodes, others said they had at some point or another been threatened with physical harm, been robbed or faced possible injury from irate community members demanding electricity. Some of the respondents shared that several attempts had been made on their lives while working in the community and in some instances attempts had been made to steal money, personal belongings or council vehicles from the municipal workers. While some of these attempts had not been successful or resulted in a fatality the municipal workers were in constant fear of the danger lurking in the township as they never know when danger may be imminent. The municipal employees narrated how they often have to bring in the police or engage the services of private security forces to secure them while performing their functions during periods of highly-strung tensions in the community. One of the municipal workers explained the frustration and trauma of having to come to work in what can sometimes be very dangerous circumstances:

[50] Interview with Respondent #5

> There are times that the danger to the human person…becomes so detrimental I'd rather get in my car and get out, but then they stay without power until somebody higher up in the political chain can calm them, keep them at bay for us to render our service… Once I had to defend myself to the extent that I actually had to shoot a gun. And then after that I was informed I'm not allowed to take my gun in anymore, so we are soft targets now… luckily we haven't got an incident where we were stabbed with a screwdriver again in the last say three or four years, but before that… (I was) stabbed with a screwdriver. We were busy doing disconnections for finance, people didn't pay electricity…and when you go into there, the whole community stands up against you but you still need to render the service… So when we disconnected the one guy's supply he just got angry and stabbed me with a screw driver…[51]

That municipal employees at the coalface of service delivery face possible danger every time they go out to provide on-site services to the community is the harsh reality of their work, unlike administrative personnel or managers who do their work safely behind the secure walls of their offices and well-guarded municipal buildings. Frontline municipal employees work in conditions where their safety is always in question and yet no safety measures are provided for them to be able to perform their duties without the fear of being harmed. Staying at home or in their offices is not an option, someone needs to go out and replace a stolen cable, fix a vandalized transformer, attend to an illegal connection, even enter people's homes to assess the possible causes of a power failure even when they have no idea what danger may be lurking in or outside that dwelling.

Narrating what had happened in yet another incident the same employee who had been stabbed with a screwdriver shared:

> One of our electricians was in Thokoza, and the community due to illegal tampering blew up a transformer… The electrician told them we haven't got any more spares because those things are costing too much we don't buy them off the shelf, we have to order those things. It takes weeks to get them repaired or a year. The community got angry and they actually informed him "get your stuff and **** off or we will kill you". But then on the next day we had to go back to the same people to try and…restore the power.[52]

Speaking to the participants I got the sense that they are committed to doing the work they do, they are determined to offer quality services to the community and that it would be easier for them to do so if they have the support of the community and if they do not

[51] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015
[52] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

feel a constant threat on their lives, if they operated within a normative environment, serving normatively behaved citizens. But this is far from reality. As one respondent put it:

> …if they give us the chance, because when they fight with us they are making us scared to go to them and it will be difficult for them to have this service delivery, because sometimes you find that we are scared to go to a certain area because they are fighting, and when they fight, it's the more they don't have electricity for a long time, until there is a situation where we have to go out with the police if we have to assist. You find that we organize the…traffic cops, they go with us so that they're standing there, we work and finish. So it's like we're trying to give the service, we're forcing to give the fair service while those people we're supposed to give… they don't care.[53]

The reality is that people do not always conform to normative behavior. The idea of the good citizen might be totally lost to the throngs of poverty-stricken township and informal settlement dwellers of Thokoza. For the urban poor, conforming to the values of the good citizen when they perceive themselves as receiving the short end of the stick and benefitting unequally from the state remains a farfetched dream. The state needs to do more to provide the means necessary to ensure that all its citizens and residents can benefit equally from state services. Lack creates a fertile ground for crime.

Poor prosecution services add to the woes of municipal employees as many cases of vandalism of the area's electricity grid go unpunished despite being reported. This happens even when the culprits have been caught red-handed, one respondent alleged. Offenders were said to get away with not much more than a mere slap on the wrist for their crimes because of poor prosecution processes and leniency of the judges on offenders who cite poverty in mitigation for their crimes. The municipal employees accused the justice system of being more protective of offenders than of the public officials who approach the courts to report acts of crime.

The municipal worker who said he had had to fire warning shots in self-defense against a crowd that wanted to attack him says while he was issued with a caution to desist from ever carrying a gun during his field trips to the township, the people he accused of trying to harm him were set free with not much more than a warning to desist from their wayward behavior. The judge's caution against him was issued despite his pleas of having survived few attempts on his life whilst on duty, he alleged, and regardless of the submissions he made in his own and the defense of his colleagues that criminals often arrive armed to the teeth when they strike. In spite of the high statistics of illegal connections, cable theft

[53] Interview with Respondent #3, 21 September 2015

and other forms of vandalism, courts were said to be unhelpful as they would not prosecute offenders. The courts would reportedly cite what one municipal employee called ‘lame excuses’ for failure to prosecute offenders, the most common of which was that of ‘insufficient evidence’ despite the latter being caught red-handed committing the crimes they were being accused of.

Municipal employees also cited difficulties concerning the municipality’s inability to enforce land use management by-laws, a weakness that had resulted in the multiplicity of backyard shacks and squatter camps that were the main reason behind service delivery glitches in Thokoza. Respondents felt that if the by-laws were strictly adhered to then the municipality’s electricity department would not be dealing with the extent of problems it has and electricity provision would be better organized and managed. The reality, however, is that South Africa has a large number of people who are unemployed, cannot afford to buy property or pay for municipal services. The South African government’s Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) which attempts to address the housing challenge by building and allocating housing units to indigent families is struggling to reach the entire population of people in need of houses. Corruption in the allocation of RDP houses does not help to alleviate this situation.

What can be drawn in summary of this chapter is that service delivery efficiency in Thokoza is shrouded by a myriad of challenges not least of which is the issue of poverty and inequality, both of which contribute to the high prevalence of crime in the township. Crimes related to service delivery range from the petty to the very serious. These include construction of unauthorized backyard structures, theft of personal belongings of municipal workers, cable theft, illegal connections, burning of state or private property as well as injury and murder of municipal employees. Poor linkages and poor coordination between not just municipal departments that need to be working closely together to enhance service delivery efficiency, but also between municipalities and other state organs like law enforcement and the justice system make it easy for crime to thrive in the townships. The result is that no matter how idealistic the plans may be to redress past service delivery inequalities, those plans may fail to take off because of realities on the ground. This again shows cracks in the state’s normative approach to resolving the country’s developmental challenges in the post-apartheid era and the need for more practical responses.

The prevalence of petty and serious crime in the townships and how it complicates service delivery is symptomatic of the discrepancies that exist between official and practical norms. I have shown in this chapter that crime compromises the provision of electricity in the township in two ways. Firstly, by inducing most of the problems that course power failure in the first place and these include cable theft, vandalized transformers and illegal

connections that are allegedly the order of the day in Thokoza. Secondly, crime hinders the efforts of municipal workers to rectify problems responsible for power outages as these workers constantly have to be on the lookout for criminals and angry residents who believe the municipal workers are responsible for their electricity-related troubles. Some municipal workers have lost their lives while responding to service-related problems in the community and weak prosecution services are said to add to the troubles of the municipal workers.

In the next chapter I deal with the issue of councilors and their role as mediators of service delivery between the municipality and the community. I also analyze how this role appears to be inherently conflictual at the institutional, political, social and administrative levels as well as how these contradictions play out and affect the work of municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery.

CHAPTER 7. PROMISES, CONFLICTS AND GRASSROOTS POLITICS

In this chapter I begin by pointing out that although municipal workers are the focus of this study, they, alongside councilors who are their political counterparts, exist to fulfil a common purpose, and that is to ensure the delivery of equitable and quality municipal services to residents. How they go about pursuing this goal may differ because of the different mandates they carry. While councilors carry a political role as brokers of municipal services on behalf of their respective constituencies, municipal employees carry an administrative mandate as executors of those services. In a perfect world both these mandates should converge harmoniously at the point that the desired end is achieved, that is, at the delivery of equitable and quality services to the people. The highlight of this chapter is to put a spotlight on the importance of human relations in the negotiation of service delivery, in particular the relationship between councilors and municipal workers and how this relationship whether positive or negative can produce complexities as well as opportunities for service delivery outcomes.

Zainab Bawa (2011) writes at length about the role of relationships as a bargaining mechanism in the service delivery space. This is especially crucial in situations where relationships can catalyze or unlock service delivery possibilities for the urban poor who often fall short of meeting the official criteria for their full enjoyment of state services. The relationship between municipal workers and councilors, amongst others, plays an important role in enhancing opportunities for the urban poor to access the state and its services (2011:493).

In the real world relations between frontline municipal workers and politicians do not always flow as smoothly as they could. When the relationship between municipal workers and councilors is mismanaged it can compromise access to municipal services, especially for the majority poor living in South Africa’s townships and informal settlements. The functional paths of municipal workers as they carry out their administrative duties and councilors in their pursuit to score political points often clash disharmoniously at the community level, and when they do it is residents who suffer the consequences.

Interestingly, municipal workers and councilors, despite their mandatory and operationally different roles, share some significant commonalities as far as those roles are concerned. Both exist to service the needs of the people and both their performance is measured against their ability to fulfil this particular function. Both municipal workers and councilors operate at the coalface of service delivery in close proximity to the residents and their everyday realities. So close that both are equally positioned to be able to directly shape service delivery and access to municipal services. Lastly but equally importantly, both the municipal workers and councilors are the face of the state’s service delivery function at

the community level. Whereas councilors represent the state's political face, municipal workers represent the state's administrative face. If municipal authorities are the closest sphere of government to the people compared to the provincial and national levels, councilors and frontline municipal workers are the closest, most visible and most accessible layer of the municipality's governance hierarchy to ordinary community folk who look to the state for the supply of basic services (Borgess, 2006 cited in Bénit-Gbaffou, 2011).

If all the above-mentioned commonalities could be utilized effectively and the relationship between these two important service delivery agents kept functionally cordial this could have a positive effect on service quality and equity for the benefit of the urban poor (Bawa, 2011; Bosaka, 2015). On the other hand, if the relationship between municipal workers and councilors is not managed well this can have negative repercussions for service delivery beneficiaries (Bawa, 2011). As in most relationships even among the thickest of friends, there is bound to be occasional disagreement and antagonism. This is especially the case in relationships where recognition, power and authority are at stake. The picture painted by the municipal workers I interviewed about their relationship with the councilors in Thokoza was one marked with disharmony, tension and blame. Needless to say, had councilors also been interviewed they might have shared their own opinions about the nature of this relationship. However, it has already been made clear that the study specifically sought out the voices of municipal workers for reasons repeatedly motivated in this report, but even so, some alternative views about the relationship between municipal workers and councilors have been taken into account and these include the narratives provided by the likes of Bawa, 2011; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2011, 2016 and Bosaka, 2015.

Three main issues emerge from my analysis of the municipal workers' views on their relationship with councilors. These include tensions relating to transparency or the lack thereof, unclear lines of responsibility and struggles for leadership at the community level.

7.1 Tensions between municipal workers and councilors about issues of transparency

Municipal employees raised concerns about the way that local councilors and other community leaders influence community perceptions about service delivery. These municipal employees were particularly concerned about the overblown expectations raised by councilors when addressing communities about electricity provision. These include promises of free electricity, impractical turnaround times for fixing power interruptions, not being transparent and honest to the community about council resolutions, policies and regulations.

In one particular instance a councilor is alleged to have supported a plot hatched by residents to delay if not altogether avoid the installation of prepaid meters in a section of the Thokoza township. This was despite a long-standing council resolution to do so. Municipal employees said that the councilor refused to have the meters installed because of what they believed was a promise he had made to the community to prevent the metering process from taking place despite that this decision had been sanctioned by the council as a remedial measure against illegal connections.[54] Instead of engaging the community about the council resolution and why it was important to install the prepaid meters, the municipal workers claimed that the councilor had strung them along, making them believe the community was ready for the installation only to renege at the last moment in order to score political points with the residents.[55]

> …some of the councilors they've promised members of the community a lot…we'll bring you high masts…you'll get electricity for free…you'll get water for free… once these things…don't happen people start to be riotic… It's a major, major problem, of promise and promise and promise and promise and then if things need to be done, they don't happen. I'll make a practical example, there was a project of installing the prepaid meter for each and every house. All the necessary organization…had been met, community was informed, church leaders informed, everybody. Come the dates, guess what, it never happened. The day when we were going to install the prepaid, councilor said we never communicated the dates with him, and that this…was still under discussion… I'm talking about four years ago… They are refusing, they are using the electricity for free.[56]

However, a counter-question that could be asked about how this particular incident unfolded is if or how municipal employees working on the project had been involved in engaging the community about its importance and implications. It could be that community engagement on the matter had been done hurriedly or perhaps even conducted as a once-off, half-hearted event (Bosaka and Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016:16) aimed at merely ticking a box (Benit-Gbaffou, 2011) on the project checklist. It is also not known if the consultative process mentioned by the municipal worker who narrated the story had been followed through over a reasonable length of time (ibid) to ensure enough time for the residents to process the news of the proposed changes and to ensure that all questions or misgivings the community had regarding the project were sufficiently addressed. Consulting with communities when a council resolution is already in place

[54] Interview with Respondent #4, see also Malzbender, 2005
[55] Interview with Respondent #1
[56] Interview with Respondent #4

makes it a whitewash and ineffective exercise (ibid) which communities are not likely to buy into.

The danger of municipal workers leaving the responsibility for community engagement on a sensitive project such as this one entirely in the hands of politicians is that councilors by the nature of their positions, would prefer to be in agreement rather than on opposing ends with their constituencies for obvious reasons. They may therefore go along with whatever the community has to say about the project regardless of any council resolution or administrative priority. If on the other hand, municipal workers take it upon themselves to engage the community about the benefits of the project throughout the planning stage and make sure to address the concerns of the community truthfully and empathetically, they might earn the community's trust and cooperation or at least enable objective discussions about possible options. Inadequate or non-participation of municipal employees in community engagement processes may cause unnecessary delays in project implementation and may also result in witch-hunt modalities wherein each role-player blames the other for project failure.

As a result, some of the municipal workers felt strongly that councilors had a lot to do even with the service delivery protests that have been happening in Thokoza. These municipal workers were of the opinion that the widespread protests occur because of failure on the part of councilors to engage honestly with their constituencies about service delivery dos and don'ts, what to expect from the municipality and what not to expect. Among other things, councilors were accused of failing to speak with one voice with the municipal workers about which services are feasible or not feasible within the particular contexts of the township and informal settlements, or what obligations are to be honored on the part of the residents to ensure that they receive quality services from the municipality.

Councilors were also said to turn a blind eye to the indiscretions of community members who were blatantly tampering with the municipality's electricity infrastructure in order to gain forceful access. According to the municipal workers, the reason for the councilors' nonchalant or even protectionist stance was their fear of losing political points with the people who had elected them into office who might accuse them of either not negotiating hard enough for better access to services on their voters' behalf, or failing to live up to their electoral campaign promises. For this reason, councilors would not boldly speak out against community indiscretions relating to rigging of the municipal infrastructure for the delivery of electricity. As one municipal worker shared:

> …other councilors…when they come to…their communities, they are the ones who influence those communities to do illegal connections, they say it's fine, they can

do illegal connections. While they are destroying our equipment, it's fine, but when they come to us, they come with a different story, "no it's wrong…you must give them fines, you must arrest those who are stealing…So if the councilors can be honest, if the councilors can educate the communities, actually tell them straight "no, doing one, two, three is wrong, stealing electricity, not paying…it's wrong, everything can work fine. Councilors are the ones who are changing stories…because they need the community. I think the biggest problem…they need them to be councilors. Should they tell them "no you should be arrested, it's wrong, you can't steal, you can't…", they won't vote for them…[57]

Figure 7. Picture of vandalized transformer in Thokoza[58]



[57] Interview with Respondent #1

[58] (Picture supplied by respondent #4

In their jointly written paper, Bénit-Gbaffou and Bosaka (2016) chronicle the difficulties faced by councilors as mediators of service delivery. They note that councilors play a role in which honesty does not always work in their favor as their constituencies elect them on the condition that their service delivery interests will be guaranteed by whoever gets elected to represent them in the council. The councilors' relationship with their constituencies often gets sour when the councilors fail to deliver on their promises. Councilors may therefore find it difficult to bluntly inform residents about what are realistic or unrealistic expectations in fear that they would face a vote of no confidence as leaders of their communities and not win the next election.

Bénit-Gbaffou (2008) adds that councilors are often constrained by municipal structures which make it difficult for them to effectively advance the interests of their constituencies. The complementary relationship which needs to be negotiated between the municipal workers and councilors to enable meaningful community engagement on service delivery issues is fraught with mistrust and is often shoddily managed in what Bénit-Gbaffou and Bosaka (2016: i) call a 'tick-box', half-hearted attempt that is unconducive to the building of long-term trust relationships between the community and municipal officials. Bénit-Gbaffou and Bosaka argue that the responsibility for community engagement does not lie only with one camp within the municipal structure but that it is 'everybody's business' (Ibid: ii). This is contrary to what the municipal employees had to say about councilors not engaging truthfully with their constituencies, and also seeming to believe that someone else besides themselves had to take responsibility to engage and educate the residents on how to work cooperatively with municipal structures to ensure that service delivery happens without unnecessary bottlenecks. This leads me to the next important point I would like to make concerning the relationship between municipal workers and councilors operating in the Thokoza township, ambiguities about who should be responsible for what.

7.2 When responsibility lines get blurry and everyone passes the buck

Some of the respondents felt that if councilors took responsibility to educate their constituencies about the importance of looking after the electricity supply system, not ransacking the infrastructure to gain unauthorized access, and paying for the electricity they consume, the township would experience fewer power outages and fewer community protests. The municipal workers reckoned that if this were the case there would be fewer cable thefts, fewer illegal connections, greater responsibility in the use of electricity, and more time and resources at the disposal of the municipal employees to maintain the municipality's electricity infrastructure. Instead, it causes community unrest and defiance among community members when the information given to them by councilors differs from what municipal employees say or do.

It was quite clear from the submissions made by the majority of municipal workers I interviewed that they thought that the role of engaging with and educating the community is the primary responsibility of the councilors and not themselves. As this municipal worker proffered:

> If the councilors can educate the communities, actually tell them straight "…doing one, two, three is wrong, stealing electricity, not paying…I think…everything can work fine.[59]

This assertion can be understood in at least two ways. Firstly, it might mean that the councilors, in their effort to appease their constituencies, negate or water down efforts by the municipal workers to educate the residents about electricity provision and how the residents can play an active and supportive role to ensure that the delivery of electricity happens without unnecessary glitches. Secondly, the same assertion could mean that municipal workers believe that their sole responsibility is to deliver services and not have to engage with the public on the nitty-gritties pertaining to accessibility, usage or future plans if they perceive that function to be the responsibility of the councilors. After-all working in silos is a frequently occurring phenomenon within the public sector (Von Holdt, 2010: 244). My own experience of working in the municipality's Department of Health has shown that although every section in the department targets the same community with our various programs, review after review one of the factors that stands out as a hindrance to program success is that everyone does their own thing despite targeting the same community, sometimes even duplicating each other's efforts. This leads to the community becoming confused and unreceptive to the interventions intended for their benefit.

From what most of the municipal workers had to say it was difficult to tell if they saw themselves as having an active role to play in attempting to craft joint solutions for the challenges they and the community face regarding electricity provision in the township. One after the other the municipal employees complained:

> …our people are not educated. By educated I don't mean …going to school. I mean lacking information. So that is why these people… most of the time they don't have electricity and they end up blaming us. They are burning the transformers time and again, we find that we put a transformer this week, next week it's burned… and we're trying to engage, how can we teach them so that we don't have these problems, we find that it's difficult to sit down to teach these people because they are bridging the transformer….[60]

[59] Ibid

[60] Interview with respondent #3

I could also sense some despondency on the part of the municipal workers, especially the one I just quoted who clearly felt that it would be pointless to try to educate the residents about issues of accessibility or usage of electricity when all the residents did was keep messing up the system and making it dysfunctional. Another municipal employee adding to these sentiments shared:

> I would say more than sixty percent of all our calls are coming in due to the fact that the public are not trained, they are not educated, or they've got a total disrespect of whatever rules is supposed to be there…they weaken the grid by…tampering into it, they are overloading the system. The system was never designed to handle that kind of load. They are not educated, they are not schooled, they don't know what they are doing and that is destroying the system, and if we cannot repair a failed system they…then it's strikes, then it's strikes, they want it, they want it, now! A lot of times we…have to just force the cable to flow, and just hope by God that this cable will last for the night. So far we are lucky, a lot of times it did go through, the danger behind it is becoming critical. I'm on the point of stating I can't risk my life anymore, I've got a family… why must I keep on putting myself in danger for the public if they are either not being educated or they totally ignore the bit of education they've got?[61]

One of the municipal workers even believed that the task of educating the residents about electricity and electricity provision should be the competency of the communications department which handles the municipality's official communications function. Deliberating on this suggestion the municipal worker told me, as if imagining how this educational session would go:

> We've got a media department, the one that deals with the media, I think they have to call them (referring to the community), maybe…once a week to the hall so that they can show them what is going on, to show them exactly the amperage…, let me say maybe if ever you are using 35 amp the more you plug, let me say maybe you're plugging a geyser, a stove, an electric kettle and…so that you can see exactly if ever the load is going up, let me say maybe they gave you 35 amp you're almost at 30, 31 when you keep on plugging, 32, 33 its too much already, …show them exactly what is going on, practically…[62]

Although the communications department is indeed tasked, among other things, with the responsibility to handle publicity issues relating to the municipality, it was not clear how this municipal worker envisaged the communications department being able to explain or

[61] Interview with respondent #5
[62] Interview with Respondent #2

demonstrate it better to residents how electricity works without those working in the electricity department leading such a public engagement exercise. The municipal workers felt it was not their responsibility to conduct public engagement sessions to voice out electricity provision concerns as they seemed to believe this task was the prerogative of either councilors or the communications department. I have already indicated that concerns are widespread that public sector departments tend to work in silos rather than interactively. The 'them' and 'us' attitude which appears to exist between councilors and municipal workers (see also Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016), which also appears to be the case between the municipal workers and residents, does not help in resolving the impasse about who should take the lead in educating residents about the uses, access and dangers of electricity. This is especially unfortunate given Bawa's prognosis that service delivery thrives in settings where good relations also thrive among key stakeholders (Bawa, 2011). This includes relations between and among councilors, residents and municipal workers.

Bénit-Gbaffou and Bosaka (2016) take this point a notch further and say community engagement should be a shared responsibility among all relevant departments, sections and individuals within the service delivery spectrum, and not just left to be the responsibility of any one of these (2016:15). They further advocate the importance of trust, respect and codependency among stakeholders (ibid:3) in order to generate "a common management vision" (ibid) for service provision. They advance the importance of sustainable community engagement initiatives as necessary mechanisms to clarify what are negotiable issues, dos and don'ts within specific service delivery fields. They also advocate the importance of power sharing (ibid: v) in order to diffuse unnecessary tension among politicians, municipal workers, residents and other development partners (ibid:3).

The relative power and authority that councilors have over municipal workers, however, does not always make it easy for municipal workers to take the lead in engaging with the residents, especially when administrative service delivery matters turn into heated political contests. A typical example would be the highly contested decision to install pre-paid meters to monitor access and use of electricity. While this seemed like a plausible administrative strategy for revenue collection which would ensure that residents purchase the electricity they consume, politically this strategy would not go down well with the residents who all along were enjoying free electricity sourced through unauthorized means and they would hold the councilor responsible for allowing the metering process to happen. In such situations it becomes difficult to propose administrative solutions for political problems but even so, it requires the joint effort of both councilors and municipal workers to offer a solid rationale for the decisions taken, and to negotiate win-win solutions with the residents.

The apparent lack of community engagement concerning electricity provision and its related dangers plays a crucial role in how the residents handle electricity and deal with those tasked with its provision. Municipal employees perceive the community engagement void as being directly responsible for what they believe is a ‘couldn’t care less’ attitude on the part of the residents towards not just the electrical network which the community tampers with on a continuous basis despite the probable dangers of doing so but also towards the frontline municipal workers who are tasked to oversee that the electricity provision network in the area operates without disturbance. There appears to be very little regard shown even to the state’s law enforcement structures operating in the area. Informal wires can be seen crisscrossing overhead everywhere you look while protruding cables can be seen narrowly buried in shallow trenches on the ground to link dwellings to nearby sources of electricity. There is no sign of effort to conceal them from the public eye or the eyes of the municipality’s law enforcement agents. Municipal employees feel that the residents do not take responsibility for their actions because no one makes them accountable for their conduct.

The picture below shows how residents in Thokoza find creative ways to access electricity when official channels fail them or they are unable to pay for electricity.

Figure 7:[63]



The dangers associated with electricity are not confined to the municipal workers who constantly have to reverse the community's 'do-it-yourself'[64] connections. Residents also risk being electrocuted when they tamper with the electricity infrastructure, but not even this risk is sufficient to deter them from what they believe is their only means to access electricity without having to pay for it. Speaking about the dangers posed by the illegal connections one municipal worker shared in concerned detail:

> …they do not know about the danger of this thing because when you do that you, you, you're overloading cables. Shacks are being…sensitively connected, shacks are actually conductive to the ground, now the live wires are running into the

[63] The picture was provided by one of the municipal workers I interviewed to show the conspicuousness of illegal connections in Thokoza.

[64] All the respondents spoke at length about the issue of illegal connections

> shacks, that's why they're even sometimes getting killed … A shack is directly connected to the ground, you're not supposed to liven up anything that goes to the general mass of the earth, …now if the shack is connected to a cable which is live, the shack itself is a metallic conductor to the earth. Now if the insulation of the wire is being ripped off it would actually activate or energize the portion of the metal to the ground. A person on the ground touching that is going to get electrocuted… So it's very, very dangerous but maybe it's because I don't know whether community are not being educated about the danger of electricity, they don't know… Even now if you can go drive past Thinasonke, there just…behind Thokoza, Thokoza police station, that area, if you go past that, there's just a main street right behind that you'll see that the overhead, thin wires running, they just put a stick across just to steal electricity and then there's plenty of that and that is very, very dangerous…and you cannot rip off that, once you touch that they're gonna fight you, you can't just rip it off, you need… security, Metro Police and all that just to get those things going… On a daily basis the live wires are running everywhere in the ground and all that and it's very, very dangerous but I don't know whether they are not aware of the danger of electricity, they're not getting enough education about that, the danger of electricity…it's very, very hazardous…[65]

It is therefore very clear from all the excerpts I have shared so far that it would require much more than the efforts of municipal workers or councilors alone to actively engage the residents about electricity provision or how the residents can play an active part to ensure that they enjoy safe and uninterrupted power supplies. A multilayered approach involving all stakeholders is necessary to address the electricity provision challenges in Thokoza and elsewhere. Frontline municipal workers have an equally important role to play as do councilors to chart a way forward for an efficient and all-inclusive service delivery mechanism that puts residents and their diverse realities at the centre of service provision.

In the last section of this chapter I discuss the encroachment of grassroots power struggles onto the work of frontline municipal workers and the tensions this creates.

7.3 Competition for leadership at the community level

Struggles for power within the community complicate the work of municipal employees who often find themselves caught in the crossfire as councilors and their opponents jostle each other for votes. It has already been detailed how councilors reportedly make overinflated promises to the community just so they can win votes, according to municipal employees. While existing councilors are said to play this card in an attempt to keep their

[65] Interview with Respondent #6

seats as councilors, those aiming for political office in the next term are also said to use the same strategy in the hope of unseating the incumbents. To keep their popularity rankings high, some councilors would allegedly turn a blind eye to the community's service delivery indiscretions. Illustrating how the power dynamics and local politics at the community level affects service delivery one respondent enlightened:

> …there are people who go with the councilor and then there are people who are against the councilor, but they are using power failure to achieve their motives, you see. So as a department we are in the middle, we're in the middle, come next year, you'll see… Now one has to prepare himself now, starting now, for next year (referring to the period preceding the local government elections of 2016).[66]

One of the municipal employees narrated how he had found himself in an awkward position between a councilor and an ambitious community leader vying for a seat in council. The municipal worker's mistake, he alleged, was to indulge the demands of the community leader to have power reinstated in a section of the Thokoza township. The community leader had made sure to be seen by the community actively instructing and working alongside the municipal employee who was trying to rectify a power blackout in the area. Once the problem had been successfully resolved, the aspiring councilor is said to have hastily convened a community meeting to inform residents how he had personally seen to it that the area's electricity problems were fixed timeously while their councilor did nothing. Upon hearing about this the ward councilor had turned his wrath on the municipal employee, insisting that the latter should present himself to answer questions at yet another public meeting so that the record of what had transpired could be set straight.

The municipal employee says he refused to be drawn into a political scuffle between the councilor and the community leader and referred the matter to his superiors. Needless to say this was interpreted by the incumbent councilor as not just an act of insubordination towards a political superior but was also viewed as a conspiracy between the municipal worker and the community leader to sabotage the councilor's role as ward leader, said the municipal employee with concern.

Although this might seem like an uneventful end to a petty misunderstanding, the possible ramifications for disobeying an authoritative figure like a councilor can have long-lasting consequences for employees who are deemed by politicians as wayward. Members of the Mayoral Committee, referred to in brief as MMCs, serve as the municipal cabinet of the municipality headed by the Mayor. They are handpicked by the Mayor to serve as political heads of departments. This means that any councilor with the right political connections can become a Member of the Mayoral Committee. Like the Mayor who has

[66] Interview with Respondent #4

executive powers, MMCs perform their functions in very close proximity to the administration structures and processes within the particular department to which they have been assigned political oversight duties. It is not unusual to hear of instances where political clout is used to motivate discipline against a municipal worker who is accused of undermining political leadership or meddling in the political affairs of the community, and dare I say, politicians have a very long memory. An employee might even find themselves missing out on promotion opportunities in the future because of a political offence they might have allegedly committed in the past.

Given this kind of history it is clear that the issue of electricity provision in Thokoza is a complex one and that it requires concerted efforts to effectively engage the community to identify the best strategies to enhance service delivery. While councilors need to find a balance between their role as representatives of their constituencies and as ambassadors of the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), and Growth and Development Strategy (GDS), municipal workers need to do their part in actively engaging the communities they service to actively participate in decision-making processes relating to service delivery. Unless councilors and municipal employees speak in one voice to promote responsible citizenship, and jointly facilitate community engagement exercises to ensure that service delivery planning is well informed through a widely consultative process, service delivery will continue to be dogged by tensions, ineffectiveness and protest. However, the question to be posed here is whether or not municipal workers can successfully promote responsible citizenship among residents who believe they do not enjoy substantive citizenship. It places municipal employees in great disadvantage and even grave danger if the communities they service view them as exerting undue restriction on access to municipal services or if they are perceived to be not providing timely responses to service interruptions. It remains unclear for instance why a community would invite municipal employees to come and resolve service disruptions in their area and when those municipal workers arrive they are attacked and sometimes killed.

The aim of this chapter was primarily to demonstrate that from the municipal workers' stories, there are tensions and difficulties within the relationships between municipal workers as providers, councilors as brokers and residents as beneficiaries of municipal services. The focus of the chapter has been to demonstrate the difficulties of frayed relations between municipal workers and councilors and how this affects service delivery. The relationship between municipal workers and councilors also appears to be compromised by local struggles for power. The proverbial grass suffering when the elephants fight could not have found a better context or relevance for application than that provided by the service delivery space, much more so in relation to the urban poor living in the townships and informal settlements.

CHAPTER 8. STATE OF THE BUREAUCRACY – LABOUR PRACTICES, STAFF DISCIPLINE AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIONS

Although respondents were being understandably cautious in making this point, there was no hiding that some serious administration concerns were affecting the delivery of electricity in Thokoza. Issues around staff recruitment, promotion, interdepartmental communication, corruption and ill-discipline were said to interfere with operations and this would have a spillover effect onto the services delivered to the community.

In this chapter I analyze these internal bureaucratic struggles which make service delivery highly contentious in and outside of the municipality's administrative realms. Once again the disjuncture between official norms and practical norms takes center-stage in this discussion as practical realities about the form and practice of the bureaucracy clashes remarkably with normative ideals espoused as the guiding beacons for the country's post-1994 bureaucracy. These ideals which prescribe how public officials should conduct themselves to ensure effective and efficient service delivery include values such as honesty, integrity, equity, equality, access, service standards, openness and transparency and value for money, among others.[67] The Public Financial Management Act[68] further tightens controls by making it illegal for government departments to overstep expenditure control guidelines. This Act prohibits *irregular expenditure* or spending that is in contravention of the South African government's finance management statutes and supply chain management processes. It also prohibits *unauthorized expenditure* or expenditure incurred without the authority to do so and prohibits *fruitless* and *wasteful* expenditure referring to expenditure which does not yield the intended outcomes or expenditure that was made incurred in vain. The Employment Equity Act makes it mandatory for public entities to apply fair recruitment practices by following a merit-based approach, giving equal opportunity to citizens to access government jobs. This Act also prioritizes the recruitment of previously marginalized population groups.

Together all these value statements, policies and legal prescripts embody a purposeful trajectory from the apartheid era's public service discourse which was characterized by deliberately structured inequality at different levels. Service delivery is one of the main tools used by the apartheid government to segregate between black and white human settlements. While service delivery in the areas occupied by the white minority proceeded with great efficacy and accessibility, populations in the black areas battled pitiful if not altogether absent municipal services. White people were also privileged with good, well-paying jobs while the lower end, poorly paid jobs were reserved for black people.

[67] This is according to the government's Batho Pele Principles promulgated to ensure judicious conduct of public sector personnel and to prioritize and safeguard the interests of the South African citizens

[68] See the Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 1999 enforceable by the South African National Treasury to regulate public financial expenditure

The eve of South Africa's democracy was therefore celebrated by the black people not just for its promise of a variety of political freedoms that were relentlessly fought for by the country's black consciousness movement then led by the African National Congress. The dawn of democracy was also celebrated for its promise to reverse the service delivery inequity that had been exercised for decades by the apartheid government and enforced at the local level by a bureaucracy that had been ardently schooled to fulfill the apartheid government's draconian purposes.

With the era of apartheid behind us this chapter focuses on characteristics of the post-1994 municipal bureaucracy and specifically how municipal workers shape the service delivery discourse in practice rather than what is officially prescribed (De Hert and De Sardan, 2015). The dichotomy between official norms and practical norms manifests within the administration of service delivery in a number of ways. In this chapter I focus on five personnel-related factors perceived by the municipal employees themselves as having a significant impact on service delivery.

8.1 Recruitment and deployment practices

Irregularities in the recruitment and promotion of staff was said to cause conflict and low staff morale among municipal employees. They blamed this on lack of transparency in the recruitment process, with certain jobs being reserved for unqualified and or inexperienced candidates. This was said to become especially problematic when people appointed in supervisory positions were less qualified or less experienced than the team of employees they were expected to supervise. This inevitably results in conflict among the municipal workers and compromises the team-spirit required to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. The appointment of individuals who are deemed less competent than their subordinates into supervisory positions also results in poor workmanship on the municipality's electrical infrastructure as junior workers may refuse to support or work cooperatively with a team-leader whom they deem incompetent and not deserving to lead them. One of the municipal workers had this to say on the matter:

> We've got people that is (in) charge of that team that cannot even join a cable. Now they are making use of the laborers that know how to do the job so that the team leader can look good, 'my team has done that' but the team leader cannot even join a cable, they don't even know how to operate the tools… The guy that has got the pick and shovel in his hand will eventually do…the joint that has to be done by a senior person because the senior person…were not capable, but yet that senior person is supposed to lead the team.[69]

[69] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

Previous studies have linked the nepotistic appointment and promotion of ill-equipped public service personnel to poor performance and poor service delivery. Senior officials in the public sector have been accused of using their authority to hire and promote relatives and friends who are not qualified for the positions they are given. This is what Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk (2002) refer to as 'jobs-for-pals' recruitment practices. This practice not only results in conflict in the workplace but may irk the communities that are at the receiving end of shoddy service delivery. Low staff morale may also lead to delays in responding to public complaints about service interruptions as those employees who feel sidelined from promotion opportunities pass the buck when they have to respond to service complaints from the public.

Two important points can be extrapolated from the argument about the allocation of positions to non-qualifying candidates and the effects this has on service delivery. The first point is closely linked to Bawa's (2011) hypothesis that relationships play an important part in determining issues of access and issues of quality of the services rendered by public officials to the community. When relationships are cordial between frontline bureaucrats and those occupying positions of influence, and this includes the direct supervisors of those frontline teams responsible for service delivery at the coalface, residents are likely to benefit from a well-coordinated and well-resourced service delivery mechanism than if relations between team-leaders and their subordinates are strained. On the contrary, residents might be at the receiving end of disagreements between team-leaders and their subordinates about who is supposed to do what and jobs may be left incomplete or done half-heartedly when those doing the job believe it is someone else's responsibility and that someone else who happens to be a supervisor earns more than they do. This leads me to my second point.

Service delivery does not occur unilaterally and independently of the socio-economic and political environment. Social, economic and political factors play a significant part in recruitment practices as well as in the relations among municipal workers. With the high rate of unemployment in South Africa it cannot be disputed that some appointments into public positions are not made on the basis of merit. Those in positions of influence may prioritize the appointment of candidates who are in some way or other affiliated to them be it on familial, social or political grounds (Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Wyk, 2002). Frontline municipal workers are often the lowest paid. They are unlikely to perform optimally under the supervision of someone who gets paid more but does less in terms of workload. Demotivation and aspirations to make more money may result in the abandonment of official tasks in favor of private jobs. This not only eats into the official working hours which should be dedicated to servicing residents at the behest of the municipality but it may also lead to the use of municipal resources like equipment and consumables to perform private jobs. This shows that even in the recruitment, allocation of work tasks as well as ethical conduct of those in public office across the board, official

norms give way to practices that are far from the norm but are indicative of realities on the ground. To understand the constraints that face service delivery in South Africa we need to dig deeper beneath the surface of the policies, value statements, official procedures and legal prescriptions that frame service delivery to get to the core of what works or does not work in reality.

8.2 Staff discipline and the role of Unions

Municipal employees occupying supervision positions reported endemic ill-discipline among staff. Most respondents attributed the lack of discipline and insubordinate behavior of junior personnel to undue interference from the two workers' unions, SAMWU and IMATU. The unions were said to be overprotective of staff making it increasingly difficult for managers and supervisors to manage effectively or address staff misconduct. One of the supervisors took me by complete surprise when he shot straight to the subject of staff indiscipline as soon as I finished introducing myself and asked what I had all along thought was a mere ice-breaking question. I asked him to describe what an ordinary work day looked like for him, half expecting him to share the hustle and bustle of his work involving phone calls from the public, issuing job cards to electricians and so forth which seemed to be a common theme among the respondents I had interviewed earlier. Before I could even finish asking the question this particular respondent curtly told me he had one word to describe his typical work day, and that word was 'problematic'. Stunned by this answer I asked him to elaborate. In-between phone calls trying to get hold of one of his staff members he shared how the staff were totally insubordinate and unwilling to cooperate when allocated work tasks. Staff members were said to prioritize their personal affairs over their work and they would cite all sorts of excuses to worm their way out of carrying out work instructions. As a result, the supervisors often had to call in private contractors to carry out assignments that had been initially assigned to the municipal employees just so they could respond to service delivery complaints on time. He described this insubordinate state of affairs as not just being a once in a while occurrence but that it had become quite the norm among the municipal workers working in the unit.

> …they've got their own interests… they've got piece jobs…they must go to the banks, they must take their wives somewhere, you know, all those funny, funny things.[70]

Another supervisor blamed the levels of ill-discipline among staff on the blurring of lines between senior and junior staff which he said had become the order of the day in recent years. Junior officials no longer had the regard they used to have for their seniors, he

[70] Interview with Respondent #7, 8 December 2016

alleged, nor saw the need to do a good job because lines of accountability had become tangled and there were no consequences for poor performance.

> We used to have electricians that respected laws, respected seniors, respected the supervisors and they did the job that needed to be done… Nowadays your electricians which is the first line of reaction, they don't care about the job anymore, they do sloppy jobs, they do inferior work, it's as if they haven't got pride in their job so the whole network is falling apart because of first line of reaction is failing to do a decent job. It's as if they just don't care, they are just there to try and get the overtime money and salary. There's no pride in their jobs, there's no systems in place that can regulate anybody… if I wanna charge anybody for the fact that they are negligent in doing their duty, the unions cover for them in such a way that it's not even worthwhile if you can fight against them. So that is the downfall of not only the Councils, not only the Ekurhuleni's but I think the bigger South Africa's falling because the unions are intervening and they are covering for people that is making misuse of the opportunity to be protected by the unions. That's what's happening everywhere, that's why you've got all these fires (protests) arising… Years ago, when the electrician was called to the senior's office, that electrician respected the position of the senior… Nowadays you're just another friend on the street, you're having drinks together, you're having parties together, so there's no more guidelines, and no more that 'hey this position is my senior, I have to respect this position, there's none of that. How do you in Ekurhuleni nowadays discipline an electrician…if the bosses are their friends? No pride anymore, no control anymore.[71]

Ekurhuleni has a very strong union movement. Organized labor played an important role in the history of South Africa's political struggles, a role it continues to play even in the present-day political dispensation. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which is the mother body of South African trade unions, is a member of the tripartite alliance together with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC) which took over the political reins from the former apartheid government. A member of COSATU, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) has been a force to be reckoned with in the fight for workers' rights during the last few years of South Africa's democracy.

There has not been any mistaking the power of SAMWU at the negotiating table on issues concerning municipal workers' employment benefits and working conditions. Where negotiations have failed to yield desired outcomes they have resulted in protracted strikes during which service delivery would grind to a halt until the employer concedes to

[71] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

reasonable settlement terms with the union. It was hardly surprising therefore to hear that municipal employees in the Ekurhuleni municipality enjoy the support of a very vigilant worker's union which does not hesitate to protect its members from what may be viewed as unjustified or excessive disciplinary action. While the union's diligence in protecting its members is not a bad thing considering that this is the main reason why labor unions exist, some of the respondents were of the view that the unions can be overbearing and lacking objectivity in the manner they handle disciplinary cases brought before them. This was said to compromise accountability and discipline among municipal workers which in turn impacts negatively on service delivery and service quality. This normative view about labor unions and how they are expected to conduct themselves in line with institutional expectations does not take into consideration the distressful realities often faced by lower-end municipal workers who have to constantly contend with fixing vandalized infrastructure, replacing stolen cables, dealing with irate residents demanding services or possibly even dangerous criminals who may suddenly pounce on unsuspecting municipal workers as they go about reticulating services in the township. One of the key priorities for workers' unions is to curb growing unemployment in the country. South Africa has witnessed substantial job losses in recent years, particularly in the private sector, something that the unions in the country are actively fighting against. It is hardly surprising then that workers' unions in the local government sector are said to fight tooth and nail to prevent disciplinary action which might ultimately lead to termination of employment for their members. In-fact this alleged overbearing influence of unions on the supervisor-subordinate relationship among municipal workers seems to be directly related to the next challenge I will be discussing.

8.3 Bureaucratic delinquency

Some municipal employees were said to take advantage of existing administrative loopholes and especially the protection provided by the unions to manipulate the situation for their personal benefit. For example, the municipal workers would reportedly accumulate long hours of overtime by doing minimal work during the day and then putting in long night-shift hours doing work that should have been done during the day in order to boost their earnings at the end of the month. Illustrating this point one respondent explained:

> …if a customer phones in with a complaint, whether …a cable fault, …a prepaid meter that is malfunctioning, that is where your biggest concern starts… The electrician that needs to go out and do that first line takes them 5 hours, 6 hours before they can respond, because I've seen that what they do is in the morning they get here on a van, they go to the shop, they sit at the shop for two hours, three hours and they do their own personal job. So only later…they will start with the complaints, reason being…they don't only want the salary, they don't want to work

> in the nine to five period, they want to work after five through the morning because then they can book overtime, they get the money, so they are crooking the system in order to work overtime… you're not allowed to do more than forty hours (in overtime) per month… We've got guys here that does 170, 160 hours a month, easy, but then… when you start using the system that's in place…like the GPS tracking on the vehicles you'll find that that guy was sleeping the whole… night but yet the book says seven, eight hours every night… The guys are doing one hour's job during the day and everything else is booked after hours.[72]

Needless to say some of the respondents gave a different perspective to why they prefer to work at night. One municipal employee explained that it's easier to identify power interruptions at night than it is during the day and that although most residents are able to make phone calls or come to the municipal offices to report service interruptions, some members of the community cannot afford to do so and might therefore stay in the dark until a municipal employee doing the rounds at night identifies the problem and rectifies it.

> …some of them they can't complain, they don't have access to the internet, they don't have airtime so I must also drive at night and check which lights are failing at night to come on… at night you just drive, you go straight to the light which is not working and attend to the light.[73]

At face value the sharp contrast between the supervisor who says nighttime work is done in order to cash in on overtime and the worker who says he prefers to work at night because it enables easy identification of power interruptions might indicate weaknesses in the supervision and allocation of work tasks to subordinate staff and may point to gaps that exist between residents and municipal employees. An electrician shouldn't have to do nightly visits to discover failing lights since this would definitely mean a lot of hours are put into overtime driving around the township to find faults. This not only exposes municipal employees to the dangers of working at night but also plunges the municipality's salaries budget into disarray because of uncontrolled overtime. That the allocation of work tasks by supervisors is at odds with subordinates who insist on working overtime speaks of a work culture in which supervisors have lost control of their teams, teams who do not work as a collective to identify strategic solutions for identifying and responding to power failures in the township, a culture of looting state resources by those in the public service, municipal employees taking advantage of management weaknesses and a union that

[72] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015
[73] Interview with Respondent #2, 30 July 2015

seems to exclusively focus on protecting the interests of individual employees rather than the interests of the organization at large. As one of the municipal employees highlighted:

> …I haven't got the proof with me but I'm telling you I've got an idea that our overtime per month equals our normal pay cheque for everyone… a lot of the strikes the public has got against service delivery is valid, because… I would say that 40% of the people are really doing what's supposed to be done. The rest are just wheeling along, that is why the public gets upset. Yes, there's a lot of times when the public is at fault, where they want electricity for free…, they vandalize the systems…[74]

Ekurhuleni's Overtime Policy clearly states that employees may not work more than 3 hours overtime a day and no more than 10 hours per week or 40 hours per month. This excludes staff employed as guards and employees attending meetings or performing emergency work. The policy adds that an employee may only work overtime if requested or permitted to do so by the employer. The policy itself is in line with stipulations on overtime contained in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of the Republic of South Africa (1997). The policy further states that should a work team incur more than 240 hours a month overtime on a regular basis, the municipality's Human Resources Department should investigate the possibility of creating another position to take over the extra hours of work. The policy is clear that the Council shall confine its work to normal working hours in order to limit overtime expenditure. If employees do indeed flout the policy as frivolously as it is alleged this would substantiate the allegations that public servants are sluggish, underproductive and do not take their work seriously and that the organization does not take its own policies seriously. During the last days of putting the final touches to this report an urgent memorandum from the Acting Group Financial Officer authorized by the office of the new City Manager in line with a Council resolution taken on the 26th January 2017 was sent out to all staff of the Ekurhuleni Municipality forbidding the authorization of any employee from working or being paid for more than 40 hours in overtime per month. It would be interesting to follow up on how management and employees in the Municipality's Energy department have responded or complied with this directive and how this decision is going to impact on the attitudes and practices of municipal employees responsible for delivering electricity to local communities.[75]

Proponents of the practical norms theory would argue that although municipal employees are expected to behave in a particular way in keeping with the law and organizational policies, their lived realities tell of deeply rooted problems that make it difficult for them to

[74] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

[75] See annexure 1. It is also to be noted that the Ekurhuleni municipality recently appointed a new City Manager who has a long service history in senior management positions within the municipality. Indications so far are that the new City Manager is on a mission to clean up any administrative misconducts that put the municipality in disrepute and affect service delivery.

behave in a manner that mirrors those institutional norms. In-fact Lipsky and Weatherley (1977) contend that in reality service-related policy is made at the coalface of service delivery by frontline or 'street-level bureaucrats' who use their discretion to deal with the experiences they encounter at the implementation level and do whatever it takes to make their work bearable and manageable. In this particular case municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery innovatively manipulate the municipality's overtime policy to accumulate more nighttime hours which pay more compared to day hours so that they can boost their relatively lower salary packages compared to the salary packages of senior managers who work in the comfort of their offices and do not have to contend with the challenges faced by these frontline municipal employees who work in direct proximity to the often disgruntled residents. It is for this reason that while the supervisors in the study perceive working at night as a ploy to swindle the municipality's payroll system, the frontline technicians justify that their nighttime patrols serve the noble purpose of reaching out to residents who might be in distress but are unable to contact the municipality's call center for help. Not even the dangers associated with the nighttime patrols appear to be a deterrent to the municipal workers' determination to work at night. The night hours registered in their work schedules do not necessarily have to reflect actual hours worked as long as their work schedules show that they attended to a service related complaint during the night whether the said complaint is real or imaginary. In light of their ability to influence the form, pace and terms of service delivery at the local level, municipal workers may as well be the makers of policy according to Lipsky and Weatherley (ibid, p.172). They hold discretionary powers (ibid) over issues of access and service standards, an attribute which official policy-makers and theoretical analysts should not overlook in their search for answers to the service delivery complexities currently afflicting South Africa. While it might not be ideal for municipal workers to embezzle state resources it is essential for the state's governance structures to identify and address underlying factors that make looting the state the default norm for public servants.

8.4 Staff development and institutional memory

Respondents felt that not enough training was provided to equip them with the requisite skills to enhance their ability to deliver electricity using innovative measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Employees in the private sector were said to be better capacitated for this purpose and it was allegedly for this reason that private contractors were called in from time to time to fix more complex problems relating to electricity provision in the municipality.

Despite a few respondents agreeing that institutional memory is very important for continuity and preservation of lessons learnt from past experiences and to keep an intellectual inventory of the municipality's infrastructural network, some of the

respondents raised concerns about poor succession planning within their section. They felt that it was important to familiarize new appointees in the department with the intricacies of electricity provision while taking into consideration the complexities of the Thokoza township and surrounding informal settlements. The older generation of municipal employees were said to have a clearer understanding of the twists and turns of the area's electrical supply network and a better sense of how much longer this network would cope with future demands for electricity before reaching breaking point that would likely throw the township into total darkness. A similar experience had unfolded nationally when the country's energy bulk supplier, ESKOM, could no longer cope with the demand for electricity and had to enforce rotational load-shedding measures in order to prevent a total blackout in parts of the country. A detailed understanding of the municipality's electrical infrastructure would also make it possible to troubleshoot power supply bottlenecks quicker whereas it would take the newer appointees a while before they could have a complete grasp of the intricacies of the township's electrical system. As one of the municipal employees confided with great trepidation:

> …I can tell you one thing, if the Ekurhuleni…doesn't open their eyes, I give up within another five years, before total destruction. There's nobody…that's got the want, to carry this forward, I'm on my way out, I don't think I'm gonna last another five years…who's gonna take my place? The other senior officer who is in charge of medium voltage he's got one more year then he's going on pension. There's nobody in line that is being trained, that is being schooled to take his position… It scares me, it scares me. I don't know what sort of Alberton we're gonna leave behind to the kids… I'm telling you, five years, six years, maximum.[76]

The unit where this study was being conducted was said to be already feeling the expertise void left by some of its retired employees who had left the municipality in previous years. Although there was confirmation from more than one respondent that one particular employee was being groomed to possibly take over the ropes should one of the more experienced workers leave the organization, one was left wondering about the meaningfulness of empowering one out of the dozens of municipal workers based at this particular workstation especially given the extent of the geographical size of the township and the complexity of problems it faces with regard to electricity provision. What the absence of a concrete succession plan and the attempts by lower level supervisors to address this gap tells us is that important details like the need for a succession plan may be missed by official policymakers during their strategic planning processes because of their detachment from practical realities on the ground whereas frontline bureaucrats, because of their hands-on proximity can step in with innovative ideas to close the gap between policy and practice. This shows that practical norms have an important and an

[76] Interview with Respondent #5, 7 October 2015

enabling role to play in spearheading service delivery. Although critics hold a negative view of the practical norms theory which they claim encourages the bending of official rules, normlessness and anarchy, the above example shows that practical norms can contribute positively where institutional norms fail. In this particular case frontline municipal workers out of their own volition have taken it upon themselves to undertake a peer grooming exercise to prevent a complete institutional memory loss should long-serving employees in the department leave the organization.

8.5 Weak interdepartmental linkages and communication

The right to water which flows from the United Nations basic human rights declaration on the 'right to life' (Kothari, 2006) is also entrenched in Section 27(1)(a) of the Constitution of South Africa. This right is claimable regardless of consumers' ability to pay (Section 73 of the Municipal Systems Act). Section 4(3)(c) of the Water Services Act also prohibits the termination of water supplies to non-paying residents. Whereas electricity is also rated a high priority service which should be universally accessible to all of the country's citizens, water provision is rated as being more important and should never be denied to residents. Consequently, it is electricity that gets cut off when punitive measures are meted against residents who default on paying their water bills. The same fate applies to people who owe rates to the municipality, failure to pay rates may lead to the suspension of electricity supply to the defaulting household. Two offshoot problems arise from this arrangement:

Firstly, because the termination of an important service like electricity causes frustration among consumers this can quickly turn into anger for residents whose electricity gets suspended when they are certain they have paid for it. That anger may escalate to violent protest not just against the municipality but especially against municipal workers operating at the field level who may be held directly responsible for cutting off electricity supplies to non-paying households. Although the municipality has hired private service providers to disconnect non-paying consumers, in the eyes of the residents it is the municipal workers who are held responsible for termination of municipal services, whether directly or indirectly. Municipal workers are easily identifiable within the community where they work. They, and not the private contractors whom the municipality commissions from time to time to assist with electricity provision or withholding it, are the face of the municipality at the community level. Municipal workers may therefore be an easy target for residents who feel let down by the municipality.

Secondly, when those departments who depend on the suspension of electricity to recover monies owed to them fail to effectively communicate with the energy department about why the electricity supplies to particular households should be suspended, this causes confusion for the municipal employees responsible for reactivating access

especially when the affected residents complain and produce proof that their electricity has been paid for.

> The cut-offs are being handled by…the revenue or by the finance department. They are sending…external people to go and disconnect, and then when we get the complaint ourselves you'll find that …for some reason this person had been disconnected either …in a wrongful way or in a rightful way but when they were disconnected the…notices were coming from the Finance Department not the technical side. When you get there, somebody's showing you the paper that they've paid but we are not dealing with the…payment… now the Finance has disconnected them legally… me as electrician I'm being sent without having correspondence, and then when I get there I find that there is a problem, I fix the problem… I reconnect them (only) to find…it was disconnected for some reason and I don't know the reason because I'm coming from the technical…somebody disconnecting them is coming from Finance…[77]

The challenge with this sort of arrangement is that it causes inefficiency in all the departments involved (see also Bawa, 2011:492). The Finance department's efforts to collect revenue are compromised when municipal employees from the Energy department reconnect services that have been suspended due to non-payment. The Energy department might also find itself in conflict with the municipality's revenue collection wing for reconnecting defaulters. Worse still, the municipal employees who reconnect certain defaulters and not others risk getting in trouble with those who are not reconnected who may feel unfairly discriminated. Municipal workers could be accused of favoritism for reconnecting some defaulters while others remain without electricity. Township residents are a close knit community. News of any one of them getting what the rest of the community might think is privileged treatment can instigate community unrest. Needless to say then that if part of the community believes that other residents get preferential treatment from the municipal employees, the municipal employees suspected of practicing favoritism may be singled out for retribution (Tarrow, 2011: 47).

Weak inter-departmental collaboration manifests in different ways which further weaken the municipality's service delivery proficiency. In yet another example furnished by one of the respondents, the municipality's procurement division had reportedly bought and allocated a fleet of vehicles to the energy department which were not customized for the purpose for which they were needed. They had not been fitted with the mechanism to hoist technicians up onto the overhead cableway to diagnose and rectify power supply faults. This meant that the energy department had to borrow suitable vehicles from other departments whenever the need arose. This would sometimes cause delays in responding to power interruptions in the township. Normatively, a proper needs analysis

[77] Interview with Respondent #6, 21 January 2017

should precede the procurement of equipment and vehicles to ensure they are fit for purpose but the practice in reality does not always correspond to this norm.

In this chapter I have shown how practical norms have been an intrinsic part of the day-to-day operations of frontline municipal workers just as they have been an unquestionable part of the urban poor's struggles to access municipal services. This is apparent in the day-to-day claim-making maneuvers of poorly resourced township and informal-settlement dwellers who constantly find innovative ways to gain access to municipal services as it is apparent in the behavior of municipal workers who themselves spend much time trying to find innovative ways to deliver municipal services amidst the volley of constraints they face in their personal, workplace and external environments. Low levels of cooperation among municipal departments and the municipal workers that staff them compromise coordination of efforts towards coherent and successful service delivery outcomes.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

Findings of this study were indicative of much deeper challenges that affect service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa. These challenges require far more than theoretical assessments of what the developmental state can or cannot achieve. Factors such as poverty, unemployment, crime, corruption, bureaucratic red-tape and power dynamics in both the administration and political spheres play a critical role in shaping the perceptions and behavior of municipal workers.

Contestations between the official norms which appear to frame the perceptions of the municipal workers I interviewed, and community norms that seem part of the day-to-day claim-making practices of the Thokoza residents playout against a backdrop of a multiplicity of relationships and challenges. Together these threads produce the complexities and tensions that shroud South Africa's service delivery terrain.

Tensions between municipal workers and local councilors compromise service delivery. While municipal workers perceive councilors as being unsupportive and not stepping up to their role as mediators of service delivery, councilors battle their own challenges which make it difficult for them to effectively perform their role or to have honest conversations with their constituencies about issues of access, constraints and responsibility with regard to service delivery.

Findings from related studies such as Bawa's (2011) on the role of councilors in water provision in Mumbai, Bénit-Gbaffou and Bosaka's (2016) on the challenges and opportunities of community engagement in Johannesburg, Richard Weatherley and Michael Lipsky's (1977) on the role of street-level bureaucrats in implementing special education reform in Massachusetts all show that while frontline service workers face a number of challenges they also have a window of opportunity to influence service delivery outcomes by exercising initiative, evaluating and maximizing the use of resources at their disposal and fostering strategic partnerships with stakeholders. Some of the studies referenced here also reveal that councilors do not always possess the level of power that municipal workers and residents alike imagine they have to influence service delivery on behalf of their constituencies (Benit-Gbaffou, 2008; Bawa, 2011). Decision-making powers about what services are provided to who is concentrated in certain nodes within the municipality, particularly the mayor and members of the mayoral committee (ibid: 28) and in parts of the broader political spectrum as well as socio-economic demographic within which service delivery takes place (Bawa, 2011).

While municipal workers are hypothetically bound by legal statutes, codes of conduct, value statements and principles plus numerous institutional policies to regulate their behavior as state representatives, these measures do not provide any guarantee that the

municipal workers will conduct themselves in the manner expected of them. There are deeper structural, political and socio-economic problems which influence the behavior of municipal workers in their daily praxis of service delivery. Although it is necessary for municipalities as institutions and municipal leaders as policymakers within those institutions to put regulatory mechanisms in place to safeguard state resources, promote the state's legitimacy and protect its public interest image, it may be pointless to put any regulatory mechanisms in place without embracing the practical realities and innovative improvisions of municipal workers at the coalface of service delivery.

Frontline municipal workers and the work they do epitomize the climax point at which all the senior-level planning, strategy and prioritization of municipal services embodied in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) culminates into the actual delivery of services. These frontline workers are the point at which residents experience the state's service provision function. Residents might not even have the faintest idea about what painstaking processes precede the final delivery of the services they receive from the state. They experience service delivery at the point that they witness the lightbulb come on at the switch of a button, when the stove heats up so they can enjoy a warm meal or when hot water comes gushing out of the tap on a cold winter morning. Behind all of this is the frontline municipal worker who makes sure that each residential dwelling is connected to the power supply.

It is therefore necessary to undertake more in-depth studies about the place and future of practical norms in understanding contemporary challenges and shaping future discourses about service delivery in South Africa's post-apartheid context. The search for solutions for the problems that plague service delivery in South Africa is bound to be long, winding and possibly fruitless if a cut-and-paste approach from the North to the South is applied without taking into consideration context-specific realities. Understanding the interplay between practical norms and official norms is an unavoidable necessity that can help shed light on how municipal policies, strategies and actions can be modified and harmonized with the country's democratic developmental agenda which places service delivery equity and quality at its core.

A deeper analysis of the disjuncture between official norms and practical norms is especially crucial in light of South Africa's journey from its apartheid days to its present-day democracy. At the core of both these political periods stands the issue of inequality which continues to play a prominent role in the country's service delivery discourse. In as much as the entrenchment and enforcement of inequality was the defining feature of the apartheid governance system, doing away with inequality and substituting it with equal treatment of the country's citizens and equitable access to services has been the overarching foundation of South Africa's long struggle against minority rule and against all forms of discrimination.

Greater cooperation needs to be fostered among role-players at all levels of the state's service delivery mechanism. The different levels of the state, and by this I mean the national, provincial and local levels, do not always operate cooperatively with each other to ensure effective devolution of service delivery responsibilities and resources from the central state to the grassroots level. Municipal workers bear the brunt of service delivery failures because of their proximity to citizens at the community level.

The most important lesson learnt from this study was that although municipal employees have much to learn and improve as enablers and implementers of service delivery, there needs to be shared responsibility between municipalities and communities to ensure service delivery efficiency. The state and its devolved structures, municipalities in particular, cannot by itself achieve the developmental aspirations of South Africa's constitution unless all parties concerned, including the citizenry, engage meaningfully on the underlying factors responsible for service delivery inefficiency and how the state and citizens can work together to find long lasting solutions.

This study is just a scratch on the surface about the realities of service delivery in South Africa's post-apartheid era. More in-depth studies are required to unravel the details and get to the roots of what appears to be failures of South Africa's developmental state to deliver efficient and equitable services. It is my hope that this study will contribute to these ongoing debates, policy reform and shape future thoughts, meanings, encounters and practices of service delivery.

Although this particular enquiry does not necessarily seek to fix current challenges related to service delivery in South Africa or anywhere else, it is my hope that the lessons learned from this study will contribute to the body of thought and to efforts to understand what factors enable or disable effective and efficient service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Annexure 1. Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

I am a student at Wits conducting a study to find out what are the perceptions and experiences of municipal workers in Ekurhuleni on their role in delivering essential services to the communities in their service delivery areas. My study focuses on the provision of electricity to the community of Thokoza and surrounding informal settlements. You can help me complete this study by answering the following questions with as much detail as you think is necessary.

1. Can you describe what an ordinary work day looks like for you?

2. What do you find most fulfilling about your job?

   2.1 What is it about this that is meaningful to you?

3. What do you find most unfulfilling and why?
   3.1 Could you give me an example of ways in which this unfolds?

4. How are service delivery targets in your area of work decided?

5. What measuring mechanisms are in place to assess if targets are being met?

6. Could you share with me an example of a case where you felt you had been exceptionally successful at performing a particular work task.

7. What is it about this particular case that makes it a success story?

8. What would you say were enabling factors for this task to be performed successfully?

9. Could you share with me an example of a case in relation to your work which you felt was not accomplished successfully.

10. What is it about this case that makes it an unsuccessful story?

11. What would you say were the disabling factors that prevented this from being a successful task?

12. Between the success stories and the ones that were not so successful which ones would you say are predominant in your world of work?

13. If an unexpected blackout occurs what procedures are followed to address the problem?

14. What is the nature of the relationship you have with the community where you work?

15. What is your opinion about the service delivery protests that have been taking place in and around Thokoza?

16. How have the protests been dealt with?

17. Some people say there are more service delivery protests during the winter season. Is this the case in your service delivery area?

18. How would you explain this seasonal variation in the frequency of the protests?

19. In your view how can service delivery in your service delivery area be improved?

20. Please feel free to share any other information you feel would be important for this study?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my questions.

Annexure 2. Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Name of Researcher : Gugu Gloria Mpapane

Institution : Faculty of Humanities - University of the Witwatersrand

Date : 24 July, 2015

Title of Project : Municipal Employees at the Coalface of Service Delivery: Stories about Electricity Provision in Thokoza, Ekurhuleni

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I ---------- agree to participate in the above-mentioned study conducted by Ms. Gugu Gloria Mpapane in fulfillment of her academic requirements. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any stage or refuse to answer any questions without the fear of negative consequences. I understand that my identity will remain confidential and that there are no risks or benefits to my participation in the study. I give permission for direct quotes from the interview to be used in the research report and/ or publications provided that anonymity is preserved. I understand and give consent that findings of the study including my contributions may be published and stored in the Wits University Library or Website.

Recording of the Interview

I hereby voluntarily consent to my interview being audio-tape recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will only be heard by the researcher and her research supervisor(s), and will only be processed by the researcher or appointed transcriber.
- All tape recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure location, which only the researcher will have access to.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed:----------at ----------on ----------

Annexure 3. Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

My name is Gugu Gloria Mpapane. I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) currently studying towards a Master of Arts in Development Studies degree. I am required to undertake a research project as part fulfillment of academic requirements for this program. My research topic is “Municipal Employees at the Coalface of Service Delivery: Stories about Electricity Provision in Thokoza, Ekurhuleni.”

The aim of this study is to hear municipal employees at the frontline of delivering some of the most important services to local communities share their stories about their role and experiences in delivering these services in order to gain a better understanding of how these services are delivered in practice and to find out how you tackle challenges you encounter in performing this function. This study is being conducted among middle-managers, team-leaders, supervisors, technicians and skilled laborers. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

I am inviting you to participate in this study. Your participation will help to answer many questions about service delivery at the local level.

I have prepared an interview schedule that will assist me to gain a clear understanding about the nature of your work but please feel free to share with me as much information as you can which you may consider important. On estimate this might take an hour. You are free to suggest a convenient time and place for us to meet and talk. Permission has been requested from your superiors to undertake this study. Please note that participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will not affect you in any way. Your inputs to this study are purely for academic purposes and will be treated with the highest confidentiality and anonymity. You will not incur any costs or be compensated for participating in this study.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please feel free to contact me.

My contact details are as follows: Telephone number: 078728 4626; Email address: ggmpapane6@gmail.com

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, or would like to obtain information or offer input, or should you wish to register a

complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Supervisors for this project:

Name	Telephone Contact	Email Address
Professor Bridget Kenny	011 717 4445	Bridget.Kenny@wits.ac.za
Professor Zimitri Erasmus	011 717 4417	Zimitri.Erasmus@wits.ac.za

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

---------- ---------- ----------
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Name Signature Date

Annexure 4. Request for approval to conduct study

10 November 2014

Attention: The Head of Department - Energy

Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

4th Floor, Civic Centre

Boksburg

Dear Mr. Wilson,

Re: Request to Conduct Research among Municipal Employees in the Energy Department – Alberton Service Delivery Area

I am an employee in the Health and Social Welfare Department, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. I am also a part-time student enrolled for a Master of Development Studies program at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). I hereby request permission to conduct an academic research study among municipal employees in the Electricity (Energy) Department, Alberton Service Delivery, specifically those employees who are located in the Swartkoppies complex. My research topic is "Providing Electricity, Water and Sanitation in Thokoza: Ekurhuleni Municipal Employees' Perceptions of their Role in Service Delivery".

The overarching objective of this study is to highlight the realities of developmental local government, not as theory but practice and to determine the extent to which these realities correspond with descriptors of a developmental state according to developmental theorists. The study seeks to gain an understanding about the perceptions and experiences of municipal employees in relation to the provision of specific basic services and how they view their role in operationalizing local government's service delivery mandate and tackle day-to-day service delivery challenges.

I will be most grateful if my request to conduct this study in your department is accepted.

Yours Faithfully,

Gugu G. Mpapane (Researcher)

Mr. Mark Wilson (HOD – Energy)

Please indicate response with a tick below

Approved--- ✓ / not approved---

Annexure. 5 Memorandum- Permission to conduct the study

Annexure. 5 Memorandum- Permission to conduct study

MEMORANDUM

Ekurhuleni
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY
ENERGY DEPARTMENT

Corporate Office

Boksburg Civic Centre
1 st. Iscor Road
BOKSBURG
1460

P O Box 215
BOKSBURG
1460
Tel: (011) 999-5000
Fax: (011) 917-3834

www.ekurhuleni.gov.za

From: Acting Head of Department: Energy

Email: [redacted]

Date: 08 March 2017

The University of the Witwatersrand

Research Ethics Committee

To whom it may concern,

Re: Permission to conduct a study for academic purposes – Ms. Gugu Gloria Mpapane

Permission is hereby granted to Ms. Gugu Gloria Mpapane to conduct a study for academic purposes in the Energy Department of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Ms. Mpapane is an employee of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality working in the Health Department. It is also my understanding that Ms. Mpapane is a Master's student in the Faculty of Humanities, School of Development Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

We support and wish her all the success in completing her studies.

Yours faithfully

S Sanperied
Acting Head of Department (Energy)

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Annexure 6. Acting letter for Acting Head of Department-Energy

Annexure 6. Acting letter for Acting Head of Department-Energy

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

MEMORANDUM

Ekurhuleni
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

Head Office
EGOLI BUILDING
CNR CROSS & ROSE STR
Private Bag X1069
Germiston 1400
South Africa
Tel (011) 999-3075
Fax (011) 999-1011
www.ekurhuleni.gov.za

To: Ken Sanpersad
Divisional Head: Business Planning & Strategy

Ref: Office of the City Manager

Enq: Linda Naicker

E-mail: [illegible]

Date: 01 March 2017

ACTING HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: ENERGY

You are hereby appointed to act as the Head of Department: Energy from the 09 March 2017 till 13 March 2017

You are therefore authorised to exercise the delegated and signing powers that are vested to the position whilst acting

Kind Regards

DR M J MASHAZI
CITY MANAGER

DATE

I hereby agree to act in the position of HOD: Energy

KEN SANPERSAD

2017/03/06
DATE

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